

The power of independent thinking (L-R): Ibanez' Talman TC620 BP, Chandler's 555, Guild's Brian May Standard, TV Jones' Model III, and Chandler's Baritone.



HARDBODIES

ing tuners would probably be a good idea), but there's no denying this guitar's overall quality. If you're looking for a no-nonsense Strat that can cover a lot of bases, the Schecter S series is a worthy choice.

TV Jones Model III (\$1,050 with case). Tom Jones (no, not the one who sings "What's New, Pussycat?") is a relative newcomer on the solid-body scene. His Model III is a feisty little bruiser with a contoured ash body, set-in maple neck, and an ebony fingerboard fitted with low, medium-sized frets. The frets are adequately installed, rounded, and polished, but a little spiky on the ends. The graphite nut is cut for very low action, a potential problem depending on how you play.

The TV has dual Seymour Duncan Full Shred humbuckers with rear cover plates and adjustable polepieces for each coil. The controls include master volume and tone and a 3-way pickup selector. Both knobs have push/pull functions; the volume pot cuts out the front humbucker coil, while the tone pot cuts the rear coil of the bridge humbucker. This allows neat

humbucker-plus-single-coil combinations. This unique double-cutaway offers a string-through-body design with a black Wilkinson non-trem bridge and locking Sperzel tuners that contrast well with the guitar's light metallic purple paint. The finish shows some orange peel and telegraphs the wood grain in some areas. Inlays include an abalone headstock logo and dot position markers.

We found the TV a clear, articulate guitar with a lot of bottom end and midrange complexity. It has a fast, even neck and can sound both muscular and glistening; with both coils cut, the guitar yields a crisp, balanced sound with lots of low-end push. We found a surprising number of good rhythm sounds, and you don't lose highs when the volume is rolled back. Cool. The TV has top to spare in the high-gain modes and pumps out very buff, resonant tones with good sustain. We found the full-blown single-coil tones a little fizzy, however. Not everyone was wowed by the TV's color, but the Model III certainly offers a lot of handbuilt grooviness for a low price.

Washburn MG701 (\$730 w/o case). The Korean-made 701 is a ragingly fast player thanks to its thin, non-vintage neck and large, smooth frets. The frets are well seated and finished, and the nut is rounded off for comfort. The alder body has a flame-sycamore top, while the solid maple neck has a 25¹/₂"-scale rosewood fingerboard. Construction and finish work is flawless.