

LAKWOOD M-32 CPG £1,699
ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS



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Lakewood M-32 CPG £1,699

Is Lakewood trying to get getting a piece of Taylor and Larrivée's action? Could the M-32 CPG offer a serious alternative? We find out *by Steve Harvey*

While the 'Made In Germany' tag has become synonymous with precision engineering and high tech production methods, let's not forget that it was old-world guitar making traditions from Germany that a certain CF Martin took with him to the USA. For the past 20 years or so, under the direction of owner Martin Seeliger, Lakewood has aimed to combine the best of both worlds.

On test this issue is the M-32 CPG. The 'M' denotes a Grand Concert body shape, the '32' points to the use of rosewood for the back and sides and the 'CPG' stands for Cutaway, Pickup, Great Britain.

Largely based on what is perhaps Lakewood's best known model – the M-32 – our review sample offers some subtle differences designed to appeal directly to the UK market. The body shape is described by Lakewood as a Grand Concert. In essence, the M-32 CPG is 5mm wider than a Martin OM-28 and virtually the same height. Overall, however, the Lakewood is significantly thicker than an OM, measuring 6mm deeper at the lower bout and 9mm deeper at the upper bout. This gives the Lakewood a reassuringly full-bodied feel.

In terms of its looks, you wouldn't go so far as to call this model a Plain Jane, but it's certainly not the most glamorous acoustic we've ever reviewed. Simple and elegant would best describe the M-32 CPG's appearance. We are particularly taken with the unpretentious and delicate mother-of-pearl snowflake

inlays fitted to the choice ebony fingerboard. They add a touch of class without a hint of bling.

The two-piece Indian rosewood back is divided by a muninga (also known as bloodwood due to its reddish hue) centrepiece. Muninga has also been used for the binding fitted to the top and bottom of the body. The light coloured

The Rivals

The **Takamine TNV 460SC** (£1,969.99) costs more than the Lakewood, but has the CTP-1 Cool Tube preamp, while **Taylor's 314ce** (£1,729) comes with the award winning Expression System. **Larrivée's LV-09E** with Venetian cutaway and LR Baggs iMix Notch system is a no-nonsense high-end electro, but the RRP is now £2,311. If your budget is a bit tighter, try the **Tanglewood Masterdesign** series. The **TSR-2** (£1,129) is a powerful, articulate picker, albeit without a pickup.



The Sonic pickup's controls are mounted discreetly inside the soundhole



The mother-of-pearl snowflake inlays are both classy and unusual

The M-32 CPG is clearly a fingerstyle guitar. The string spacing is generous and the action is just about perfect

noble wood purfling offers nice contrast to the predominately dark tones created by the rosewood and muninga.

Interestingly, Lakewood has chosen to coat the Indian rosewood sides with a very thin layer of finish without 'filling in' the naturally occurring indentations of the wood's grain. This 'open-pored' finish is believed to aid resonance by allowing the timbers more room to breathe without the constricting affects of too much grain filler and finish. The loud, bright tone of the Lakewood would suggest that this is more than mere marketing speak.

The bone nut and saddle are clean and crisp in their presentation, while the jointing and craftsmanship of the one-piece mahogany neck is top drawer. In fact, everywhere you look on the M-32 CPG, the attention to detail and overall workmanship give evidence of first rate standards.

The M-32 CPG comes loaded with Lakewood's own Sonic pickup system – the result of a cooperation with Shadow Electronics. The unit combines two pickups: one at the bridge

boasting Nanoflex technology and one in the fingerboard. Seeliger is known for his reluctance to cut into his guitars' bodies to accommodate pickup control panels. Thus, the Sonic's controls are mounted just inside the soundhole. It takes a little bit of practice to get used to operating the two rotaries blind, but once mastered, it works well.

The M-32 CPG is undoubtedly designed as a fingerstyle guitar. The string spacing is comfortably generous and the action is just about perfect. While it could be described as an all-rounder, its strengths ultimately lie in fingerpicking styles.

Sounds

The M-32 CPG's output benefits from excellent tonal separation and a room-filling volume. The mids stand out proudly (though not brashly) from the firm bass register, while the high-end is crystal clear. The overall tone couldn't really be described as unique, but it certainly has a degree of character and is very agreeable, particularly as mentioned for fingerstyle

disciplines. We are also impressed with the way the Lakewood holds its output and tone right the way up the neck.

Plugged-in, the Sonic system performs very well indeed. The Blend control gives a wide variation on tone ranging from a bright, metallic, mid-heavy rasp through to a warm, mellow, bass-heavy blow. In short, it does exactly what it says on the tin.

Verdict

The M-32 CPG gives evidence of high quality craftsmanship and its resulting performance gives it credibility as a viable alternative to the Taylor and Larrivée staples. If you're looking for a mid- to high-end electro, but are without the funds for a full-blown handbuilt custom model, the M-32 CPG could open up a whole new world for you.

The Bottom Line

We like: Excellent set-up; playability; fingerstyle-friendly; onboard electrics

We dislike: Tone lacks a little versatility and character

Guitarist says: Lakewood knows how to build a good guitar and the M-32 will give the big guns a serious run for their money



Lakewood M-32 CPG

PRICE: £1,699

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Grand concert

TOP: AAA Cedar

BACK/SIDES: Indian rosewood (Style 32)

MAX RIM DEPTH: 118mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 397mm

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 650mm (25.6-inch)

TUNERS: Schaller M6 chrome enclosed/rosewood buttons

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/46mm

FINGERBOARD: Ebony

FRETS: 20, medium

BRIDGE SPACING: 58.5mm

PICKUP: Lakewood Sonic

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.0/4.4

OPTIONS: M-32 G (£1,499) is same spec but without cutaway and pickup

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, to order, but with a £150 upcharge

FINISH: Open-pored satin matt (as reviewed)

Synergy Distribution

0121 270 6485

www.lakewood.de

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★