



Verdict

It always interests us that guitars which are, on paper, of a very similar spec can perform so differently – and long may that continue. In a nutshell, the two Strat-inspired guitars give a basic sound that's full of overtones and rich, trebly harmonics, while the pair of mahogany shapes provide huge tones that are ideal for wall-of-sound rock styles.

We must say that we've jammed all four of these guitars together and in pairs, and if your rock or metal combo has a pair of guitarists, you should seriously consider combining either the LTD or Jackson with the Dean or Washburn; what a

wonderfully balanced sound you'd have.

We really have to raise our collective hats to Washburn's WV40V. Not only does it look amazing, it has the best sound by a margin too. And let's not forget that, for just £689, you get an original Floyd Rose and a shaped gig-bag – value for sure. Okay, so you can't really play it in a seated position, but you'll soon forget about that when you plug it in.

The satin black Dean ML really does look great too and, although not as all-powerful as that Washburn, it provides a lovely rich tone alongside a neck that takes the best bits from Dean's illustrious history.

We'd be hard-pushed to pick the best player between the Jackson and LTD, as both guitars feature very modern necks, the LTD going one step further with its nearly-through construction. The Jacko's custom shop vibe is further pressed home with our example's cool Swirl finish, while the MH-401QM's lovely red hue implies quality and luxury in the same way a red carpet can. Note too that the Jackson includes a pro-standard hard case for its £819 asking price.

Of course, each guitar represents just a small part of that company's roster and we're under no illusion that a guitar

fitted with both a double-locking Floyd and a pair of EMGs isn't going to be everyone's cup of tea. However, ignoring the benefits of such an instrument would be somewhat blinkered. The only thing that's going to make any guitar from this price point sound sub-standard, one would argue, resides behind the guitar and in front of the strap.

So why not give any of these a go? Each is perfectly stable and provides its own tonal variance on what are supposed to be one-trick pickups. To be honest, if we could squeeze the Washburn's magnificent tone out of the Jackson, we could go home very happy bunnies...



ESP LTD MH-401QM

PRICE: £829
ORIGIN: Indonesia
BODY: Mahogany with quilted maple top
NECK: Maple, set
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 24 extra jumbo frets
HARDWARE: Floyd Rose Special double-locking vibrato, Grover tuners, all black nickel
ELECTRICS: EMG-81 (bridge), EMG-85 (neck), three-way lever pickup selector switch, volume, tone
OPTIONS: The hardtail MH-401QM NT is £799. Other options include the MH-250QM (£599), MH-100QM (£399) and MH-103QM (also £399)
FINISHES: See-thru red (as reviewed), see-thru blue
Electron
01795 419460
www.espguitars.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



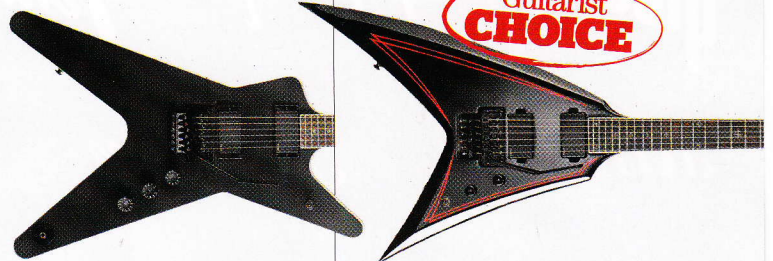
Jackson DKMG Green Swirl

PRICE: £819 (inc case)
ORIGIN: Japan
BODY: Alder with carved top
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 24 extra jumbo frets
HARDWARE: Floyd Rose-licensed Jackson JT580 double-locking vibrato, Jackson tuners, all black
ELECTRICS: EMG-81 (bridge), EMG-85 (neck), three-way lever pickup selector switch, volume, tone
OPTIONS: Solid finish versions of the DKMG start at £729. The USA DK-1 range starts at £2,049.99, the Pro Series DK2 range at £599.99, and the JS30 Series DK at £379.99
FINISHES: Green swirl (as reviewed), metallic black, trans red, trans black, satin black, black forest green, black
Fender GBI
01342 331700
www.jacksonguitars.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Dean ML Knight

PRICE: £749
ORIGIN: Korea
BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Mahogany, set
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 22 jumbo frets
HARDWARE: Floyd Rose-licensed double-locking vibrato, Grover tuners, all black
ELECTRICS: EMG-81 (bridge), EMG-85 (neck), three-way toggle pickup selector switch, two volumes, tone
OPTIONS: The more affordable MLs start with the MLXM (£199), while one of the nicest, the Time Capsule, goes for £2,679
FINISHES: Satin black only
Bill Lewington
01268 413366
www.deanguitars.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Washburn WV40V Pro E Vindicator

PRICE: £689 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Indonesia
BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Mahogany, set
FINGERBOARD: Phenolic resin, 24 extra jumbo frets
HARDWARE: Original Floyd Rose double-locking vibrato, Grover tuners, all black
ELECTRICS: EMG-81 (bridge), EMG-85 (neck), three-way toggle pickup selector switch, volume, tone
OPTIONS: The WV40V goes for £425.50, with the Floyd-equipped version costing £499. The version of the WV40V Pro E with a tune-o-matic is £689, while the Scott Ian signature WV40VASI is £586.50
FINISHES: Black with red pinstripes (as reviewed), white with black pinstripes, red with black pinstripes
Sound Technology
01462 480000
www.washburnguitars.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★