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Words Chris Corfield / Photography Phil Barker

# DUAL-HUMBUCKER T-TYPES

Tele-inspired, dual humbucker-equipped solidbodies primed to deliver high-grade rock and blues tones with change to spare



**T**he Fender Telecaster is much loved across the music world. It's a player's guitar, a nod of the head and a doff of the cap to those who know. And yet, as loved as they are, you'd be hard pushed to say they are versatile. Two single-coil pickups, alone or in tandem, simply can't cover as much tonal ground as other contemporary guitars. You'd certainly never choose them for playing heavier styles. Unless you're in Gojira, of course. Yet there is an unmistakable Tele vibe which some crave. So we present to you four variations on the Tele theme.

Each offers a faithful homage to that classic shape, yet all come equipped with dual humbuckers, meaning heavier styles and versatility are well within grasp.

Up today we have the Ibanez FRIX6FDQM, which melds the best of Ibanez's metal-leaning design standards with a striking, familiar offset body. The Chapman ML3 Modern, updated for 2019, brings a touch of individualism to the class. G&L brings its ASAT Deluxe carved top, offering the closest representation of a 'real' Fender. And, keeping guard, the Fender Player Telecaster HH is here to remind everyone who's boss. Let's look at how each fares in the real world.



## IBANEZ FRIX6FDQM

£739

### When worlds collide

**There's not a huge amount of Tele involved here, right?**

That's probably fair to say. Aside from the familiar body shape, Ibanez's FRIX6FDQM bears little resemblance to the T-style guitars you know and love. What you get instead is all the best bits of Ibanez's Iron Label series – thin neck, solid hardware, and grungey finishes – with a body that offers a vague nod towards Fender's classic marque.

**So it's just for metal?**

Aesthetically, it'd be hard to argue with that. Yet there's a surprising



amount of versatility on offer here. The flick-switch under the single volume knob introduces coil-tapping into the equation, so more traditional single-coil tones are available from the sweet DiMarzio Fusion 'buckers. A neat touch.

**That's some finish...**

Yep, Ibanez continues its trend of offering some of the coolest, most original finishes around. It's listed as being Black Mirage Gradation, with a tremendous quilted maple top, but up close there's a vague hint of green involved which brings to mind... zombie flesh?



AT A GLANCE

**KEY FEATURES:** Nyatoh body with Quilted Maple top, Nitro Wizard 3-piece Maple/Purpleheart neck, ebony fretboard, 24 jumbo frets, Gibraltar Standard II bridge, 2 x DiMarzio Fusion Edge pickups, Gotoh MG-T locking machine heads

**FINISH:** Black Mirage Gradation

**CONTACT:** Headstock Distribution  
ibanez.com

## G&L TRIBUTE ASAT DELUXE 'CARVED TOP'

£449

### Have we met before?

**This one looks familiar...**

Of the three non-Fender models we're reviewing here, this one bears the most resemblance to an original Tele. Where you'll find this one differs, however, is in the two humbuckers designed by G&L's Paul Gagon, and in the gorgeous carved top, of course.

**Any corners being cut here, considering the price?**

Well, whereas the more famous ASAT Deluxe version is produced in Fullerton, this Tribute series is produced in Indonesia, so



you can expect there to be certain facets which are not at the same standard.

**Who's it for?**

Clearly the humbuckers point towards this being a badass rock machine and the inclusion of split coils via a push/pull tone pot means there are plenty of perfectly serviceable tones which you can coax from the ASAT. We did find its overdriven sounds fared less well in comparison to the Ibanez and the Chapman, so perhaps it has its limits. Stick to pre-halfway on the gain dial and you'll be fine, though.



AT A GLANCE

**KEY FEATURES:** Mahogany body with Flame Maple top, Maple neck with Brazilian Cherry fingerboard, 2x G&L humbuckers, 22 medium jumbo frets, G&L hardware

**FINISH:** Trans Red (as reviewed), Trans Black

**CONTACT:** Andertons  
glguitars.com

## CHAPMAN ML3 MODERN STANDARD

£449

### Updated rocker from growing range

**Chapman seems to have a horse in every race at the moment...** Absolutely. The UK-based 'collaborative' guitar brand is certainly churning out axes that fit the bill for a lot of different players. And, despite their obvious similarities to more established styles, the company is slowly but surely developing its own character. We're at the stage now where you can recognise the Chapman in any line-up.

#### What's the deal with this one?

This is the updated version of the ML3, featuring improved



tonewoods, rolled fretboard edges, and newly designed pickups. Each of these tweaks, while seemingly minor, contributes to the continuous improvement and development of the Chapman lines. It's all good stuff, and indicative of the attention to detail we're now familiar with.

#### What stands out?

The overall build quality is exceptional. The finish and binding are classy, while the Chapman Sonorous Zero pickups seem slightly more articulate and defined in their attack than the G&L and Fender. The satin neck is a players' dream, too.



#### AT A GLANCE

**KEY FEATURES:** Mahogany body, Maple neck with Ebony fingerboard, 2x Chapman Sonorous Zero humbuckers, 24 medium jumbo frets

**FINISH:** Gloss Incarnadine

**CONTACT:** Chapman Guitars  
chapmanguitars.co.uk

## FENDER PLAYER TELECASTER HH

£599

### Your next workhorse?

#### At last, a proper Tele!

Yes, a proper Tele from the original Telecaster company. It wouldn't be right not to have at least one from the Fender stable. And, true to form, this one has the famous body, curves and heft, and the right name on the headstock. But this Mexican-made model, which replaces the Standard range, also packs in two humbuckers, lending itself to raunchier sounds than you'd expect of a traditional Tele.

#### Business as usual elsewhere?

Yep, from the alder body to the maple neck, this is as much a Fender



Tele as you'd expect. There are slight variations in the shape of the six-saddle bridge and in the aforementioned pickups, but otherwise, this is the same entry-level 'proper' Fender we've known for years.

#### How does it sound?

Much like you'd imagine; the alder/maple (or pau ferro, depending on the finish) combo gives the tone a real brightness, much more so than the others on show. Where the Chapman and G&L could find themselves straying into slightly muddy territory, the Fender retains exceptional note definition.



#### AT A GLANCE

**KEY FEATURES:** Alder body, modern C-shaped maple or pau ferro neck, 2x Player Series humbucking pickups, 22 medium jumbo frets

**FINISH:** Sonic Red (as reviewed), Tidepool, 3-Colour Sunburst

**CONTACT:** Fender EMEA  
fender.com



# HEAD TO HEAD

## A quartet of guitars riffing on the Tele theme

**W**hile, on paper, you'd think four dual humbucker-equipped T-type guitars might share a number of sonic characteristics, in practice we found that to be less clear cut. Instead, these are four guitars with very different applications, which will appeal to many different players. The Ibanez FRIX6FDQM, for example, was by some distance the most playable. The exceptionally lithe Wizard III neck felt flatter and slightly wider than the other guitars, lending itself to faster, more technical playing styles. Couple that with the DiMarzio pickups and you have a guitar which would sit comfortably in the mix of any heavy band. It even coped with our intense bouts of down-tuned riffage during testing, with the low-profile edges of the hardtail bridge ideal for palm-muting and speedy right-hand picking.

At the other end of the scale, the Fender Player Telecaster HH delivered everything we'd

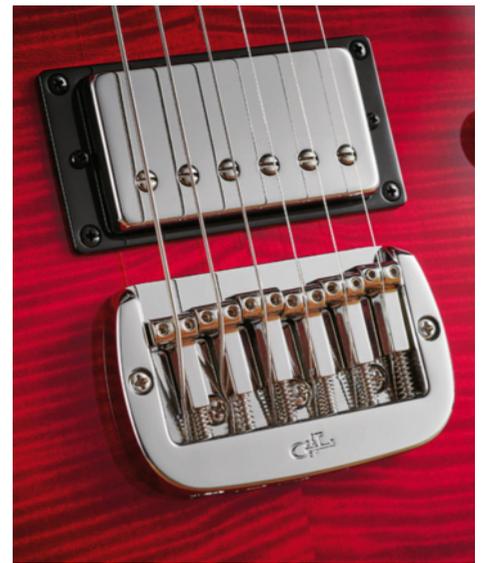
## THE IBANEZ FRIX6FDQM WAS BY SOME DISTANCE THE MOST PLAYABLE

expect from the original Tele kings. Okay, it's not going to venture anywhere near the tones the Ibanez provided, but what it did do was open the doors to far more versatile, high-class tones. Being picky, we could say that despite its humbuckers, it's potentially a little bland, though. It's harder to see where the G&L ASAT Deluxe sits in the overall scheme of things. It's not as versatile as the Ibanez or the Chapman, and it doesn't have the cache of the Fender. It was perfectly fine to play, but it didn't have much in the way of excitement or vibe.

The Chapman, on the other hand, quietly impressed with its thoughtful touches – the way the pickups have been rebooted using guitar-specific magnets, or the new baked tonewoods promising extra zing in your lead tones. None of this is rocket science but you can see it's a guitar which has been designed by passionate guitar people. It gets extra points from us on account of the Incarnadine finish which looks even better in the flesh than in the pictures.



Dual humbuckers aside, the Player has all the classic Fender Tele features you'd expect



The Ibanez has a Nitro Wizard neck made from maple and purpleheart wood

# FINAL VERDICT

Which of our T-types is best for you?

**F**or our money, dual humbucker T-type guitars occupy quite a unique niche. You have to be someone who likes and appreciates the idiosyncrasies of a Tele – weight distribution, tone – yet also wants to push the guitar into ever louder, more assertive tonal pastures. In practice, not all of the guitars in this test managed to pull that feat off.

The Ibanez, while offering superb construction and exceptional higher-gain tones, isn't likely to be the first choice for

anyone outside of the metallic genres purely due to its aesthetics. The Fender, meanwhile, ensures the safe passing from the well-loved Mexican Standard line onto the newer, revamped Player series, yet has it got enough pizzazz to capture the hearts of new fans? The G&L, it pains us to say, was a level below the rest in terms of build quality and tonal spectrum. Anyone who's played the upper-level G&L range knows the quality and craftsmanship on offer there, but we found it lacking in this instance.

Which leaves the Chapman ML3 Modern. Despite not besting the Ibanez for metal tones, or the Fender for cleans, the ML3 earned our respect by being good enough at both to satisfy most players, but added enough 'marginal gain' stuff – build quality, versatility, playability – to give it the edge in this test overall. That's without considering the lower price point, which all points to a great guitar from a company which is truly finding its place in the guitar ecosystem.

**IBANEZ  
FRIX6FDQM**



**TOTAL  
Guitar**  
BEST FOR  
METAL

**G&L TRIBUTE ASAT  
DELUXE 'CARVED TOP'**



**TOTAL  
Guitar**  
BEST FOR  
ROCK

**CHAPMAN ML3  
MODERN STANDARD**



**TOTAL  
Guitar**  
BEST BUY  
AWARD

**TOTAL  
Guitar**  
BEST VALUE

**FENDER PLAYER  
TELECASTER HH**



**TOTAL  
Guitar**  
BEST FOR  
INDIE

<b>SUMMARY</b>	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★	★	★	★	★

<b>SUMMARY</b>	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
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	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★	★	★	★	★

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	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★	★	★	★	★

<b>SUMMARY</b>	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★	★	★	★	★