



£295

# DEAN DIME TRIBUTE GUITARS

DIMEBAG LIVES ON THROUGH THESE DEAN TRIBUTE MODELS. WE PAY OUR RESPECTS WORDS: HENRY YATES

Dean have always been the naughty schoolboys of the guitar industry. This US firm was founded in 1976 by Dean Zelinsky, an 18-year-old luthier who was sick of the stagnant designs of the era and keen to put the fun back into rock 'n' roll. Dean's marketing campaigns were notorious – a typical ad would feature a top-heavy babe straddling a phallic electric guitar – but this sense of frivolity didn't undermine the fact that Zelinsky was making real technological advances. Dean guitars didn't just look rebellious, with their spiky bodies and V-shape headstocks. They sounded rebellious, too, thanks to a mix of monster tone and massive sustain. The metal fraternity quickly grunted their approval.

Before his untimely death in 2004, Dimebag Darrell shared the Dean ethos that rock 'n' roll should be about volume, whisky and women. He was both the firm's most prominent endorsee and its biggest fan, having won his first Dean in a Texas guitar competition at the age of 16. Now, with Dimebag gone but hardly forgotten, Dean have introduced a new Tribute Series based on the ML body style that the guitarist was so fond of. And so, it falls to TG to decide which of these awesome models is the most fitting epitaph...

## DBD TRIBUTE ML £295

It's impossible not to think of Dimebag when you see the Dean DBD Tribute. This isn't down to the little picture of our hero on the headstock (which frankly feels a bit weird, like playing a shrine). Nor is it down to the free Dime sticker and poster you'll get if you buy this model in the States. Nope, it's simply the combination of those iconic ML body contours (kinda like the bastard child of an Explorer and a Flying-V) and Series II Classic V headstock. Rarely has a body design been so closely associated with one guitarist.

Let's not piss about. The DBD Tribute costs £500 less than the Dime-O-Flame model, and we can tell just by looking that it's got a less exciting bridge and pickup configuration. There's no binding on the neck either, and the fret inlays aren't quite so spangly. TG accepts that, when it comes to trimmings, you get what you pay for. What we're not prepared to swallow is any class divide in the construction stakes. Fortunately, Dean's Chinese factory has done them proud. The DBD Tribute has a tidy finish and we didn't spot any serious faults in the time we spent together. The bolt-on joint that binds the

maple neck to the basswood body is tough as hell, and if there is a more solid combination than a tune-o-matic bridge and a string-thru-body tailpiece then we will eat our Aviator sunglasses.

Basswood, maple and rosewood (that's the fingerboard) are decent enough materials in this price bracket and raised TG's hopes that we'd be able to squeeze a muscular Dimebag sound from the DBD Tribute. The ML body shape is also designed to maximise sustain by spreading its mass over a wide area, which we were also keen to put to the test.

The final piece in the jigsaw is a pair of zebra humbuckers that sit at the neck and bridge with a three-way selector to move between them. There's also a good story behind those strips of duct tape on the neck item. It's a trick that Dimebag used to stop his strings getting caught under his pickups while dive-bombing the trem. There's no whammy bar on the DBD Tribute, so we guess it's just for show. Of more practical use are the Dimebag traction knobs, which have a series of holes drilled into the plastic around

### INFORMATION

**MODEL:** DBD Tribute ML  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**BODY:** Solid basswood  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on, with Dean Series II Classic V headstock and Tribute crest  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 22  
**SCALE:** 24 3/4"  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome Grover tuners, tune-o-matic bridge, Dimebag traction knobs, strings-thru-body  
**PICKUPS:** 2 x Zebra humbuckers  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**CASE:** No  
**COLOURS:** Just what you see  
**CONTACT:** Bill Lewington Ltd 01268 413366  
**WEB:** www.deanguitars.com

the dials, giving you more of a grip in a sweaty venue.

Dimebag's technique was physically demanding and that is reflected by the DBD Tribute's level of playability. Despite being a fairly obtuse shape, the ML body is a winner on the lap and when standing. It also offers a level of top fret access that's up there with the Strat, and its neck profile supports every Dime technique from tapping to chugging.

Play the DBD Tribute clean through a solid-state amp and you may find its tone functional rather than memorable. Inevitably, this guitar doesn't really get going until you press the overdrive button. Here it is an absolute monster, with a thick, high-octane tone that eats up everything from *Message In Blood* to *Cowboys From Hell*, and sustains for so long you'll have time to grow a funny little pink beard between notes.

**FOR:** Great looks and distorted tone

**AGAINST:** You'll have to be pretty obsessed with Dimebag...

TG RATING



Dimebag put duct tape on his neck pickup to stop his strings getting caught under it while dive-bombing. It's a nice touch





£795

The Dime-O-Flame has a Floyd Rose-licensed tremolo, an authentic touch for all Dimebag devotees

The Dime-O-Flame offers arguably better tonewoods, with a solid mahogany body and set mahogany neck



## DIME-O-FLAME ML £795

Everybody knows flames are cool. So perhaps it was inevitable that TG would take an instant shine to the Dime-O-Flame. This guitar doesn't overegg the Dimebag pudding with crests, stickers and funereal paint jobs. Instead, it pays tribute to the man's lunacy with a colour scheme that's slightly daft and totally adolescent. Let's be clear, we like this one a lot more.

Our reasons for preferring the Dime-O-Flame are not purely cosmetic. Quite simply, this is a more interesting guitar. While a

construction of this model. While the DBD Tribute has a basswood body and bolted maple neck, this deluxe model is made entirely of mahogany with the neck set deep into the body. We haven't plugged it in yet, but TG reckons the warmth and authority of mahogany can only be a good thing.

Dean have thrown us another curveball when it comes to the pickups. We're not talking about the neck item – that's just another zebra humbucker, complete with masking tape – we mean the beast in the

### INFORMATION

**MODEL:** Dime-O-Flame ML  
**ORIGIN:** Korea  
**BODY:** Mahogany  
**NECK:** Mahogany, set, with Dean Series II Classic V headstock  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 22  
**SCALE:** 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
**HARDWARE:** Floyd Rose-licensed tremolo, Dimebag traction knobs  
**PICKUPS:** Zebra humbucker (neck), Seymour Duncan Dimebucker (bridge)  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**CASE:** No  
**COLOURS:** Just what you see  
**CONTACT:** Bill Lewington Ltd 01268 413366  
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authenticity with a Floyd Rose-licensed trem. Dimebag was a fiendish user of the whammy bar and TG has to assume that if you're serious about nailing his sound, you will want your guitar to have one.

There's not much to choose between the two axes in terms of comfort, with the Dime-O-Flame supplying the same great access, fretboard comfort and weight distribution. One factor that did strike us was the obvious tuning benefits of a locking trem. However hard you thrash this axe, it holds pitch.

Picking through the chiming intro of *Cemetery Gates*, TG felt the Dime-O-Flame had the more interesting raw tone. It's warm and deep, in the way that good mahogany electrics tend to be, and actually deals capably with a number of styles besides metal. So it should come as no surprise to hear that this model excels at the filth, with the neck humbucker supplying the perfect punch for riffs like *Walk* and the bridge Dimebucker offering a sizzling lead sound for Dimebag solos.

**FOR:** Build, tone, testosterone, it's got it all  
**AGAINST:** There's a huge jump in price

TG RATING



### CONCLUSION

With all the column inches and hand-wringing that continues to surround his death, Dimebag Darrell is in danger of becoming the Princess Diana of the metal world. With that in mind, it strikes TG as a good thing that Dean have chosen to honour his memory not with yet another overwritten obituary, but through two of the most arse-kicking electric guitars to come through TG Towers in ages. It's what he would have wanted.

If the DBD Tribute and Dime-O-Flame taught TG anything, it's that we don't play Dean guitars enough. Between their bonkers styling and brutal tone, these two guitars caused more carnage than Dimebag and Zakk Wylde in a china shop after a night out on the Black Tooth Grin. Picking a winner wasn't easy, but ultimately we're going for the Dime-O-Flame. It feels less morbid and more irreverent, and offers a greater level of authenticity through the pickups and floating tremolo. Dimebag may be gone, but with guitars this good keeping his name alive it's unlikely that he will be forgotten.



Both guitars feature Dimebag traction knobs, giving you maximum grip when the heat is on

cursory scan over that familiar ML body and Series II Classic V headstock might suggest that this is just the DBD Tribute with a different coat of Dulux, TG was surprised at how different they actually are. For starters, the Dime-O-Flame is made in Korea and costs twice the price of the DBD Tribute. And that's the tip of the iceberg, dear readers.

More significant is the fact that Dean have used totally different woods in the

bridge, a Seymour Duncan Dimebucker that promises mayhem when we run it at high volume. Not only does this bring increased versatility to the spec but it's more faithful to Dime's own guitars, which were often equipped with a similar configuration.

Elsewhere, there's another very obvious difference. While the Tribute scores points for convenience with its string-thru-body format, the Dime-O-Flame hits back for