



Takamine EG Mini £347

Hot on the heels of Taylor's GS Mini is this EG Mini. A new trend, or pure coincidence? *by Dave Burrluck*

Is the mini body style becoming the latest hot thing in the acoustic guitar world? Back in issue 340 we looked at Taylor's GS Mini, which was launched in the USA in the last quarter of 2010. Then, at 2011's Winter NAMM show in January Takamine announced its answer – or perhaps simply a coincidental launch – the G Series Mini.

Supplied in a standard gigbag – a lot less robust than the 'hard' gigbag the Taylor GS Mini came with – our 'Takamini' arrived in a cool-looking, gloss black livery with single strip cream edge binding. Overall it's a smaller guitar than the Taylor: about 25mm shorter from top to

base, 37mm trimmer across the body and 15mm shallower in depth. Scale length is shorter too: 578mm (22.75-inch) compared to the GS Mini's 597mm (23.5-inch).

Judging by the clean interior, it's tidily built. We have a scalloped, X-braced solid cedar top with laminated mahogany back and sides; the GS Mini goes for a solid Sitka spruce top with laminated sapele back and sides. The Takamine's back is conventionally braced, while the Taylor has a more bulbous and unbraced back. The black-stained bridge here has an intonated saddle and black-dotted cream plastic pins; the tuners are perfectly serviceable

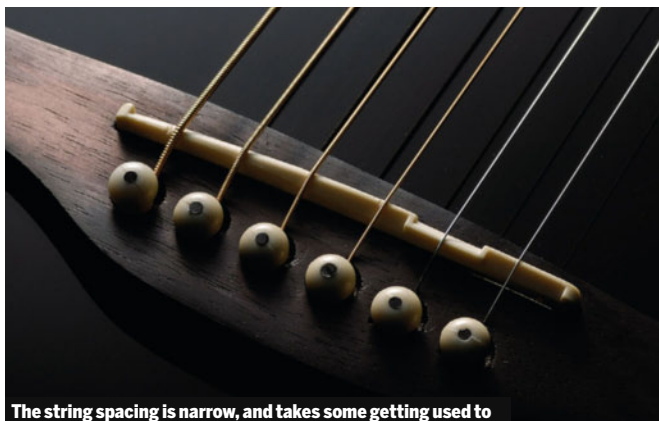
Takamine-logo'd enclosed types and you can access the truss rod access via the 90.6mm diameter soundhole.

Like the GS Mini it's a 14-fret guitar – the fretboard is very tidy, edge-bound with a black plastic strip plus micro face dots, which according to the spec sheet should be abalone,

The Rivals

Taylor's 14-fret **GS Mini** (£499) has a surprisingly big sound and a purpose-built ES-Go pickup (£73.30). Aside from **Martin's Backpacker** travel guitars the LX series has a number of 14-fret 'Little Martin' guitars, such as the solid-topped **LX1E** electro (£459), with Fishman Isys T preamp, and the **LX Black** (£369). **Crafter's TRV23** (£210) is a 14-fret cutaway acoustic, with a solid spruce top. All these guitars come with a gigbag.

Tonally, it's more balanced than initial impressions indicate and is an ideal volume for round-table strumalongs



The string spacing is narrow, and takes some getting used to



but look like standard pearloid. The neck profile is a good 'C'-shaped handful and the nut width is about half a millimetre narrower than the GS Mini and about a millimetre tighter at the 12th fret. Yet here the string spacing is noticeably narrower at the nut – 34mm as opposed to the Taylor's 37mm. At the bridge we get a spread of 54.5mm as opposed to the GS Mini's 55.5mm. These dimensional differences may seem small, but they have a profound effect on the feel and playability of the guitar: the Takamini has less air and space, especially at the nut – it feels more 'mini' than the Taylor.

The Takamini is available as a pure acoustic or, as reviewed here, with a built-in undersaddle pickup and passive gain and tone controls. The output is via the base strap pin/jack socket but, unlike the GS Mini, we don't get a second strap button on the heel.

Sounds

The Mini hardly kicks out a big sound, but that's not the point. Initially the Takamini sounds a little thin, with a tight bass end and perhaps, as you'd expect, a rather boxy character – certainly after a full size dreadnought! But play it for a while and not only do you get used to the narrow left-hand spacing but, tonally, it's more balanced than initial impressions indicate and is the ideal volume for indulging in a round-the-table strumalong.

The onboard passive system is typically low in output and on the bright, zingy side tonally. The tone control has a rather abrupt change from bright to dull and very little in between. But, if zingy and piezo is good for you, it works.



The passive system is functional, but not for everyone

Verdict

This travel guitar certainly has charm and an acceptable voice. Plugged in, the abrupt tone control lets it down, but we've heard worse. Its narrow nut string spacing and shorter scale does make it less useful for any serious playing/practice than the Taylor GS Mini, but it is considerably cheaper and there's little doubt it'd be a fun companion on your summer hols, and good enough to plug in for that bar gig when you run out of money. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Good clean build; compact size

We dislike: Cramped string spacing at nut; overly bright electro performance

Guitarist says: As a travel guitar or a starter guitar for your youngsters, the Takamine EG Mini is just fine and reasonably affordable. If you don't expect more than that, you'll be happy

Takamine EG Mini

PRICE: £346.80 (inc gigbag)
TYPE: Down-sized NEX (mini-jumbo) electro acoustic
ORIGIN: Korea
TOP: Solid cedar
BACK/SIDES: Laminated mahogany
MAX RIM DEPTH: 98mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 328mm
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 578mm (22.75-inch)
TUNERS: Chrome, enclosed
NUT/WIDTH: Cream synthetic/42.2mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with abalone micro-dots
FRETS: 19, small
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with cream synthetic compensated saddle/54.5mm
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.8/4
ELECTRICS: Unspecified undersaddle piezo pickup with passive gain and tone controls
OPTIONS: The EG Mini is available in natural finish at same price. The purely acoustic G Mini (natural only) costs £310
RANGE OPTIONS: The full-size EG Series includes the start-up non-cutaway NEX-shaped EG430S-VV at £430.80
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, gloss black only, £322.80 (acoustic) and £358.80 (electro)
FINISH: Gloss black (as reviewed) and natural
Fender GBI
01342 331700
www.takamine.com

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★