

# Rocked & Rated



Fender J5  
Triple Tele  
Deluxe

Spear Tomcat  
Golden Tiger

Group Test

## Mid-priced rockers around £500

Is Fender's new John 5 Triple Deluxe Tele the best mid-priced rocker on the market right now? Meet three other axes that beg to differ...

WORDS **ED MITCHELL**



Dean  
Razorback DB



Washburn  
W1200 PRO-E



Flip the page to  
find out which  
one won our  
Group Test  
head-to-head

**H**ave you seen what 500 quid can buy you in a guitar shop or online these days? The world is your oyster – especially if you’ve got a few hundred clams in your pocket.

When we got our hands on the new Fender J5 ‘John 5’ Triple Tele Deluxe recently we took the opportunity to see what the competition had to offer. OK, Mr 5’s guitar retails at £699, but as usual a bit of squirrelling around on the internet uncovered some good deals. We actually found a Triple Tele Deluxe selling at £569. You might find an even better deal by the time you read this Group Test.

The quality of top of the range guitars hasn’t changed all that much over the years. You should get what you pay for so you have a right to expect the best when you’re paying top dollar for a guitar. The real growth in quality has happened in beginner and mid-priced guitars.

The sheer number of brands has created a competitive atmosphere where manufacturers are producing better quality guitars with pro-quality hardware and pickups in an effort to get you to part with your money. These days it’s not unusual to find a £400 Chinese-made guitar that kicks ass as hard as an axe priced at a grand. That’s great news if you’re on a tight budget but can’t bear to compromise on tone and playability.

#### Meet the contenders

For this Group Test we pitted the Fender J5 Triple Tele Deluxe against three guitars that we reckon represent the best value for money for around £500. First, there’s the

Dean Razorback DB, which is an affordable version of... you guessed it, Dimebag Darrell’s mega-selling Razorback model. We’ve also bagged Washburn’s recently launched W1200 PRO-E, basically an Idol model packing a pair of active EMG humbuckers. Rounding out this collection of six-stringed gladiators is the brilliantly-named Tomcat Golden Tiger from new boys on the block Spear Guitars.

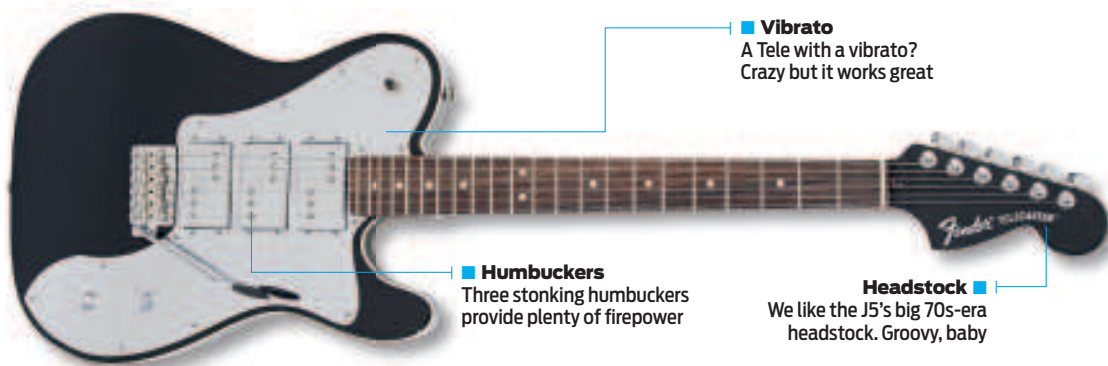
This is a battle between four very different guitars. The only things these axes have in common are wood, humbuckers and a desire to be number one on your shopping list. Which one will bag TG’s Group Test prize? Let’s get it on and find out...

**“IT’S NOT UNUSUAL TO FIND A £400 CHINESE-MADE GUITAR THAT KICKS ASS AS HARD AS AN AXE THAT’S A GRAND”**



## Fender J5 Triple Tele £699

John 5's latest blingcaster



**Vibrato**  
A Tele with a vibrato?  
Crazy but it works great

**Humbuckers**  
Three stonking humbuckers  
provide plenty of firepower

**Headstock**  
We like the J5's big 70s-era  
headstock. Groovy, baby

### At a glance

#### Fender J5 Triple Tele Deluxe

**BODY:** Alder  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**SCALE:** 25.5"  
**PICKUPS:** 3x Enforcer 'Wide Range' humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** Master volume, master tone and three-way pickup selector switch  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome vibrato, Schaller locking machineheads  
**FINISH:** Black only  
**CONTACT:** Fender GBI 01342 331700  
**WEB:** www.fender.co.uk

**T**he Telecaster is almost 60 years old. When you're that age 'the yoof' will just think you're an old fool while the Tele is still cutting it with the kids thanks to cutting-edge signature models from the likes of Jim Root of Slipknot and John 5. Speaking of which...

**The sizzle:** The J5 Triple Tele Deluxe is based on a 70s Telecaster Deluxe, a Tele/Strat hybrid that some cruel folk nicknamed the 'Uglycaster'. But



Johnny 5's axe looks pretty tasty thanks to a load of pimped-out chrome and sexy black paint.

**We say:** This guitar is almost brilliant. We love the comfortable 60s-style C-shape neck profile,

the three powerful Enforcer humbuckers, the 22 fat frets and the rock-solid tuning stability provided by the locking machineheads. And a padded gigbag is included in the price.

All gravy but there are a couple of potential deal breakers. For a start, the J5 is a real heavyweight. Everyone in the TG office that picked the guitar up exclaimed, 'Jeez, that's bloody heavy!' We wouldn't fancy strapping this guitar on for a whole gig. We also kept whacking our pick off that

middle humbucker, a common problem with triple 'bucker guitars. It's not a serious downer, just annoying.

If these niggles haven't put you off the J5 Tele make sure you shop around: we've seen this guitar online for as little as £569. Great guitar but not quite a five out of five, er, Mr 5...

### SUMMARY

**For:** Killer looks, superb neck

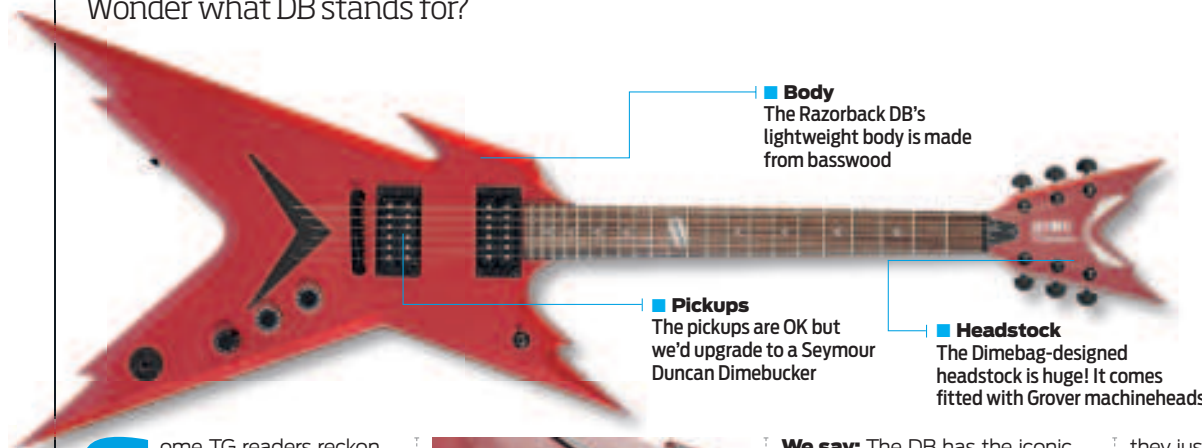
**Against:** Heavy! Obtrusive 'bucker

☆☆☆☆☆

**TG says:** A heavyweight contender!

## Dean Razorback DB £495

Wonder what DB stands for?



**Body**  
The Razorback DB's  
lightweight body is made  
from basswood

**Pickups**  
The pickups are OK but  
we'd upgrade to a Seymour  
Duncan Dimebucker

**Headstock**  
The Dimebag-designed  
headstock is huge! It comes  
fitted with Grover machineheads

### At a glance

#### Dean Razorback DB

**BODY:** Basswood  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**SCALE:** 24.75"  
**PICKUPS:** 2x Dean humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** 2x volume, master tone and three-way pickup selector switch  
**HARDWARE:** Grover machineheads, tune-o-matic bridge  
**FINISH:** Metallic red (shown), metallic white and classic black  
**CONTACT:** Bill Lewington  
**WEB:** www.deanguitars.com

**S**ome TG readers reckon we should stop going on about Dimebag Darrell because he's dead an' that. Sorry, ain't gonna happen. Dime designed the Dean Razorback, one of the most brilliant metal guitars of all time, so get over it!

**The sizzle:** We wish we could afford a US-made Razorback, but we're talking two grand plus. Even the Chinese made Razorback with its set-neck,



Floyd Rose vibrato and Seymour Duncan Dimebucker humbucker will rid you of £995. Hmm, what we need is a Razorback that looks the part but only costs 500 quid. Funny we should say that...

**We say:** The DB has the iconic spiky body and huge Dimebag-designed headstock. It's only when you look closer that you see why this guitar is so keenly priced: instead of the mahogany body you get basswood; the neck is a bolt-on; you get a fixed bridge in place of the Floyd Rose locking vibrato; and there's no Seymour Duncan Dimebucker in the bridge position.

In use, it's Dime's signature pickup we miss most. The DB's humbuckers are poky enough but

they just don't have the balls we expect from one of Dime's metal machines. Here's an idea: we've spotted the Razorback DB online at £314. Get a Seymour Duncan Dimebucker (approx £80), have it fitted and you'll have a killer metal guitar that plays great at a bargain price.

### SUMMARY

**For:** Lethal looks, the neck profile

**Against:** We miss the Dime pickup

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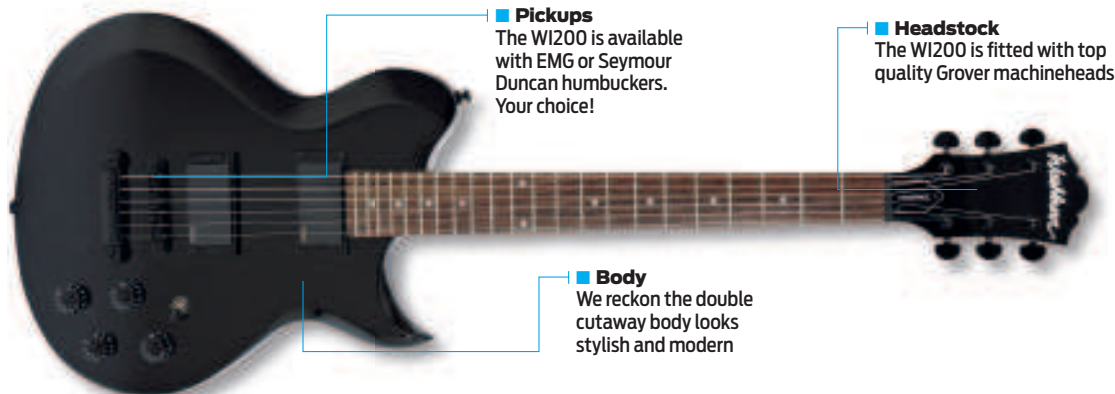
**TG says:** A modern metal icon

**"THE TOMCAT GOLDEN TIGER OFFERS MORE PLAYABILITY THAN YOU'D EXPECT FOR £429"**

MID-PRICED ROCKERS **★ GROUP TEST**

## Washburn W1200 PRO-E £499

Is it the Rock Idol?



**Pickups**

The W1200 is available with EMG or Seymour Duncan humbuckers. Your choice!

**Headstock**

The W1200 is fitted with top quality Grover machineheads

**Body**

We reckon the double cutaway body looks stylish and modern

**At a glance**

**Washburn W1200 PRO-E**

**BODY:** Agathis  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**SCALE:** 24.75"  
**PICKUPS:** EMG85 (neck) and EMG81 (bridge) active humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** 2x volume, 2x tone and three-way pickup selector switch  
**HARDWARE:** Grover machineheads, tune-o-matic bridge, stop tailpiece, Buzz Feiten tuning system  
**FINISH:** Black only  
**CONTACT:** Sound Technology 01462 480000  
**WEB:** www.washburn.com

According to Washburn, its 200 PRO Series was 'designed around the single premise to create a truly professional series of guitars offering the best value for money in today's electric guitar market'. Hey, we'll be the judge of that, Washburn dudes.

**The sizzle:** The 200 PRO Series Idol model is available fitted with Seymour Duncan '59 and Custom Custom humbuckers (neck and bridge respectively) at £379 or EMG85 (neck)



and EMG81 (bridge) active humbuckers at £449. The one we've got has the EMG pickups.

**We say:** The Idol's double-cutaway thin body and twin humbucker line-up give it the

feel of a modern take on a Gibson SG. There are a load of Idol models available including the aged W164 Vintage guitar (£449), but our W1200 is designed to offer the maximum firepower for the least amount of money. That's why it features a bolt-on neck and Agathis body, instead of the set neck and mahogany body of some of the other Idol models.

It's main selling point is the EMG pickups. EMGs cost £90 each, so the £449 retail price of the W1200 PRO-E starts to look

like a steal. Well, we've been digging and found this guitar selling online at £359, so it's got to be the cheapest EMG-equipped guitar out there. Call us greedy but a set neck would've sweetened the deal. Still, we can't complain. The W1200 PRO-E didn't win this Group Test, but it came pretty damn close.

**SUMMARY**

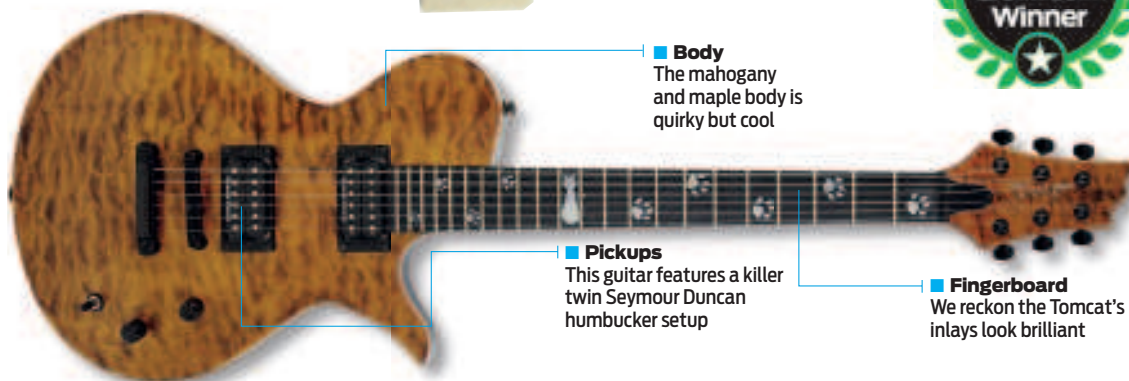
**For:** Looks cool, great pickups  
**Against:** We'd prefer a set neck

★★★★★

**TG says:** A 21st Century SG...

## Spear Tomcat Golden Tiger

Pants or the cat's pyjamas? £429



**Body**

The mahogany and maple body is quirky but cool

**Pickups**

This guitar features a killer twin Seymour Duncan humbucker setup

**Fingerboard**

We reckon the Tomcat's inlays look brilliant

**At a glance**

**Spear Tomcat Golden Tiger**

**BODY:** Mahogany, maple  
**NECK:** Maple, glued-in  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**SCALE:** 24.75"  
**PICKUPS:** Seymour Duncan SH-4 Jeff Beck (bridge) and SH-2 Jazz (neck)  
**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, pickup selector switch  
**HARDWARE:** Sperzel locking machineheads  
**FINISH:** Amber, Translucent Blue, Tobacco Sunburst  
**CONTACT:** Black i Distribution 01236 861261  
**WEB:** www.blackie.eu

Spear is a relative newcomer to the guitar scene in the UK, and it deals in high-spec, quality guitars that sell at affordable prices. We were impressed when we reviewed Spear's Gladius SP recently, so let's see how the new Tomcat Golden Tiger stacks up.

**The sizzle:** The Tomcat Golden Tiger looks like the bastard child of a Gibson Les Paul and a Fernandes Ravelle. Specification is high with a mahogany body,



maple top and a striking flame maple veneer. You also get a pair of Seymour Duncan humbuckers. So we know it's got all the right bits, but is this tiger a roaring success? Sorry...

**We say:** Yep, this is a killer guitar. The chunky neck and 22 fat, well-finished frets make the Golden Tiger feel like a guitar at twice the price. String bending above the 12th fret is a joy and tuning stability is rock solid.

We can't fault the pickup selection either; there's a rocking Seymour Duncan Jeff Beck at the bridge and a Jazz in the neck position. We even like the slightly bonkers pussy footing fingerboard inlays including the cat-shaped inlay at the 12th fret,

although we would agree that they're an acquired taste.

The Tomcat Golden Tiger won this Group Test because it offers more playability and features than we'd ever expect for £429. This tiger took on some fearsome competition and emerged as the pick of the litter.

**SUMMARY**

**For:** Value for money, killer spec  
**Against:** Feline inlays not for you?

★★★★★

**TG says:** Top cat!