



# LTD EX BLACK METAL

£859

A solid high-gain monster with none of the frills but all of the thrills

It can be said that many trends are cyclical and, broadly speaking, music and fashion tastes have been recently following a trend of borrowing cues from 20 years previous. To further back up this spurious claim with another, it looks like black satin guitars are back. Or is it more that they've never been away, but that they've just caught this particular reviewer's eye and brought back memories of the early noughties when the black satin look was definitely in? Fast forward to 2021, which sees LTD ushering in a new batch of stealthy numbers, bolstering its Black Metal range to a now plentiful 12 guitars. One of the company's most striking silhouettes has to be the EX and ESP/LTD's spikier than thou version of the Explorer, which makes its debut in the collection.

Equipped with a solitary EMG 81 and single volume control, the EX Black Metal is perfectly complemented with black metal hardware, tune-o-matic bridge and locking tuners. Setting up what is bound to be a solid, no-frills, high-gain affair. It features a set-thru construction with a mahogany body, a three-piece maple neck and a Macassar ebony fingerboard. And while you'd be forgiven in thinking that this could all add up to quite a weighty guitar, you'll be very much mistaken. As were we when we took receipt of the EX Black Metal, thinking that we'd been sent an empty box. This thing is super-light, weighing in at just 2.54kg/5.6lbs. Of course, having such a lightweight body can come with its own issues and while your back may thank you, the combination of this and the upper strap button location, the neck just wants to nosedive whilst standing.

The construction, overall, is solid and that is mirrored in the guitar's sonic attributes, too. The EMG 81 is fixed and adds to the overall resonance, which is very good. The 81 is well-known for its detail in the highs, whilst still delivering that weighty low-end required for metal. The lack of moving parts adds to the guitar's direct and solid feel. It allows you to get straight down to the business of big heavy riffage and at great speed, should the need take you. The neck is flat and on the wide side, so plenty of space for the big-handed folks out there, but not too big for us smaller digitized types either. However, the locking-tuner spacing on the headstock is very tight and could frustrate some, though the addition of extra-jumbo frets is always welcome for those who want to rock a lower-tuning with big string gauges.

While this guitar delivers a striking silhouette, all the blackness feels like it's not too showy. Further complemented by the lack of inlays on the fretboard, although handy glow-in-the-dark dots adorn the side of the neck. The EX Black Metal is ideal for those who want to plug in and rock out with no messing around with tonal variation, so tone-hounds need not apply. Don't be fooled by the supposed lack of features when compared to the price. This guitar is designed to shorten the distance between your riffs and the gain channel, making sure that they sound as precise as possible.

**Simon Arblaster**

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

## 1 EMG 81 PICKUP

The 81 is a classic found in the bridge position of countless metal-ready axes, most often paired with an 85. On this occasion it takes centre stage and it's fixed mounted, too.

## 2 MAHOGANY BODY

As mahogany bodies go, this has to be one of the lightest we've come across.

## 3 LOCKING TUNERS

LTD's own brand of locking tuners adorn the EX and should come as standard on all guitars at this price point. Although that spacing is a little on the tight side.

## AT A GLANCE

**Construction:** Set-Thru  
**Scale:** 24.75"  
**Body:** Mahogany  
**Neck:** 3Pc Maple  
**Fingerboard:** Macassar Ebony  
**Fingerboard radius:** 350mm  
**Finish:** Black Satin  
**Nut width:** 42mm  
**Nut type:** Molded  
**Neck contour:** Thin U  
**Frets:** 22 XJ  
**Stainless Steel**  
**Tuners:** LTD Locking  
**Bridge:** Tonepros  
**Locking TOM and Tailpiece**  
**Pickup:** EMG 81 with Black Logo  
**Controls:** Volume

