



# EPIPHONE LES PAUL £729 TRIBUTE 'PRIZM' PLUS

Bright colours and brighter ideas offer a classic guitar a fresh twist

**T**here's plenty that is audacious about the Epiphone Les Paul Tribute 'Prizm' Plus outfit. And we're not just talking about a multicolour finish that would be more commonly sighted flying above the treeline in the Amazon, nor the SEO-friendly, convoluted name it goes by (we'll call it the Tribute Plus for brevity). No, it's in the fashion that Epiphone has equipped this Chinese-built electric with pro-quality parts to create a premium guitar that might just make you think twice before plumping for one of Gibson's more affordable US models.

## “THERE'S NO MISTAKING THE LES PAUL DNA IN THE TRIBUTE'S VOICE”

Epiphone has form in such manoeuvres. Its premium Les Pauls have always been super-playable and affordable, with a tone invoking its parent brand, Gibson. The Tribute Plus is no different. Take the pickups. Here we have a Gibson USA '57 Classic humbucker in the neck, with the ever-so-slightly hotter '57 Classic Plus in the bridge. As the name suggests, these are vintage voiced replicas of the PAF-style humbuckers that were first designed by Seth Lover in the 1950s. You would expect to see them in a Gibson USA model, perhaps an SG '61 Reissue, and yet here they are, seated in a generous slab of mahogany capped with flame maple.

This would be enough to be getting on with but Epiphone takes it further, augmenting the

traditional Les Paul configuration of two volume/two tone controls with the latter offering a push-pull choice between wiring the pickups in series and parallel. The default series wiring offers what we might expect; sure, there's plenty, plenty of presence and bite, but that's balanced and rounded out by the Tribute Plus's ample frame, which keeps the tone warm and thick. In parallel, this tone opens up. There's more brightness, a little more elasticity and pop, some more juice in the upper registers, giving it a slightly different voice while retaining its humbucking properties. This feels much more of a piece with the

Tribute Plus's tone than having, say, a splitter to render the humbucker as a single coil; it adds options without wholly changing the character of the guitar.

There's no mistaking the Les Paul DNA in the Tribute Plus's voice. With the pickups in default series wiring, there's still so much play that can be had by adjusting the tone and volume controls. Without going full-on ice pick, the bridge pickup's treble is sharp and definitive, and really comes into its own with your amp on the point of break-up, serving up heaps of snappy blues-rock mojo. Acolytes of Page, Slash, Moore et al will not be disappointed. Perhaps the biggest joy in playing the Tribute Plus is in finding all these new sweet spots for your tone, safe in the knowledge that you've got some genuine Les Paul



**1 MACHINEHEADS** Not only will the Tribute Plus support your string bends with sustain, these locking Grovers will keep you in tune.

**2 ELECTRICS** The Mallory-150 tone capacitors in the Tribute Plus's circuitry might go unnoticed but they are a considerable upgrade and evidence of Epiphone's attention to detail.

**3 FINISH** Rainbow Burst is not for everyone, but if you are more denim jacket than Hawaiian shirt, sober finishes are available!



### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** mahogany w/ flame maple cap

**NECK:** mahogany (set)

**SCALE:** 24.75"

**FINGERBOARD:** Pau Ferro w/MOP trapezoid inlay

**FRETS:** 22

**PICKUPS:** 1x Gibson USA '57 Classic humbucker (neck), 1x Gibson USA '57 Classic Plus humbucker (bridge)

**CONTROLS:** 1x three-way pickup selector, 2x volume, 2x tone w/push-pull parallel-series switching

**HARDWARE:** Nickel, LockTone Tune-o-matic bridge

**LEFT-HANDED:** No

**FINISH:** Rainbow [as reviewed], Faded Cherry Burst, Midnight Ebony, Midnight Sapphire, Vintage Sunburst, Aquamarine, Black Cherry

**CASE:** Hardcase included

**CONTACT:** Gibson  
epiphone.com



## Out of their tree

Introducing pau ferro, the new rosewood alternative on your fretboard

For many brands, rosewood is off the table for now. Import restrictions, price, and sustainability issues mean that manufacturers need alternatives. The Tribute Plus boasts a pau ferro fingerboard, one of the many sustainable alternatives that we'll need to get used to. Pau ferro sounds like a cheap aftershave but it's a tonewood found in Brazil and Bolivia. How does it feel? It is harder than rosewood. But anyone who has played an ebony fingerboard will find the pau ferro's tight grain reassuringly crisp and familiar. What that means tone-wise is that there will be a little more brightness, more snap. With Fender's Mexican models also using pau ferro, it's here to stay – at least for now.

tone on tap. But those who favour a slimmer neck might argue that its playability seals the deal. The Tribute Plus boasts a 60s-style slim D profile that is eminently playable, but not so svelte that the instrument feels imbalanced. Epiphone don't explicitly say that the neck construction uses the favourable long neck tenon as found on the super-premium Gibson Historic series and suchlike, but in describing it as a "deep-set neck joint," it can't be too dissimilar, and only adds to the impression that the Tribute Plus is one seriously solid piece of craft.



The tribute's audacious finish brings to mind Al DiMeola's signature Prism PRS



Why does this matter? That solid construction is where the Les Paul's famous sustain comes from, and you will find the Tribute Plus to be a willing ally for those moments when you bend a note and hold it. The Tribute Plus is definitely a guitar built for such moments. We said it was audacious at the top of the review – and that finish, redolent of or inspired by Al DiMeola's signature PRS is certainly that. More suitable adjectives might include genuine, authentic, fun, surprising, and serious. It might lack the Gibson Custom Shop build, but for an affordable,

mass-produced instrument the Tribute Plus is unimpeachable, with a mighty serious spec that is incredible for the price. Would we recommend spending an extra £500 on a USA-built Gibson? Who can say? That's a tough one. That it's so tough proves Epiphone are right on the money here.

**Jonathan Horsley**

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

## ALSO TRY...

**PRS SE 245 STANDARD** £475

The SE series is a godsend for players on a budget. With its mahogany body and neck, and excellent pickups, it's a sublime single cutaway.



**YAMAHA REVSTAR RS502** £489

The Revstar's rugged modern finish is a little utilitarian but its tone is old-school P-90 cool, and it's a lot of fun to play.



**GUILD BLUESBIRD NEWARK ST** £899

Okay, so it's a little more expensive, but whether in Ice Tea Burst or in black, the Bluesbird is a serious performer.

