

# GEAR

## REVIEW

### FENDER KURT COBAIN JAGUAR

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Fender



# FENDER KURT COBAIN JAGUAR

£1,306

Here it is. Now let's see if it entertains us

**WE** brought you the full story of Fender's new Kurt Cobain Jaguar in TG220. If you didn't see that, we'll quickly fill you in. Cobain's famous left-handed '65 Jag was bought second-hand through the *LA Recycler*, and became his main touring guitar for the *Nevermind* era. Its previous owner had heavily modified it with a black chrome bridge, a pair of DiMarzio humbuckers, a three-way pickup switch and an extra volume control. Kurt's Jag also had a bound neck with a Strat-size headstock bearing a non-period-correct 'Spaghetti' Fender logo and block Jaguar lettering.

Fender has included all of these modifications on its new Mexican-made replica, and the Three-Colour Sunburst finish has been applied with nitrocellulose, then relic'd to reflect the battered finish of Kurt's original. Opening the included hard case reveals a guitar that looks even better for real than in the pictures. Regardless of your take on aged finishes, this has been executed so well that – bar some of the 'buckle rash' on the back – every ding, dent and scratch looks authentic. The lacquer is cracked in places, resulting in a beautiful vintage-looking patina, while the pickup's pole pieces are rusted. The metalwork's also been aged brilliantly, and you'd be hard pressed to tell that this isn't really an old guitar.

Jaguars have a 24-inch scale length – an inch-and-a-half shorter than a Strat. This can result in spongy string tension and tuning problems, but Fender has fitted this guitar with .010-.052 gauge strings. The result is taught strings, even in drop tunings.

Kurt wasn't known for being a tonehound, yet it's this very fact that has made his sound so sought after. It's abrasive, aggressive and unapologetically raw. Thanks to the combination of an alder

body, Super Distortion 100 bridge pickup and solid Adjusto-Matic bridge, you get a biting, resonant sound when you apply distortion to the bridge position. It's thicker than a Strat sound, but with more cut than a Les Paul. Meanwhile, the DiMarzio DP103 PAF has a slight pump towards the midrange that makes clean and semi-distorted playing warmer, and very punchy. Think *Heart-Shaped Box* and you're not far off.

The KC Jag also includes a working Jaguar rhythm circuit, which overrides the Jag's three-position switch and volume/tone pots, and switches in the neck pickup only. The circuit also has its own separate volume and tone roller controls. Kurt never really used the rhythm circuit on his Jag, but with it switched in and the tone rolled back, you can get a mammoth stoner-rock tone and then return to a throaty bridge pickup sound with the tone on full at the flick of a switch.

Likewise, Cobain never used the vibrato, but Fender has included it here for those who want it. It's smooth and light (the classic surf vibrato sound) and holds its tuning thanks to the upgraded bridge.

The KC Jag isn't without its flaws – that extra volume pot makes control changes awkward, the three-way switch is positioned in a prime location to be knocked, and the Jaguar scale length will always be divisive. You can't argue with any of these features, though; it is what it is, and Fender has done a remarkable job of recreating Cobain's Jaguar with accuracy, taste and, above all, respect.

Stuart Williams

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

## AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Alder  
**NECK:** Maple  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 22  
**SCALE:** 24"  
**PICKUPS:** DiMarzio DP100 Super Distortion humbucker (bridge), DiMarzio PAF DP103 36th Anniversary (neck)  
**CONTROLS:** Master: 2x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector. Rhythm circuit: on/off switch, vol, tone rollers  
**HARDWARE:** Black chrome bridge, aged nickel  
**LEFT HANDED:** Damn straight!  
**FINISH:** Three-Colour Sunburst  
**CONTACT:** Fender GBI 01342 331700  
[www.fender.co.uk](http://www.fender.co.uk)



## 1 PRICE

**CHARGING** £1,300 might seem to go against Kurt's punk spirit, but factor in the superior relicing job, aftermarket pickups and extra hardware, and we think it's worth every penny

## 2 FEATURES

**KURT** may not have used them, but Fender has appeased traditionalists by including a working rhythm circuit and Jaguar vibrato

## 3 LEFTY

**LEFT-HANDED** players will be glad to hear that the Kurt Cobain model is available as a lefty for no extra cost

