

VS

Words: Ed Mitchell

**LTD MH-417 VS
SCHECTER HELLRAISER C-7**

As this issue's cover stars will testify, sometimes six strings just aren't enough. Welcome to seven heaven...



ACCORDING to Wikipedia, a seven-string guitar is 'a guitar with seven strings instead of the usual six'. We should probably elaborate on that particular nugget of wisdom. Seven-string guitars have been around for years. Jazz guitarist George Van Eps pioneered the seven-string electric, even then with a low A, in the 50s and 60s. Steve Vai got in on the act in the 90s with his seven-string Ibanez Universe with its fattest string tuned to low B. Of course, the seven-string electric hit big-time with the explosion of nu metal in the Noughties. Innovative guys like James 'Munky' Shaffer and Brian 'Head' Welch from Korn were soon followed by a procession of dudes

with straggly beards jumping around in cargo pants. Pants being the operative word...

As our Head To Head contestants prove, the seven-string guitar has survived all that knocking about with a bad crowd. This month's cover stars, John Petrucci and Periphery's Misha Mansoor, have helped the seven-string guitar grow. It's not just about pulling off discordant riffs for some twonk to rap over. These days a seven-string is all about extending the range of the instrument with fresh chord voicings and innovative lead ideas. The ESP LTD MH-417 (£829) and Schecter Hellraiser C-7 (£799) in this Head To Head feature low Bs, active EMGS and playability that any six-string player can get to grips with.

>>>

LTD

MH-417

£829

Holy extra string tuned to a low B... Batman! This dark knight gets ready for battle

BUILT in Indonesia, the LTD MH-417 is everything a modern guitar should be. It plays like a dream, comes with some serious firepower in the pickup department, and that black satin finish is the absolute balls. It's like something Lucius Fox put together for Bruce Wayne (if Batman played guitar). The MH-417 is produced by the budget division of ESP Corporation, the people responsible for the favourite instruments of

Metallica's James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett and Deftones' seven-string aficionado Stephen Carpenter. Like the Schecter Hellraiser C-7, the MH-417 has a mahogany body with deep cutaways and some ribcage contouring on the back. While the former guitar has a set-neck, the LTD employs a thru-body construction. This means the neck forms the centre of the body with a 'wing' glued to either side of it to complete the guitar's profile.

Both guitars feature through-body stringing and good quality hardware, although the latter has locking machineheads in place of the LTD's non-locking Grovers.

The active EMG pickups here include an 81-7 in the bridge position and a 707 at the neck. It's not just a clever name; the 81-7 is a seven-string version of the classic high output EMG 81 pickup. Like its slimmer ancestor, the 81-7 is a cracking choice for high-gain lead and rhythm work. It swaggers with formidable power and a razor-sharp response that cuts through

any mix. Chugging away moodily on the bottom strings is a blast. It's not quite as taut as the Schecter's fattest wire, but the low B unloads some roaring false harmonics when you hit it just right.

Moving along, the neck position 707 is designed to eliminate the muddy response that plagues many humbuckers, especially those pimped to fit on seven-strings. The 707 achieves its objective brilliantly with a warm rounded tone that sounds best on

lower gain settings in our experience. The playability offered by the LTD is on a par with the Schecter and both guitars pump out a similar level of sustain. You might think adjusting to the wider fingerboard of a seven-string would be a bit of a pest. Not so. The MH-417 and its rival are easy to adjust to with a slim neck profile making the transition even easier.

The LTD MH-417 is a brilliantly designed and executed instrument, worth every digit of its price tag. It proves that an active humbucker-loaded seven-string doesn't have to be pigeon-holed as some brutal metal machine. OK, it's not quite as versatile as its rival but trust us, there are some great clean and filthy tones lurking in this guitar. The fact that it looks so damn cool makes the MH-417 almost unbeatable. Yep, almost...

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Mahogany, thru-body
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, with mini-block inlays
FRETS: 24 extra jumbo
SCALE: 25 1/2"
PICKUPS: EMG 81-7 humbucker (bridge), EMG 707 humbucker (neck)
CONTROLS: Master volume, master tone, three-way pickup selector toggle switch
HARDWARE: Black nickel
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Black Satin (shown)
CONTACT: Selectron UK
01795 419460
www.espguitars.co.uk

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



There's nothing limited about this guitar's raw power...

SCHECTER HELLRAISER C-7 £799

Schecter goes to greater lengths for tighter low B performance

AT first glance, the spec sheet of the South Korean-built Hellraiser C-7 is so similar to that of the LTD MH-417 it's like the designers were copying each other's homework. Both guitars are flawlessly built around a sculpted mahogany body and slim C-profile neck, feature rosewood 'boards and 24 fat frets, and come loaded with a pair of active EMG humbuckers. OK, the MH-417's neck has a little less depth around the first couple of frets but there's not that much in it. According to our trusty measuring tape, the fingerboard width on the MH-417 and Hellraiser C-7 is identical.

Before you resort to flipping a coin, or plump for one of these beasts based purely on how cool it looks, there are a couple of things on the Schecter that might influence your decision. To kick off, the C-7 comes spec'd with a pair of EMG 707TW humbuckers. These are the coil-splittable version of the 707 unit found in the neck position of the LTD MH-417. The coil-split is activated from a push/pull on each of the volume controls. Now, you might think that singlecoil options are a bit pointless on a fire-breathing seven-string guitar. You'd be wrong. Tonal versatility is never pointless and the C-7 reinforces that opinion with a selection of warm yet punchy humbucking and singlecoil sounds. EMG pickups are not generally celebrated for their clean tone

but the singlecoil mode on both 707 pickups works great for jazzy runs and chords and blues licks on mild overdrive settings.

The C-7 also has an extra inch on the scale length of its rival. The Hellraiser's extended 26½-inch scale adds a useful touch of extra tension to the low B string for increased definition, even when the distortion is piled on – and the other strings feel unaffected by the added tension. There's just a bit more twang in the tone and that's important if you want your bottom string riffs to stand out live or in a mix.

This is the closest run Head To Head we've ever done. Now that the dust has settled, the Hellraiser C-7 emerges as the victor in this battle. While the LTD is a killer piece of kit, and we can't get enough of its stealth bomber aesthetic and brutal bridge humbucker, the Hellraiser's wider tonal range and extended scale length make it a more potent package for us. The lower price tag doesn't hurt either. We reckon you'll use the guitar's singlecoil options more than you expect. You'll definitely appreciate the tighter

response in the low B string. It certainly helped the Hellraiser C-7 inch ahead in this Head To Head.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Three-piece

mahogany, set-in

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood,

with gothic cross inlays

FRETS: 24 extra jumbo

SCALE: 26½"

PICKUPS: 2x EMG 707TW

humbuckers

CONTROLS: 2x volume with

push/pull coil-split, master

tone, three-way pickup

selector blade switch

HARDWARE: Black chrome

LEFT-HANDED: Black Cherry

only (£889)

FINISH: Gloss white (shown),

Gloss Black, Black Cherry

(features maple top)

CONTACT: Westside

Distribution 0141 248 4182

www.schecterguitars.com

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

...but the Schecter scrapes it by an inch (and a half)