



The Indie Tribal is made of solid mahogany with a maple top, but it's not as heavy as it sounds

The fretboard inlay looks the business, but the lack of fret markers might make soloing confusing to start with

A tune-o-matic bridge and stop tailpiece won't win any design awards, but they're simple, reliable and effective

A pair of Indie Custom alnico humbuckers deliver a warm, rounded voice, although there's not much scope for tweaking

£629

INDIE TRIBAL

IT'S GREEN. IT'S MEAN. IT'S THE HULK'S WET DREAM... WORDS: HENRY YATES

Funny colour – isn't it ripe yet?

Green has never been the most rock 'n' roll of colours. It doesn't have the satanic undertones of black. It can't compete with the blood and brimstone of red. Yet, there's something about the Indie Tribal that spells trouble. Maybe it's those chunky gold humbuckers. Maybe it's the fact that the fretboard inlay looks like a tattoo on the forearm of a Glaswegian psychopath. Or perhaps it's just the name that makes us want to poke bones through our nose and dance round an enormous cauldron wearing loincloths while smeared in ritual paint.

It looks quite original...

Most guitars that pass through TG can be divided into three categories: those that look like Stratocasters, those that look like Les Pauls, and those that look like male genitalia. So it's kinda refreshing to see that the Tribal doesn't really look like anything at all. There may be a hint of Les Paul in the twin humbuckers and single cutaway, and a twist of Telecaster in the contours of the upper body, but everything else – from the shrunken head to the abalone binding – follows the Indie ethos of building original guitars with balls by the barrowful.

I'd expect nothing less for £629...

Ah yes, the price tag. There's no skirting around the fact that the Tribal is quite an expensive guitar, especially when you consider its Korean origins. We can forgive clunky fingerboards and globs of glue when we've only coughed up a couple of luncheon vouchers, but the £600 mark is where TG starts getting all fussy and demanding. Some bad-ass guitars hang out in this price bracket, and the Tribal will have to work pretty hard to avoid getting its shins kicked in and lunch money stolen by the big boys.

WHO'S IT FOR?

Anyone who is prepared to shell out a bit more cash for a guitar with bags of attitude

INFORMATION

ORIGIN: Korea
BODY: Solid mahogany, with quilted maple top
NECK: One-piece mahogany, set
FRETBOARD: Rosewood, with mother of pearl tribal inlay
HARDWARE: Tune-o-matic bridge with stop tailpiece, Grover machineheads, gold finish
PICKUPS: 2 x Indie Custom alnico humbuckers
FRETS: 22
CONTROLS: 1 x volume, 1 x tone and three-way pickup selector switch
SCALE LENGTH: 25"
COLOURS: Green (pictured) or blue
LEFT-HANDERS: Made to order (same price)
CASE: No
CONTACT: The Indie Guitar Company 01635 579300
WEB: www.indieguitars.com

ALTERNATIVELY

Peavey Signature EXP – £499
 Epiphone Les Paul – £599
 ESP LTD MC200 – £559

What's the build quality like?

Following the principle that you can't polish a turd, Indie has started out with some cracking raw materials. Beneath the green finish you'll find a mahogany body and a quilted maple top, while closer inspection of the neck reveals a set mahogany item whose one-piece construction should further complement the tone. Rosewood is the material of choice for that show-stopping fingerboard, combined with more smashed snails than you'd find in a French restaurant.

But hardware never gets anyone excited, and the Tribal is no exception. We're looking at a standard tune-o-matic bridge and stop tailpiece, Grover tuners and a three-way selector. The tone and volume knobs felt a bit cheap (and our lead didn't exactly glide into the output jack), but it's all built like the proverbial brick shithouse and we can't see the wheels falling off any time soon.

So how comfortable is it?

Slumped on the sofa, picking through *Come As You Are* in front of Hollyoaks, TG was impressed with the Tribal. A rib contour might have made things even more comfy, but then we quite like the fact that this guitar is an unrefined slab of tree rather than a Strat-style exercise in aerodynamics. The body is sufficiently slim, so you don't feel swamped, and the cutaways give better access to the 22 frets than you might think.

The Tribal isn't the lightest guitar on the market, but neither is it a Les Paul-style backbreaker. Once you're stood up the weight distribution keeps this axe level and tight to your side, while a manageable neck profile means your fingers will soon be swanning around like they own the place.

Ironically, the Tribal's most eye-catching feature is also the thing that lets it down. Don't get us wrong, that extravagant fret

There's plenty of ear candy available for £600, but the Tribal has the tone and attitude to slug it out with the big boys

inlay does make the Tribal look cool and sexy. Trouble is, even though there are fret markers on the neck's abalone binding, you won't find any on the fingerboard itself. It makes things a little disorientating when you're sliding between pentatonic shapes at warp speed, and will probably raise your bum note quota until you get used to it.

Is it for spanking or stroking?

The Tribal likes it both ways. Although it hasn't got the most versatile pickup configuration we've seen (just two humbuckers, one tone and one volume), this guitar copes well with every genre you care to throw at it. There's great authority and sustain, and enough clean character so that you shouldn't feel the need to drench it in reverb. While TG was impressed with the bite of the bridge (which has a great snappy quality), we felt the Tribal was at its most convincing with both pickups selected and a dash of gain. It has a fat, Clapton-esque swagger, and justifies the price tag in style.

Worth the loan then?

Worth considering at the very least. There's plenty of ear candy available for this kind of money, but we reckon the Tribal has the tone and attitude to slug it out with the big boys. Wild thing, we think we love you.

FOR: Original looks; watertight build and a beefy tone

AGAINST: Fret inlay can be disorientating

TG RATING:

