

MARTIN LX1E ED SHEERAN

£499

A mini-Martin signature for that mop-headed sensation from Suffolk

If you're not familiar with Ed Sheeran, well, where have you been for the past couple of years? The epitome of the open-mic troubadour turned global A-list-associating pop star, Sheeran is rarely, if ever, seen performing without one of his Little Martin LX1Es. Of course, the correct 'genre' for these short-scale small-body guitars (in this case, 584mm/23-inch) is 'travel', and Sheeran famously referred to his guitar case as his suitcase as he embarked upon his ascent to stardom.

This limited-edition model, of which "every single penny" Sheeran receives from its sales will go to charity, is going to surprise

at least a small overnight bag, smartphone charger and a couple of spare t-shirts would fit nicely.

Along with the smart build, it's a smart player, too. Despite the smaller scale, the string spacing at the bridge is only a few millimetres short of the big Martins, while the 43mm (1.69-inch) nut width is the smaller standard of most USA steel-strings. The neck shape, a 'modified low oval', has lovely sloped shoulders and virtually disappears in your hand. Fretting is excellent, while action and playability are easy and clean.

Acoustically, then, like many small guitars, it throws quite a perceived punch in terms of

Every penny Sheeran receives from its sales goes to charity

a few Sheeran doubters, not to mention those who think a 'travel' guitar is something for kids.

As with the other Lil' Martins, the spec reads like a brand manager's portfolio: multi-laminate Stratabond neck, Richlite fingerboard, black textured HPL back and sides... These man-made materials are simply cost saving, and they work. In fact, there's a strong argument they'll keep your guitar ship-shape and stable a lot longer than cheap real wood.

It's a very nicely put-together piece. The laser-etched logos on the solid sapele top – the only bit of solid wood on the guitar – impart a cool, moody aesthetic, enhanced by the black soundhole ring, fingerboard, bridge and headstock facing. There's more real wood to spot inside the body, too, in the form of the tidy spruce braces – this is far from shabby.

It's worth mentioning the padded gigbag, too. We'd wager

projection: you'll compete quite easily with your mates' full-sized models, while that hardwood top helps to add some midrange.

Plugged in with the contour switch out, it's a pretty standard piezo voice. At lower volumes, experiment with the phase switch to enhance your low-end; at higher volumes, it can instantly cure feedback. Plus, with the contour pushed in, you get a modern enhanced bass and treble with scooped midrange tone. And with those great piezo and unplugged sounds, this all adds up to one really cool little guitar. Every home should have one.

Dave Burrluck

SUMMARY	FEATURES					
	SOUND QUALITY					
	VALUE FOR MONEY					
	BUILD QUALITY					
	PLAYABILITY					
OVERALL RATING		★★★★★				



AT A GLANCE

TOP: Solid sapele w/ laser etchings

BACK & SIDES: Jet black HPL

NECK: Brown Stratabond

FINGERBOARD: Richlite

FRETS: 20

SCALE: 584mm (23")

ELECTRICS: Fishman Isys T preamp w/ under-saddle pickup and tuner

CONTROLS: Volume; contour, phase and tuner switches

HARDWARE: Black Ping w/small buttons, black Corian nut and compensated black Tusq saddle

LEFT-HANDED: Yes, no extra

FINISH: Hand-rubbed top finish, textured black back and sides

CONTACT: Westside Distribution

0844 326 2000

www.martinguitar.com

HEADSTOCK

AN orange 'CF Martin & Co Est 1833' logo sits atop Sheeran's first album '+' logo and 'Est 1991', the year he was born

ETCHING

ALONG with another '+' laser-etched into the sapele top, there's the word 'each', which stands for East Anglia's Children's Hospices, who benefit from every guitar sold

ELECTRICS

THE small Fishman Isys T preamp has a volume control, onboard guitar tuner and push-buttons for phase (to fix feedback) and contour (preset tone modification). That should sort your open-mic slot nicely

