

FENDER PAWN SHOP JAGUARILLO & OFFSET SPECIAL £802 EACH
ELECTRICS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY NEIL GODWIN



Fender Pawn Shop Jaguarillo & Offset Special **£802 each**

Fender's selection of offbeat electrics continues to expand with the arrival of some novel additions to the Pawn Shop Series *by Paul Day*

Last year saw the launch of the first models in Fender's Pawn Shop Series, and these have recently been joined by another trio of six-strings. These Mexican-made additions maintain this line's mix 'n' match approach, by borrowing and blending parts and design features from various existing instruments to create Fenders that 'could have been' – either officially, or as the result of some serious aftermarket alterations. Two of the three newcomers are reviewed here, one being a very distinctive variation on a familiar Fender model, while the other departs so far from tradition that it can be called an all-new model.

Jaguarillo

As the name suggests, this Pawn Shopper stems from the long-established Jaguar, but the substantial modifications made by Fender have turned it into a very different animal. That said, the bolt-on maple neck stays pretty much unaltered, and is topped by the typical enlarged headstock, which carries vintage-style Kluson copy tuners – the same as those fitted to numerous modern Fenders and Squiers. The posts duly incorporate the usual centre holes, but the partner

top slots are very shallow, which can make stringing a little tricky at times.

The brand logo looks a little lonely because, like some other recent out-of-the-ordinary Fender/Squier instruments, the Jaguarillo lacks an appropriate accompanying model decal. This absence imparts an almost unfinished, prototype image, and also suggests short-term catalogue status.

The truss-rod adjuster is headstock mounted in the usual

modern manner, sited just behind a very nicely cut nut that leads onto a shallow-radius rosewood fingerboard. This employs the Jaguar's standard combination of 22 frets and shortened scale length (610mm/24 inches), which allows a more elastic action and ease of bending. The smoothly finished end result provides predictably easy playability, and one that's helped by the guitar's mainstream neck profile,

although the gloss finish yields a more vintage impression.

Naturally enough, the alder body is all-Jaguar, with the classic offset shape and smooth contours enhanced by a high-shine polyester paint job executed in Faded Sonic Blue. The latter contrasts a vintage-tint scratchplate that adopts the Jag's usual outline, but the similarities end there.

Pickups comprise Strat-style single coils in neck and centre positions, while an Atomic

These Mexican-made additions to the Pawn Shop Series borrow parts to create Fenders that 'could have been'



The zebra-styled Atomic humbucker has a thick, high output, ideal for playing dirty

The rivals

Jaguarillo

Italia's Modulo Tipo 3 (£449) mounts two standard single coils and a P-90 pickup on a familiar-shaped body boasting arty hardware and plastic covering. Geoff Whitehorn's **Fret-King Corona GW** (£629) features an unusual P-90/standard single coil/humbucker pickup formation, plus a vintage-style vibrato. The stylishly compact **Music Man Silhouette Special HSS** (£1,479) comes with this maker's own twin-pivot vibrato unit and DiMarzio pickups



humbucker is based at the bridge, with all three mounted in matching angled formation. The scratchplate also carries a lever-type five-way selector, located where the triple-switch panel is usually positioned on a Jaguar. In contrast, the latter's chromed control plate is present and correct, complete with master volume and tone pots, plus output jack.

As on some other updated Jaguar variants, the Jaguarillo features Fender's Adjusto-Matic bridge, which blatantly apes Gibson's later-style Tune-O-Matic. Installing this type

of twin-pillar design on a Fender usually requires some constructional amendments, and, here, the snug-fitting neck sits in a slightly sloping body pocket. The resulting additional tilt ensures that there are adequate height adjustments for the bridge, which is further aided by recessing this through the scratchplate.

The vibrato tailpiece looks to be regulation Jaguar issue, but the long arm differs by being screw-in, rather than the familiar push-fit version. Presumably, the intention is to obviate the latter's sometimes

The Jag's Atomic humbucker lives up to its name, combining brutal output with a thick-toned but edgy attack

sloppy fit, but unfortunately, on the review guitar the alternative is equally loose, except when fully screwed in, which then puts it too far round and beyond operational reach.

Sounds

The Jaguarillo rings quite well acoustically, while an absence of many usual attendant Jaguar

rattles indicates that the Adjusto-Matic bridge is a change for the better. Fender describes the two Strat-style single coils as 'standard', but they pack plenty of power, and prove a good match for the zebra-bobbin Atomic humbucker at the bridge. The latter certainly lives up to its name, combining pretty brutal



Without a model decal, the Fender logo looks a little lost on the enlarged headstock

output with a thick-toned but edgy attack. This pickup is tailor-made for gain, and accordingly, doesn't sound too subtle under clean conditions.

Better dirt-free delivery is obtained from the two single coils, either on their own or together, being typically clear, crisp and twangy. The neck-and-centre setting is hum-cancelling, while the middle-plus-bridge position offers a beefier variation on the classic funky Strat sound.

Unsurprisingly, the Jaguarillo works well with added overdrive, supplying anything from grungy grunt to a searing snarl that's far removed from any standard Jag. The volume control comes in useful for cleaning-up duties here, while the tone pot rings the changes in an equally gradual manner.

Offset Special

Living up to its name, this Fender features an original body outline that combines Strat-style double-cutaway horns with a significantly sloping waist and lower bouts borrowed from the Jazzmaster.

As on the Jaguarillo, the bolt-on neck plays it straight, but construction is one-piece

The Jaguarillo works well with added overdrive, supplying anything from grungy grunt to a searing snarl

maple, complete with an integral fingerboard. The latter is lightly radius'd, gloss lacquered and accommodates 21 frets spread over Fender's standard 648mm (25.5-inch) scale. Neck dimensions are also different, being slightly deeper to create a rounder, more vintage profile that's just as familiar and comfortable. In contrast, the headstock is the same size-wise, while other common components include the Kluson-type tuners, truss-rod adjustment and, like on the Jaguarillo, a lonely looking Fender logo.

As well as its all-new sleekly contoured shape, the alder body incorporates a single long f-hole. This confirms the semi-solid construction, which, despite a bit more body depth, helps keep overall mass to a meagre 3kg. The review guitar's nicely applied Shell Pink polyester finish could be considered cool or a mite twee, depending on personal taste, but it effectively contrasts the

Offset Special's cream plastic and chromed metal parts.

Pickups are a pair of JZHB humbuckers rather than normal Jazzmaster single coils. Size-wise, they look the same as the latter, and are also direct-mounted to the body (being installed in neatly executed cavities), but screw-type polepieces confirm there's something different under the large cream covers. Circuitry is simple, with a three-way selector switch sitting below master volume and tone pots topped by cream, vintage-style Fender amp knobs to match the pickups. These controls are positioned quite a way up the body, putting them at more risk of being knocked during overly enthusiastic strumming.

The hardware appointments are completed by the same bridge and vibrato tailpiece found on the Jaguarillo. However, for whatever reason, the Offset Special's screw-in vibrato arm is a much tighter fit, providing a more positive

The rivals

Offset Special

Danelectro's Hodad

(£429) combines semi-solid construction with a reverse body shape and four lipstick single coils arranged in humbucking pairs. Part of **Gretsch's Electromatic** line, the **G5448T Double Jet** (£514) is a gold-topped, twin-cutaway semi-solid with two humbuckers and a Bigsby vibrato tailpiece. Also Bigsby-equipped is the **PRS SE Custom Semi-Hollow** (£849), which comes with a brace of humbuckers and a single 'slash' soundhole

feel, and usefully staying put in any position.

Sounds

The internal airspace here adds some acoustic volume and a more rounded tonality, while plugging in reveals a lack of buzz, confirming the pickups' humbucker status. Even so, output is more modest than muscular, and they retain some of their single-coil cousin's typical character.



The Adjusto-Matic bridge on both models helps cure the Jaguar-style vibrato's occasional rattles



A single f-hole affords the Offset Special a rounded tonality and light weight

The Offset's pickups are more suited to leading a gain-laden life, and work well for bluesy grit and brashy thrash

The neck selection supplies a woody warmth, with thicker mids, though it's a little lacking at the upper end. The bridge pickup is similarly slightly low on treble content, while the midrange becomes more nasal. Combining the two also introduces a hollow-toned, stringy sound that's nearer to a normal Jazzmaster.

When keeping things clean, the Offset Special seems almost subdued and polite, but matching this model's updated attitude, the pickups are much more suited to leading a gain-laden life, and work well for bluesy grit and brashy thrash. The volume pot proves rather abrupt in terms of any level changes, but the tone control is much smoother.

Verdict

These latest mongrels from Mexico more than maintain the novelty aspect of the Pawn Shop Series, but still provide valid variations on familiar Fender themes – and you should bag either one some way below the quoted retail prices.

The Jaguarillo offers the styling and some key features of the Jaguar, but broadens its appeal by simplifying this oldie's circuitry, while adding a few Strat-style sounds and the upfront attack of a no-nonsense humbucker.

Looks-wise, the Offset Special owes nothing to any

single Fender, but instead blends two famous shapes to create something entirely original. The electrics ring equal changes, and the end results should prove very attractive to the modern player who fancies something obviously Fender, but also out of the ordinary. **G**

The Bottom Line

Fender Pawn Shop Jaguarillo

We like: Range of sounds; playability

We dislike: Shallow-slotted tuners; vibrato arm operation

Guitarist says: This latest update of the Jaguar removes some performance problems and adds a menu of sounds made for the modern player

Fender Pawn Shop Offset Special

We like: Looks; playability

We dislike: Shallow-slotted tuners; control location

Guitarist says: Less-obvious origins make this Pawn Shop Fender more original than most, and guaranteed to grab the attention of guitarists who go for something different



Fender Pawn Shop Jaguarillo

PRICE: £802 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: Mexico

TYPE: Offset double-cutaway solid electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 610mm (24")

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic/42mm (1.65")

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, dot position markers, 241mm (9.5") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: Adjusto-Matic bridge and separate vibrato tailpiece, vintage-type tuners, chrome-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm (2.07")

ELECTRICS: Atomic humbucker (at bridge), 2x Strat-style single coils, 5-way lever pickup selector, master volume and tone controls

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/7.7

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: Aside from the reviewed guitars, there are the Fender '51, Fender '72 and Mustang Special – expect to pay around £620

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Faded Sonic Blue (as reviewed), Candy Apple Red or Three-Colour Sunburst

Fender GBI

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Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Playability ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Fender Pawn Shop Offset Special

PRICE: £802 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: Mexico

TYPE: Double-cutaway semi-solid electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic/42mm (1.65")

FINGERBOARD: Maple, dot position markers, 241mm (9.5") radius

FRETS: 21, medium

HARDWARE: Adjusto-Matic bridge and separate vibrato tailpiece, vintage-type tuners, chrome-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm (2.07")

ELECTRICS: 2x JZHB humbuckers, three-way toggle pickup selector, master volume and tone controls

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3/6.6

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: See Jaguarillo

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Shell Pink (as reviewed), black or Two-Colour Sunburst

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Playability ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★