

# Rocked & Rated



Schecter Omen  
Extreme



BC Rich  
Eagle One



Group Test

## Budget 24-Fret Electric Guitars

Getting 'fret-bored' with the limitations of your electric? TG solos the arse off a selection of **double-octave, dirt-cheap workhorses** to get you up to that top E note

WORDS **HENRY YATES**



Jackson  
JS22R Dinky

Kramer Striker  
211 Custom

**D**ropping a pick. Breaking a string. Being wrestled to the ground by an escaped lunatic with your face tattooed on his kneecaps. All are horrible live experiences that will haunt you for years. But nothing matches the hot-faced, prickly palmed, impotent shame of snaking up the neck in the Dorian mode, only to discover you can't hit the climactic, dog-bothering top 'E' because you're playing a '54 reissue Strat with a miserly 21 frets. You curse, retreat to the first position, and bumble on, but like the phone ringing mid-coitus, it's never quite the same afterwards.

These days, most 'classic' models (that's your Strats, Teles, Les Pauls and their derivatives) have 22 frets. Would another two really make a difference to your playing? Potentially, yes: with more

frets comes more notes, more flavours and greater options, especially for solos. No wonder double-octave axes are such a popular fixture in the modern market, especially among technical players.

For this Group Test, we wanted more frets for less cash, so we've chased down four models that qualify. Kicking off with the technician's Kramer's Striker (£269), we've also lined up the BC Rich Eagle One (£199), the cheapest in this test, the not-just-for-shred Schecter Omen Extreme (£299), and Jackson's new JS22R model (£239). ■

**"24 FRET MEANS  
12 EXTRA NOTES  
OVER SIX STRINGS"**



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



## Kramer Striker 211 Custom £269

Back of the net?



### Body

This doublecut shape might not be original, but it gives cracking fret access

### Neck

The Striker's maple neck is dead flat, making it a great platform for speed

### Pickups

There are lots of options but the Striker doesn't have the sonic character of some

### At a glance

#### Kramer Striker 211 Custom

**BODY:** Solid mahogany  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Maple  
**FRETS:** 24  
**SCALE:** 25½"  
**PICKUPS:** HSS configuration  
**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector  
**HARDWARE:** Black nickel  
**FINISH:** Trans Black [pictured], Fireburst, Purple  
**LEFT-HANDED:** No  
**CONTACT:** Gibson UK 00800 444 27661  
**WEB:** www.kramerguitars.com

Despite being rebranded for the new millennium, we suspect shred legend Kramer is still happiest knocking out 80s widdlesticks, and likely needed all its willpower not to scallop the Striker's 24 frets. Boringly, it's built on a derivative doublecut shape, but with a mix 'n' match pickup configuration and floating vibrato it's well up for the fight.

Minor finish issues (untidy frets, wires visible in the pickup cavities, stiff micro-tuners) are swept aside by a strong physical



performance, with a flat neck, low action, light strings and the test's best access confirming that, yes, the Striker is aimed directly at technicians. Indeed, you'll play so fast that it will take a moment to realise that

tonal character is a little thin on the ground. Five options are on the table, but the general impression is of competence, rather than brilliance, with the bridge humbucker crunching away without scaring the horses and the twin singlecoils bringing admirable bite but negligible body. It's better dirty, though.

**Conclusion:** For £269, the Striker is solid, not spine-tingling. Its physical prowess is the best thing about it, and while it has better own-brand pickups than

many entry-level electrics, they don't harness the warmth and darkness of the mahogany body, making for an axe that's great for fast single-note runs but stalls a little when you want to play with soul. Still, the more distortion you throw at it, the better it sounds, so maybe sink the cash you've saved into a stompbox?

### SUMMARY

**For:** Price, fast board, pickup options  
**Against:** Bit of a flat tone



**TG says:** Striker hits the post

## BC Rich Eagle One £199

Hell for feather



### Body

Granted, the body is a bit of a letdown from the planet's scariest luthier

### Neck

The Eagle's 24<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch scale gives it a 'looser' feel than the others

### Pickups

There's plenty of beefy crunch here, but bridge clarity isn't quite as searing

### At a glance

#### BC Rich Eagle One

**BODY:** Solid mahogany  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood with dot inlays  
**FRETS:** 24  
**SCALE:** 24<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
**PICKUPS:** 2x BDSM humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** 2x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector  
**HARDWARE:** Die-cast  
**FINISH:** Onyx [pictured]  
**LEFT-HANDED:** No  
**CONTACT:** Rosetti 01376 550033  
**WEB:** www.bcrich.com

The only shape on BC Rich's books that you could play in front of your gran, the Eagle is available in three luxurious formats... and this budget-friendly one. BC Rich hasn't got much to say about the Eagle's no-frills slab body, maple bolt-neck and BDSM humbuckers, but it might have mentioned the quirky 24<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch scale length.

Sure, it's conservative, but you'll find the Eagle shape more practical than, say, the Beast,



with good weight distribution, substantial meat to the neck and only occasional reminders of its price with some pitch slippage. Physically, it feels fresher than the average 25½-inch scale

double-octave electric, a bit looser, more expressive and less overtly aimed at shred. That's echoed by the BDSM humbuckers that deliver swaggering tonal weight for more 'classic' styles. Our only criticism is that the bridge isn't searing enough to placate our inner virtuoso.

**Conclusion:** At £199 (or £8 per fret) this Eagle is knockout value. Throw in the kudos of the brand and the gig-ready performance,

and it's almost a no-brainer for starter guitarists. But while the tone and feel are exceptional for the price point, they're mediocre on a grander scale, and if you're a lifer, you'll inevitably outgrow this model. The Eagle has landed – just not with quite the same thump as its pricier siblings.

### SUMMARY

**For:** Solid performance, killer price  
**Against:** Not an axe for life



**TG says:** Squawk 'n' roll!

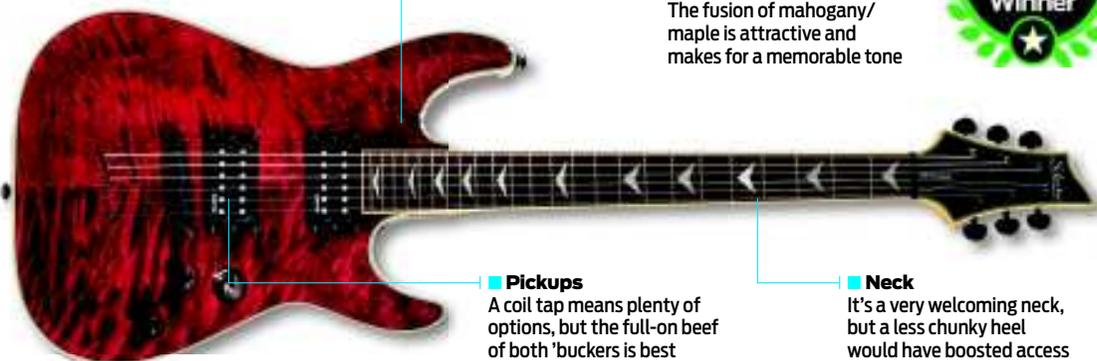
**"THE OMEN EXTREME COMBINES ITS CULTURED COSMETICS WITH A GREAT RHYTHM/LEAD TONE"**

# Schecter Omen Extreme

£299



Red devil



**Body**  
The fusion of mahogany/maple is attractive and makes for a memorable tone

**Pickups**  
A coil tap means plenty of options, but the full-on beef of both 'buckers is best

**Neck**  
It's a very welcoming neck, but a less chunky heel would have boosted access

## At a glance

### Schecter Omen Extreme

**BODY:** Mahogany  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 24  
**SCALE:** 25½"  
**PICKUPS:** 2x humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup switch  
**HARDWARE:** Black chrome  
**FINISH:** Black Cherry [pictured], See-Thru Black, Trans Ocean Blue  
**LEFT-HANDED:** Yes  
**CONTACT:** Westside 01412 484812  
**WEB:** www.schecterguitars.com

The sub-£300 market is populated by floorboards with strings, making the Omen Extreme seem positively exotic. Contoured mahogany body, quilt maple top, recessed controls, coil tap wizardry, stylish binding, arrow fret inlays, chianti-inspired paint job, revolting yellow neck stain... Schecter is clearly trying to stir our loins and bust open our wallets – and it's working.

The Omen shape is old news, but we're still fans. Like a go-faster Strat, it balances



well, feels chunky without swamping you and gives decent command of an easy-playing, jumbo-fretted board (although a less blocky heel would improve access). We're not gonna make overblown Les Paul comparisons,

but the fusion of maple, mahogany and humbuckers gives this axe a full, ringing, memorable voice that's easily the best in the test for clean open chords, and breaks nicely into classic, frayed overdrive when you push it. The coil tap, meanwhile, brings in useful snap for special occasions, but you'd be mad to demasculate those mighty humbuckers for long.

**Conclusion:** There's an unspoken theory that 24-fret models are the reserve of the

shred brigade, but it's blown apart by this Schecter, which combines its cultured cosmetics with a feel that's equally great for rhythm/lead, and a diverse voice that means anybody can give it a thrash. It may feel expensive here, but £299 is small change for an axe that even veterans will keep as a live or spare guitar.

## SUMMARY

**For:** Classy looks, feel, flexible tone

**Against:** Almost mid-price bracket

★★★★★

**TG says:** It's a good Omen

# Jackson JS22R Dinky

£239

Cheap thrills



**Body**  
The Dinky body has been seen before, but it's perfect for high-speed play

**Pickups**  
These Jackson humbuckers are loud, punchy and won't let you down

**Identity**  
Trimblings like the shark fin inlays ensure it's still recognisable as a Jackson

## At a glance

### Jackson JS22R Dinky

**BODY:** Basswood  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 24  
**SCALE:** 25½"  
**PICKUPS:** 2x humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome  
**FINISH:** Black [pictured], Inferno Red, Snow White [£249]  
**LEFT-HANDED:** No  
**CONTACT:** Fender GBI 01342 331700  
**WEB:** www.jacksonguitars.com

Ladies and gentlemen, we've hit rock bottom. In Jackson's entire product line, you will not find a cheaper 24-fret electric than the JS22R Dinky: a new model that squeezes profit margins until they weep for mercy with a spec built on high-output humbuckers, basswood body, bolt-on maple neck and fulcrum bridge.

After the relative luxury of the Schecter, this model feels a little stripped, but it's still a Jackson through and through. It's cool



to see the shark fin inlays, and the physical feel should please Soloist fans too, with a dead-fast neck that isn't miles off the more expensive models, a compound radius fretboard that excels at

lead over rhythm, and a good vibrato in a test dominated by hardtails. With basswood in place of its rivals' mahogany, the clean tone is inevitably a little flat, but we're impressed by the punchy performance on the gain channel where the output is loud, lean and hard: perfect for gigs, pushing it in the studio.

**Conclusion:** The JS22R is a great addition to the Jackson range and perfect for players who are tight on cash. While

it's true that this £239 model doesn't sound like a top-drawer Jackson, the difference is not the yawning gulf you might imagine, thanks to a tone that's punchy and plenty good enough until the gigs start getting really big. For the Dinky price, the JS22R gives a king-sized performance.

## SUMMARY

**For:** Classic Jackson vibe, great value

**Against:** A bit unnatural for rhythm

★★★★☆

**TG says:** Unmistakably a Jackson