



The great finish means you can't fail to look great

Lead or rhythm work – the ILP523 loves it all

Standard Les Paul dimensions make the ILP523 very comfortable to play

The custom pickups provide you with a huge variety of tones – which is always pleasing



£539.99

# INDIE ILP523

DOES THIS LES PAUL COPY PLAY AS WELL AS IT LOOKS? WORDS: PAUL BROWNING

## > Indie? Who are they?

Indie guitars are an independent company (hence the name), based in the UK that's owned by Keith Willis and Ian Carnell. These guys have several eye catching guitar designs, which are constructed by a firm in South Korea. Once the guitars have been made and sent back here, they're individually set up before hitting the shelves.

It's worth noting that only certain approved dealers can stock these guitars, so you'll have to check out the Indie website ([www.indieguitars.com](http://www.indieguitars.com)) to find out where you can get your hands on one.

## If these guitars are made in South Korea, are they just some sort of cheapo eastern rip-off?

Oh no, my friend, they certainly aren't – especially where the ILP523 is concerned. Look again at the photo, then check out this model's specs: a mahogany body, flamed hard maple set-in neck, rosewood fingerboard, two high quality humbuckers, two volume and two tone controls and a three-way switch. The whole guitar is covered with abalone, while the fret inlays are in a tree-of-life style, set in mother-of-pearl. Oh, and we almost forgot the gold hardware. This is quality stuff.

## It's just the 'Made In Korea' sticker is a bit of a turn-off...

Peel it off then. Better now? We challenge anyone to play this guitar, inspect it closely, then say it's a cheap rip-off. The price is less than you would pay for most Les Paul copies, and yet this guitar surpasses the usual build quality. The added advantage is you also get a thing of real beauty for your pennies.

## Looks a bit flashy

Yep, this guitar is a real head-turner. When we first got it out of the box, most of the TG team stopped work (no change there)

and gathered round to admire it. Les Paul-style models are made to stand out, but the Indie ILP523 is more than just an attractive instrument; it's a veritable feast for the eyes. We loved the abalone binding around the top, and the mother-of-pearl tree-of-life fret inlays finish off the package perfectly.

Of course, there is a danger of some guitars looking a little too flash for their own good – you know, the ones that are just made for displaying. However, the Indie is most certainly made for playing – it just happens to look extremely good while doing so.

## Does it play as well as it looks?

The short answer is yes, it does. It doesn't matter if you have the finest chops in the world, if your guitar is set up badly and has poor construction standards, you may as well play a tennis racket. Luckily, the build of the ILP523 is rock solid and of a high quality.

Basically, the ILP523 follows the standard Les Paul design; a standard-style pick guard, tulip-style gold machineheads, tune-o-matic bridge and a three-way selector. Well, there's really no point trying to better a tried-and-tested design that's served many a rock god well. The scale length has been kept to the standard 24.7 inches, and the neck has a familiar solid feel, joining the body at the 16th fret and offering the 22 standard frets.

After playing the guitar for some time, we really couldn't find fault with the binding, action and overall set-up. Even the medium frets were finished to perfection, enabling some really sweet bends.

## In practice, do you think the factory pickups cut the mustard?

Brands using cheap pickups are the downfall of many Les Paul copies, and here the traditional gold pickup covers mask two own-brand humbuckers. However, we weren't disappointed with the sound these

## WHO'S IT FOR?

Those who lust after an affordable, attractive guitar that sounds as good as a Les Paul

## INFORMATION

**ORIGIN:** South Korea  
**BODY:** Mahogany  
**NECK:** Set in hard maple  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 22 medium  
**PICKUPS:** 2 factory humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** 2 volume, 2 tone, 3-way selector switch  
**HARDWARE:** Gold tuners and tune-o-matic bridge  
**CASE:** No  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Available on special order  
**CONTACT:** Indie Guitar Company 01235 838567  
**WEB:** [www.indieguitars.com](http://www.indieguitars.com)

## ALTERNATIVELY

Epiphone Les Paul Custom – £581  
 Squier M-77 – £399.99  
 Gordon Smith Graduate 60 – £734

*Despite the Indie's flashy appearance, this guitar is made for playing – it just looks good while doing so*

components produce. The rhythm setting produces a truly fat'n'fine tone – which is simply fantastic for punchy chord stabs, yet versatile enough for an aggressive nu-metal tone. For example, you don't get the kind of power you hear with the EMG-HZ passive pickup range, but the result is far more versatility in your choice of sounds.

The treble setting is an altogether different animal. Through our Line 6 Flexitone II Brit Class A setting, we cooked up a lovely clean sound with plenty of bite. Indie has managed to retain the vintage sound here. With a few twists of the tone controls, a great range of expression is at your fingertips. We had a real blast playing our favourite classic rock tunes on the ILP523, and it certainly sounded very authentic indeed.

## So it's worth the coinage then?

Most definitely – go out and buy one now. Our initial fear was that this guitar was all talk and no action. After all, how could a guitar that pays so much attention to its appearance at such a good price sound any good? Surely, savings had to be made on construction standards or pickup quality. We have no idea how Indie's managed it, but it has – this guitar is the bees knees. Good looks, style, playability and all for an absolute bargain. Try one in your local Indie-approved dealership today.

**FOR:** Extremely attractive; has a great set up; is very versatile where sounds are concerned  
**AGAINST:** Might look too flash for some

**TG RATING:** ★★★★★

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