



VS

Words Jonathan Horsley

ESP HORIZON NT-II

VS JADEN ROSE TACHYON 6

Pro-quality shred guitars don't need a Floyd Rose vibrato to be spectacular, as these two showstoppers prove



LIKE some monstrous accident of science, the shred-machine has evolved and mutated since Edward Van Halen first pitched up at his workbench and started putting together the Frankenstrat from a Boogie Bodies body, a Gibson PAF humbucker, a Kramer neck and a Floyd Rose vibrato. But the thinking behind them has remained the same: take Leo Fender's famous outline as the blueprint and make it battle-ready for doing ridiculously meritorious things with your life like playing heavy metal and turning rock 'n' roll into an esoteric form of neoclassical expression (Malmsteen, this means you).

Since being butchered by Van Halen, the doublecut template has taken on many forms.

Companies such as Ibanez, Jackson, Charvel and ESP, even Fender, too, have all added their own flourishes. But, generally, the one thing they have all had in common is a streamlined, sharper body profile, a slimmer neck, high-output humbuckers and had a Floyd Rose to cater for harmonic pyrotechnics. But the thing is, a floating vibrato unit can be a faff. The ESP NT-II Horizon (£1,540) and Jaden Rose Tachyon 6 (£1,599) are state-of-the-art guitars with none of the hassle of a floating bridge. True to the spirit of EVH's crude hybrid, they're both radically different, individualists. There's no way they won't play quick; this battle will answer the question of which one plays faster, sounds better and looks the biz.



JADEN ROSE
TACHYON 6 **£1,599**

The new kid on the block is OK with looking different

ITS name might be unfamiliar to all but those guitarists ensconced in the progressive metal scene, where Jaden Rose and his brand have built a rep for its complement of seven and eight-string guitars. But it's only a matter of time before the market *en masse* turns its attentions to the superlative work of the UK bespoke luthier. It's all about the wood for Jaden Rose. You could picture Rose wandering like Ray Mears through a remote forest, stripping bark and sniffing the wood underneath as he sources the raw materials.

Here he has plumped for sapele for the body, chosen for its bright character. But it sure weighs a ton. With a rock maple and sapele laminated mahogany neck bolted onto the body, the Tachyon 6 is a real lump. It feels weird, with an open-grain finish more reminiscent of a rather lovely chest of drawers than a guitar, giving the body a sort of naked look. But then it's got to be all about the tone, right?

With an all-DiMarzio pairing of a ToneZone humbucker in the bridge and Air Norton in the neck, there's no way the Tachyon could sound anything other than jaw-dropping. If the open-grain finish fails to woo your eyes it should win over your ears with little trouble; the Tachyon is warm, human and hugely compelling. Against the NT-II, it's a tie when it comes to tone, though the Tachyon 6 has a livelier high-end. You can order a Tachyon

with Crunch Lab/LiquiFire or DiMarzio Dominion Mark Morton signature humbuckers, but the ToneZone/Air Norton combo would take some beating, and it's perfect for funk, jazz and blues as well as raw-meat metal riffing and searing hot lead guitar. Other super-smart features include a jack socket that points upwards, keeping the health of your cables in mind as you tuck it inside your strap, and the choice of Hipshot locking tuners affords the Tachyon great tuning stability.

The neck profile is flatter than the NT-II, and some players might find it faster than the NT-II's, certainly for sweeping, but there's not much in it. And this is the exciting thing: here we have two contrasting approaches to the fixed-bridge format, yet both exude such quality. Jaden Rose will probably never deviate from open-grain finishes, but we'd love to try a Tachyon with a set neck or neck-through construction and run it hard against the NT-II.

That the Tachyon 6 is available immediately as a seven-string is a sign that Jayden Rose's core demographic is still the seven and eight-string players, but even in a crowded market against a seasoned pro in the NT-II, the Tachyon is a genuine contender.

AT A GLANCE
BODY: Sapele
NECK: Maple and sapele bolted
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with dot inlays
FRETS: 24
SCALE: 25 1/2"
PICKUPS: DiMarzio ToneZone (bridge), DiMarzio Air Norton (neck)
CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x tone, 1x 3-way pickup selector
HARDWARE: Black, Hipshot tuners and bridge
LEFT-HANDED: Yes
FINISH: Cherry Red (pictured), Sky Blue
CONTACT: 01223 521707
www.jadenroseguitars.com

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



The Brit newcomer fights the good fight here



ESP HORIZON

NT-II £1,540

Just back from finishing school, this modern classic has never looked so suave

THE ESP Horizon series has proved an enduring victory for guitar design. Introduced in 1986, it has aged well. That dagger-shaped headstock casts an instantly recognisable silhouette, with a level of threat, too. Yet the NT-II is clearly reaching for the gentrified shredder and wears its quilted maple livery and antique Dark Brown Sunburst well – an ebony fretboard with a minimum of pearloid fills out an enigmatic guitar that reeks of class.

Up against a newcomer in the Tachyon 6 with its open-grain finish, the NT-II and its quilted maple top must feel like Roger Federer whenever he steps on court looking like landed gentry facing up to some jock in ill-fitting shorts.

Spec-wise, it's a closer contest. The NT-II comes well-equipped with a Seymour Duncan SH-4 (Jeff Beck model) in the bridge, and SH-1 ('59) in the neck. It's a classic pairing. The punch, attitude and expressive high-end of the SH-4 makes it one of the finest

high-output passive humbuckers in the business. Even in high-gain scenarios, the SH-4 won't go all shrill on you; it articulates your rhythm and lead work perfectly, complementing rather than compromising your playing. The SH-1, as you'd expect, is channelling a vintage PAF tone. When selected, it provides log-fire levels of warmth with just the right amount of break-up,

and is perfect for smooth, creamy overdrive. And where the SH-4 has the bite, an abundance of presence even in clean tones, the SH-1 is that bit more civilised. Part of the *raison d'être* of the shred doublecut is versatility, and in the warm, spongy tones of the SH-1, the NT-II has an expressive range of cleans, aided and abetted with the coil-split for some singlecoil subtlety.

Five minutes with the NT-II is long enough to recognise the appeal that it has with metal guitarists who want a guitar that has all the dynamics to handle clean, chimey arpeggios and ill-tempered, overdriven riffs alike. The U-contoured neck, with a neck-through construction for added stability and tone, is slim without being so emaciated that your hand cramps after thirty minutes. The high-gloss finish does have a tendency to gum up with sweaty hands; it's a minor gripe, but nonetheless, it's not one that affects the Tachyon 6 with its satin-smooth finish.

But, c'mon, with its unbeatable pickup pairing (plus a coil-split), its immaculate finish and great neck profile, the NT-II has got to be the closest the Superstrat has got to evolutionary perfection.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany with quilted maple top

NECK: Maple, neck-through

FINGERBOARD: Ebony

FRETS: 24

SCALE: 25 1/2"

PICKUPS: Seymour Duncan

SH-4 (bridge), Seymour

Duncan SH-1 (neck)

CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x

tone, 1x 3-way pickup selector,

coil split on volume control

HARDWARE: Black nickel,

Gotoh tuners

LEFT-HANDED: Yes

FINISH: Dark Brown Sunburst

(pictured), Black Aqua, See

Thru Black Cherry, Reindeer

Blue, See Thru Black

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Some may find the headstock a bit crowded

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

★★★★★