



Cort Earth GO 3/4 Dreadnought guitar

Onboard HyVibe H2 effects with a looper on a mini travel guitar - too good to be true?

BY ROB LAING

THE PARING OF an acoustic guitar with an effects generator that can create reverb, delay and chorus sounds through the soundhole without an amp or pedal in sight is a compelling combination. Yamaha's TransAcoustic models prove it, and the retrofit ToneWoodAmp2 was one of my favourite gear releases of 2025. The technology is only half the story, though - you have to be inspired by the guitar it's platformed on too.

Does it add up to what we're hoping? I'd better get it on the test bench and start finding out!

Build quality

I think the Open Pore Brown Burst finish here is warmer and more inviting than the more generic natural spruce top option Earth GO model - adding more of vintage touch and standing out a little more in the travel guitar competition too. The satin finish feels good in the hands, the back is highly figured and two-toned. So too is the scarf joint, with the two shades looking a little jarring - like Cort wanted to draw attention to it.

The tortoiseshell rosette is understated but complements the edge-style burst here very well, and the build itself is largely what I've come to expect from Cort instruments. Good looks, no sharp frets and a tidy finish, aside from the aesthetic of that scarf joint contrast.

The Natural finish, non-electric version called the Earth Mini (with merbau fingerboard) is available for around half the price of this model, which also lays bare the premium you have to pay for the HyVibe H2 electronics and piezo pickup here.

The price contrast for this kind of technology Vs the guitar itself is absolutely not exclusive to Cort - I've found it when comparing Yamaha TransAcoustics to similar spec'd models without it too. As we find out, it brings some significant features to the table here.

Playability

The action on this Earth GO model out of the supplied gig bag is simply too high - 2.70mm clearance from the low E and 2mm from the high E - feels especially unwieldy on a much shorter scale guitar where I feel it adds an extra challenge to overcome if you're transitioning from a longer scale guitar to these smaller frets. Beginner players especially could really struggle with the high action here on this test guitar. So that's a disappointing stumbling block right out of the gate that makes the Cort Mini more difficult to play than it should be for me.

There are two ways to address this issue - one much easier than the other. Fitting lighter gauge strings being the simplest fix (the gauge supplied isn't listed in the specs but I'm guessing it's a gauge 12 set here). Even so, that will only reduce tension and only get you so far compared to the second method - and that is really something you should be careful with.

It involves removing the strings, carefully removing and sanding down the bottom of the saddle a little, and then refitting the strings to try it again. Repeat until satisfied. A job best left to a tech for some players - and adding to the outlay. I personally don't think acoustics should be leaving a factory with this kind of action that's going have such a niche appeal. I'm hoping it's an anomaly as it's not something I've personally experienced from Cort guitars before.

So it's a shame, because apart from the action

"The combination of onboard multi-effects and a looper on a travel acoustic is an inspirational proposition here"

this seems a comfortable neck, though the shorter scale isn't quite so beguiling as my 23.5" Taylor GS Mini. Some adult players will struggle with it, children much less so.

The Earth GO sits well on the lap, and as I tune a semitone down to slacken the string tension and make the action a little easier to handle, it feels very much on the side of a grown-up travel guitar rather than a child's toy.

Sounds

This is where things get really interesting. Because the HyVibe H2 tech here is packing a lot of features into a small guitar. In addition to Reverb, Echo, Chorus, Octave, Phaser and Tremolo, there's also Distortion and Boost to be selected via the controls on the top side of the Earth Mini. There you'll also find access to tuner, metronome and looper modes.

Each effect has a level control and one parameter - so for Echo this is delay time, for Reverb it's the decay. The latter effect is my first port of call because previous experience with this kind of tech has shown me it's the most useful and organic combination with an acoustic.

While it's decent, don't expect the extremes of cavernous space here. It's not as prominent as some other acoustic guitars I've tried with this effect but the Earth GO's body is smaller than them. Nevertheless, alongside the moody charms of Tremolo, it's the effect I come back to most for adding inspiring sounds.

The Echo delay repeats can sound too artificial and plasticity at higher level settings, and there's a fine line between balancing this and them being too hard to hear when unplugged. They're certainly much more audible when amplified through a PA - and I was impressed at how the Earth GO's piezo leaned into the little guitar's rounded bottom end for a pleasingly usable live sound.

While the Chorus, Octaver and Phaser work best on the subtle side and have their charms for some of the unplugged covers I play, the Distortion is either too feedback-inducing or hard to detect, and I found the Boost hard to distinguish at all. These two sounds feel superfluous here.

The metronome is the bleeping type for practice exercises, but the looper here requires a learning curve for those used to pedal loopers. You need to set the tempo, bars and time signature before and you start playing after a countdown, rather than activating the loop to stop recording and start playing. To activate this more familiar and instinctive functionality, you'll need to invest in a Bluetooth MIDI pedal - something HyVibe actually sells direct.

It's not really surprising to me that softer playing tends to struggle during loop playback through the soundhole against my own live strumming (you can overdub up to four tracks), so play harder and with purpose for the best results. The HyVibe H2 tech also offers Bluetooth streaming, with the soundhole acting as a speaker, and you may be surprised at how effective it is for this - certainly a welcome addition for playing along to your favourite

GUITAR VERDICT



The Cort Earth GO is a little guitar packing a surprisingly expansive set of features with effects, looper, audio streaming and a tuner. Some of the effects are more effective and musically inspiring than others, but the combination of Cort value and HyVibe H2 technology is undeniable here.

PROS

- + Eight effects onboard - and a looper!
- + Impressive value for this kind of in-built tech.
- + Good build quality and looks.
- + Onboard tuner is handy.

CONS

- Action on our test model is simply too high.
- The effects here aren't as effective as some of the pricier competition.
- Looper function needs a Bluetooth MIDI pedal to really feel intuitive.

SPECS

MADE: Indonesia
BODY SHAPE: 3/4 dreadnought
BODY TOP: Solid Sitka spruce
BACK & SIDES: Laminate mahogany
NECK: C-shape, Mahogany
SCALE/LENGTH: 22.8" (578mm)
NUT/WIDTH: Plastic / 43 mm
FINGERBOARD/RADIUS: Laurel / 15.75"
FINISH: Open Pore Brown Burst (as reviewed), Natural
BRIDGE/PINS: Laurel / plastic
TUNING MACHINES: Cort die-cast with black knobs
ELECTRONICS: HyVibe H2
WEIGHT: 3.8lb/1.7kg
CASE: Gig bag
LEFT-HANDED OPTIONS: No

songs or backing tracks.

Verdict

This package offers an impressive range of features for the money, and the combination of onboard multi-effects and a looper on a travel acoustic guitar is an inspirational proposition here. While the effects aren't at the level of the ToneWoodAmp2's retrofit option, or the Reverb as effective as the quality and range found on the Yamaha TransAcoustic models, the price difference is significant for an all-in-one solution, by a considerable margin in the case of the latter.

Here you get a broad array of effects options, and even some of the looper functionality of the latest TransAcoustics, so it's just a shame that the high action on this test model presented such an unattractive playing proposition out of the box. But that can at least be overcome, because the payoff is a small guitar with plenty to offer new and established guitar players, at home or taken away with them. The USB-C charging functionality (with up to ten hours of battery life) also means you shouldn't be caught short of a charger at home, and could even use a battery pack if you're away from the mains.