

# Epiphone®

# review



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## Les Paul Standard Plus

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The Gibson Les Paul is hailed by many as the quintessential rock guitar, and when you consider it's impressive list of users (among the Jimmy Page, Joe Perry, Slash, Ace Frehley, Stone Gossard, Billy Gibbons and Zakk Wylde), that's hardly surprising. If there's a downside, however, to adding yourself to the list of Les Paul devotees, it's that these toneful, classy looking American-made axes don't exactly come cheap. In fact, the recommended list price of a Gibson Les Paul Standard is around \$2,500. Thankfully, for those who want a Les Paul Standard, and currently don't want to spend more than a grand, there is an excellent solution.

Meet the Epiphone Les Paul Standard.

With the exception of it's distinctive Epiphone headstock, this Gibson-designed, Korean-made axe looks like a Gibson Les Paul, feels like a Gibson Les Paul and even bears the familiar Les Paul signature on its headstock.

Undeniably, I was impressed with the stunning good looks of The Heritage Cherry Sunburst model. The axe's two-piece, flame-maple top is beautifully figured, and the cream-colored binding, pickup surrounds and pickguard perfectly compliment its sunburst finish. Additionally, chrome pickup covers, olive green tuning knobs and trapezoid fretboard inlays also lent an authentic

appeal.

Being somewhat of a cynic, I assumed that Epiphone had picked out the best looking axe they had in stock and sent it over for review. And consequently, I went to my local music store to check out some regular, "off the shelf" model, and discovered that they looked just as good as the one I'd been sent. Further investigation revealed that its neck is, in fact, a copy of the "non-clunky" type found on the classic, universally acclaimed 1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard. As expected, the fingerboard is rosewood and the fretwire is sufficiently chunky to make wide-assed string bends a breeze.

Sonically, this budget-priced bad boy rocked hard in a very toneful, Les Paul-like way. Using its powerful bridge pickup (modelled after Gibson's 498T) evokes all the right noises - a satisfyingly low-end, a midrange that cuts nicely and a high-end that, although somewhat brighter than the "classic" Les Paul tone, is nevertheless pretty darned smooth. Switching to the neck pickup (based on Gibson's 490R), the guitar produces an expected deep, dark, fluid tone.

Plugging into a Marshall DSL50 head, the Les Paul Standard easily nails some very pleasing clean, crunch and lead tones, coupled with the Epiphone's excellent playability, made this review a whole lotta fun. My only niggle is the annoying tendency of both pickups to squeal in response to the amp's high-gain.

For Epiphone to have made such a good-looking, good-sounding instrument priced remarkably low, relative to a "real" Les Paul, there obviously must have been some compromises made with regard to construction and hardware. For a start, the Epiphone's stylish flame-maple top is actually a veneer (a thin layer of wood) glued to non-flame maple. Secondly, new Gibson Les Paul Standard bodies are crafted from a single slab of mahogany, whereas the Epiphone body - although 100% mahogany - is laminated (several pieces glued together), as is the Epiphone's mahogany neck. On the plus side, these "compromises" allow the guitar to weigh in at 8.7 pounds - somewhat lighter than my pal's Gibson Les Paul Standard, which weighs an impressive, shoulder deforming 10 pounds.

Ultimately, what we have here is a well-made, eye-catching instrument that plays like a dream, sounds as good as it looks and won't drain your bank account. If you're looking for a Les Paul but don't have the funds, this affordable Epiphone axe is highly recommended.

--Nick Bowcott  
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