

REVIEWED:

Larrivée LV-03RE ME

LARRIVÉE

LV-03RE ME



This handsome electro acoustic guitar is just the ticket for work, rest and play...but be quick, this is a limited edition of Larrivée's popular all rounder.

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Photographs: Eccie, courtesy of Guitar Buyer Magazine

LARRIVÉE

LV-03RE ME

Limited Edition £1399.00
Standard Model £1299.00

All prices are SRP incl VAT

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WHAT IS IT?

A top quality all solid wood construction electro acoustic guitar.

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

Larrivée ranks alongside the likes of Taylor and Martin as one of the world's most respected brands of acoustic guitar. The LV-03 is an ideal journeyman player's guitar; it is versatile, well made and sounds terrific. Definitely a keeper.

So you've been playing guitar for a few years now and all of your hard work is paying off.

The calluses on your fingertips are hard, you've built up a solid repertoire of decent tunes and maybe you've even got a few gigs under your belt and now the time has come to treat yourself to a new guitar. Sure, that battered sub-£500 steel string that you bought when you started playing is still a loyal and trusty companion but as you've begun to improve and maybe played a few more upmarket guitars along the way, you've come to notice the rather large gap between the feel, sound and performance of your budget bash-box and the effortless grace of a top of the line acoustic guitar.

It's time to get serious.

Once you've reached a certain level as a guitarist, choosing an acoustic guitar can be a more confusing experience compared to buying a decent electric. Whereas electric guitars are generally dead easy to tell apart and their individual sonic qualities are usually obvious

in their general design, choice of pickups etc; acoustic guitars are an entirely different animal. To the untrained eye or novice they essentially look very similar and picking the right one for you depends on many factors: the style of music you play, whether you intend to play live or not and – most importantly – how the materials the guitar is made from affect its sound all need to be carefully considered before you make your final decision.

Fortunately, modern acoustic guitars have removed a lot of the guess work from the process thanks to forward-thinking companies like Larrivée, who along with some notable contemporaries have advanced the design and manufacturing process of the steel strung acoustic with the result that they are no longer the physically challenging beasts of old. Yet, Larrivée guitars still retain a unique feel and tone that retains the essential character and soul of a hand-built instrument and the credit for most of this lies at the feet of Jean Larrivée, who still personally

chooses the timbers for his guitars entirely by himself. Indeed, Jean even picks the timbers used to make the tops of each and every single one of his guitars, so if you own or intend to buy a Larrivée acoustic guitar, you can guarantee that the man whose name is on the headstock has invested his personal time and attention to YOUR guitar. How cool is that? We've already mentioned that Jean Larrivée devotes much of his time to personally selecting every piece of timber used to build his instruments and this involves a lot of time hopping on and off aeroplanes and scrambling around up his knees in mud in forests and timber yards all over the world. This type of hands-on commitment might sound a bit unlikely for the CEO of an international company but, as the world's precious stocks of timber grow ever harder to obtain, Jean states that buying stocks of wood from reputable sources and his insistence on using only the best materials demands a necessarily major part of his time. ▶



► Slick Picker

The LV-03RE ME is designed as an all-round gigging guitarists tool. The on board pre-amp notwithstanding, the slightly reduced body size and single cutaway are both designed to make the LV-03RE model agile and easy to play whilst still providing the authentic fulsome-sounding tones of a top-flight guitar.

This particular 'ME' designated model is a limited version of the standard LV-03RE model, the 'ME' prefix stands for 'marquetry' and sets our review sample aside from the standard model courtesy of the highly decorative inlays forming the sound hole rosette.

This type of highly skilled woodwork is more often associated with classical guitars than traditional steel strung 'folk' guitars but it really adds a subtle and undeniably classy feel to what would otherwise be a fairly plain looking guitar. The marquetry also adds an extra £100 to the overall cost of the guitar but if you are the type of player that treasures the thought that your guitar will number among a select few baring this remarkable inlay, then the satisfaction gained from that knowledge will probably justify splashing out a few more quid. A transparent scratchplate protects the spruce top from the inevitable wear

and tear without distracting from the rosette's visual impact but aside from the rosette, the limited edition model is completely identical to the standard model, construction-wise. An all solid wood instrument, the LV-03RE has a solid Canadian Sitka spruce top and bracing and a beautiful solid rosewood back and sides.

The inside of the guitar is clean and neat, with scrupulously tidy internal bracing and no glue marks or other unsightly blemishes.

So let's return to the outside, then. The Sitka spruce top on this sample has a subtle but uniform grain pattern that is neatly offset by the maple binding, which also trims the rosewood back and sides. The traditional African ebony bridge houses the Graphtec 'Tusq' saddle and L.R. Baggs Element Piezo pickup, which is linked to a control panel located on the side of the guitar. The guitar's body and one-piece mahogany neck has a uniform satin finish and while satin finishes definitely have their advantages, particularly in terms of helping to make a guitar feel more 'played in', you can't beat a lovely gloss finish to add a bit of class to an instrument. Still, you can't help but be impressed by the general standard of workmanship, the African ebony fingerboard's coal black grain is as smooth and flawless as velvet and the neck's shallow 'D' profile neck feels very comfortable indeed. There is a certain stiffness to the overall feel but flat pickers or jazzers that play with a heavy pick and a hard attack will probably relish the slight resistance and will probably find that it favours their particular approach.

Power Up

Some old school steel strung acoustics used to be a nightmare to play. Usually sporting a high action, even some of the best-known brands required either a lot of work or a dedicated practice regime to cope with the heavy



feel. Not so today's generation.

The Larrivée's superb playing action doesn't leave room for any fret buzz and the overall set up is

but the user-friendly control panel squeezes everything in while leaving enough room for all but the fattest sausage fingers to navigate the

The EQ's sophisticated anti-feedback systems keep everything under control without colouring the sound in any discernable fashion

flawless, just the thing for smoothing the transition from electric guitar to acoustic if you are in the habit of switching between both during the course of a live or studio set.

Despite only being slightly smaller than a standard dreadnought, the LV-03RE sounds a bit more balanced – I used an old Yamaha dreadnought as a comparison – with a rich low-end register and a lively top end that manages to sidestep the annoying treble sizzle that you can often find on many modern acoustic guitars. No, everything sounds bang-on acoustic – wise and it was with interest that we plugged in and gave the electronics a workout. With a three-band EQ, plus a mid frequency fine-tuner, a phase inverter and a notch filter to isolate and eliminate troublesome feedback the L.R. Baggs Element system is perfect. It sounds like a lot to cram into a single unit

knobs and faders. Plugged in, the transparency of this system preserves the integrity of the acoustic tone to a remarkable degree, The EQ's sophisticated anti-feedback systems keep everything under control without colouring the sound in any discernable fashion and when amplified, the LV-03RE sounds rich and powerful, with superb projection and a balanced tone that responds equally well to energetic rhythm work and individually picked notes. This popular sector of the electro-acoustic market means that the LV-03RE does face some stiff competition – Taylor's 300 series and Martin's 16 series to name but two. Still, this Larrivée gives nothing away to its main rivals in terms of playability or sound, and after all your years of dedicated practicing you can safely justify your decision to buy the LV-03RE.

You've probably earned it. **PU**

