



Squier Vintage Modified Series Jaguar HH and Jazzmaster £335 each

Squier's Vintage Modified guitar and bass range is designed to take old school designs and make them work for contemporary players on a budget. And that's exactly what the new Jaguar HH and Jazzmaster guitars we have here are all about. You get the classic offset body, gloss finish bolt-on maple neck, a big CBS-era headstock and, well, that's pretty much all the vintage stuff covered.

To bring the guitars' performance up to date, Fender has fitted them with beefier pickups, dropped the old school vibratos that made the original guitars an acquired taste and worked in a 241mm (9.5-inch) fingerboard radius (in place of the original guitars' 184mm/7.25-inch) for improved string-bending and general playability. The recessed Stratocaster-style jackplates and stacked concentric '62 Jazz Bass controls are also obvious departures from Leo Fender's original blueprints. The chrome knob on each control handles volume duties, while the bottom ring part is a tone.

Then there's the isosceles trapezium-shaped hardtail bridge. It looks very similar to a Danelectro unit and is mounted like one too – the front of the bridgeplate rests on two screws that raise or lower the action.

You can also tweak the action and intonation with the six individual saddles. The rear of the bridge is secured with a single large screw that can alter the angle of the whole unit.

Vintage Modified Jaguar HH

Our Jaguar has a four-piece basswood body. Basswood is known for providing good sustain and has become the go-to timber for many modern rock guitars. The bolt-on maple neck has a shallow 'C' profile and a rosewood fingerboard studded with 22 medium jumbo frets. Incidentally, there's no maple board option on this Jag. The guitar's 610mm (24-inches) scale length is shorter than the 648mm (25.5-inches) of the

Jazzmaster and other classic Fender models, the Stratocaster and Telecaster. This makes it considerably easier to bend the guitar's supplied 0.010 to 0.046 Fender USA NPS (nickel-plated steel) strings.

The HH part of the VM Jaguar model name signifies two humbuckers in the engine bay – specifically Duncan

The Rivals

Vintage Modified Jaguar HH

If you're a patient soul, consider allowing your piggy bank to pile on the pork a little bit longer and you can bag the Mexican-made and dare we say it, better looking, **Fender Blacktop Series Jaguar** (£539.99). The extra financial outlay buys you an alder body, an adjust-o-matic fixed bridge and tailpiece set-up, and a pair of Hot Alnico humbuckers. The guitar is available in a choice of black and silver finishes.



The Duncan Designed humbuckers give the Jag some rock power



Designed HB-102 bridge and neck humbuckers with zebra bobbins. Packing Alnico 5 magnets, this set is based on the popular Seymour Duncan SH-4 JB Jazz Blues bridge and the SH-2n Jazz Model pickups.

As mentioned earlier, the Jaguar HH comes with a Strat-style jackplate and '62 Jazz Bass controls. These are the guitar's Marmite bits – the jackplate looks odd to us; a bit out of place. The controls have an annoying habit of snagging on each other, meaning both move when you're trying to adjust only one.

Vintage Modified Jazzmaster

When it comes to the jackplate and controls on the Jazzmaster, ditto everything we said about the Jaguar. Moving swiftly on, the body of the Jazzmaster is formed from four pieces of alder and build quality is generally as good as the Jaguar, except for an untidy gap where the butt of the neck meets the face of the body. It doesn't affect playability, but we expect better, even on a guitar of this price. While we're in the neck area, the Jazzmaster is only

available with a maple 'board with black dots. Like the Jag it has a sleek 'C'-profile, but with 21 medium jumbo frets, not 22.

Another obvious difference between the two guitars is that the Jazzmaster comes loaded with a pair of Duncan Designed JM-101 single-coil pickups. Again powered by Alnico 5 magnets, these pickups have apparently been overwound for a beefier tone.

The playability of both guitars is excellent – that common neck profile is a joy to noodle on and the frets on both guitars have been finished perfectly. There's no buzzing or choking to spoil the fun either. The shorter scale of the Jaguar makes string-bending easier than on the regular Fender-scaled Jazzmaster, but there's not that much in it really.

Sounds

Kurt Cobain played a '65 sunburst Jaguar fitted with DiMarzio humbuckers, and that sums up the type of player Fender is hoping to hook with this Squier version. It's basically a rock beast with retro charm and a bridge humbucker with

The Rivals

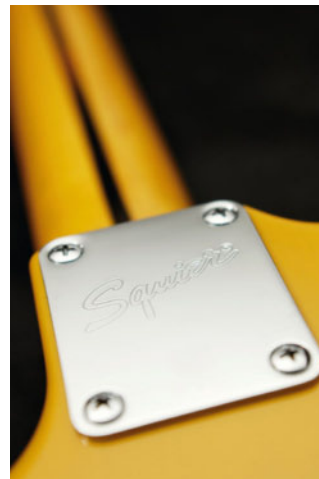
Vintage Modified Jazzmaster

Again, you could consider the **Fender Blacktop** take on the classic **Jazzmaster** (from £539.99). The Blacktop comes with a bridge humbucker and neck position Jazzmaster single-coil and the old school squeaky Jazzmaster vibrato. Alternatively, investigate some surf inspired, twin-fat single-coil fun with an **Eastwood Hi-flyer** (£319). You can choose from hardtail and vibrato versions for the same price.

Kurt Cobain played a '65 sunburst Jag with DiMarzios, and that sums up the player Fender is trying to hook here



The Jazzmaster is a tonally versatile guitar that is at home in a range of styles



enough wallop to satisfy most fuzz fiends. It cleans up well but then again, that's not really a surprise. If you've played any twin-humbucker guitar, you'll know what to expect. If you're a bit cheesed off with pointy headstock guitars with lollipop stick necks, the Jaguar offers a very cool alternative.

In contrast to the Jag's brute strength, the Jazzmaster is tonally more versatile. Run it through a small tube amp (or similar modelled sound), crank up the volume and you get that punchy clean tone heard on Tom Petty, The Smiths and REM records. Add some filth for snarling punk licks or switch both pickups on with a clean tone and slapback echo for convincing rockabilly rebellion. Played clean, the Jazzmaster kills for surf (although you might miss the vibrato), ska, country licks and some Johnny Cash boom-chicka-boom. Indeed, Cash guitarists Luther Perkins and



The Dano-style adjustable bridge is an unusual addition, but it works well

There's not much in it really and we are equally impressed with the performance of both guitars

Bob Wootton both used Jazzmasters during their time with The Man In Black. The neck pickup will do jazz styles, but we can't imagine that many dedicated jazzers would choose to pick up this style of guitar over a hollowbody.

In the end, we are equally impressed with the sonic performance of both guitars.

Verdict

As mentioned, we're not keen on the jackplates and super-sized controls, but in every other regard our time with the Vintage Modified Jaguar HH and Jazzmaster has been great. They're vibrant, easy-to-play and come loaded with great sounding pickups. Yes, Fender has squeezed an incredible amount of juice out of its old classics, but when the result is a pair of instruments that play and sound a step above their price bracket as these do, few will be complaining – big knobs or not. **G**

The Bottom Line

Vintage Modified Jaguar HH

We like: The sweet neck profile; beefy pickups

We dislike: The jackplate and bulky controls

Guitarist says: It's not the prettiest Jag of all time, but its beefy tones are perfect for hard rockers and Kurt Cobain devotees

Vintage Modified Jazzmaster

We like: Ultra-playable neck; versatile pickups

We dislike: Same as the Jaguar HH

Guitarist says: A pair of sweet-sounding single-coils make this Jazzmaster an affordable tone machine



Vintage Modified Jaguar HH

PRICE: £335

ORIGIN: Indonesia

BODY: Basswood

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 610mm (24 inches)

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/42mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with white dot inlays, 241mm (9.5-inch) radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: Chrome-plated fixed bridge, vintage-style tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: Two Duncan Designed HB-102 humbuckers, two stacked concentric volume and tone controls, three-way pickup selector toggle switch

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.6/8

OPTIONS: Finish only

RANGE OPTIONS: The Squier Jazzmaster (£370.80) featuring two Duncan Designed humbuckers and a Strat-style vibrato unit, is available in three-colour sunburst and black finishes

FINISHES: Two-colour sunburst (as reviewed), Fiesta red

Fender GBI

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Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Vintage Modified Jazzmaster

PRICE: £335

ORIGIN: Indonesia

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm

(25.5 inches)

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/42mm

FINGERBOARD: Maple with black dot inlays, 241mm (9.5-inch) radius

FRETS: 21, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: Chrome fixed bridge, vintage-style tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: Two Duncan Designed JM-101 single-coils, two stacked concentric volume and tone controls, three-way pickup selector toggle switch

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.6/8

OPTIONS: Finish only

RANGE OPTIONS: N/A

FINISHES: Butterscotch blonde (as reviewed), two-colour sunburst

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★