FENDER MODERN PLAYER MARAUDER £442

A lost classic that never really was finally sees the light of day

THE Fender Marauder first showed up on the radar back in 1965. Intended as a new top-of-the-line model, the ridiculously over-engineered Marauder had four pickups hidden under its scratchplate, wired to a mind-boggling array of switches and knobs. Despite the development of a Type II prototype with conventional exposed pickups, the Marauder never made it farther than an appearance in the Fender 1965 catalogue. By the following year, it had ceased to be. Now, 45 years down the line, Fender has finally revived

> "This little tone machine covers most genres"

the Marauder tag for a smart little guitar with an unusual pickup layout of its own.

According to Fender, the 2011 Marauder is its first guitar to feature a Koto wood body. Fender doesn't say why we should be excited about that, and we couldn't find much info on Koto aside from the fact that it's grown and chopped down in Africa. If Fender kept schtum and we had to guess what timber was hidden under that flawless Lake Placid Blue finish, the weight, sustain and tonal response would make us plump for alder. The Marauder's 25.5 inch scale and slim C profile bolt-on maple neck give it the feel of a Strat. That vibe is enhanced with a 9.5 inch radius rosewood fingerboard, 22 jumbo frets and a classic 'synchronized' vibrato unit.

You must have noticed that Triplebucker bridge pickup. You get three coils squeezed into that pickup ring, while the neck position is occupied by a Jazzmaster singlecoil. Flicking through the five-way switch reveals the Triplebucker in its humbucking mode (the two coils nearest the bridge); all three Triplebucker coils on; the inside Triplebucker coil (the one closest to the neck) on its own; that inside coil combined with the Jazzmaster singlecoil neck pickup; and the neck pickup running solo.

Think of the Marauder as a hot-rodded HSS format Strat squeezed into the body with the appeal of a Mustang or Jaguar. The humbucker mode is bright when clean and borderline brutal when the gain is increased. You might expect the triple-coil mode to increase the guitar's output. Nope. It decreases slightly, leaving you with a warmer tone that works great for rhythm work and crunchier overdrive sounds. We love the Hendrix *Little Wing* vibe of the Triplebucker and neck singlecoil setting, while running the Jazzmaster singlecoil solo offers a level of twang fatter and more defined than you'd get from a regular Strat pickup.

We didn't expect the Marauder to be such an enjoyable little tone machine, but it has the goods to cover just about any genre of music. Even metal. If you want the ace playability and tonal range offered by a hot-rodded Strat minus the hair metal vibe, the Marauder is a great choice. It's taken a long time to get here, but we reckon it was worth the wait.

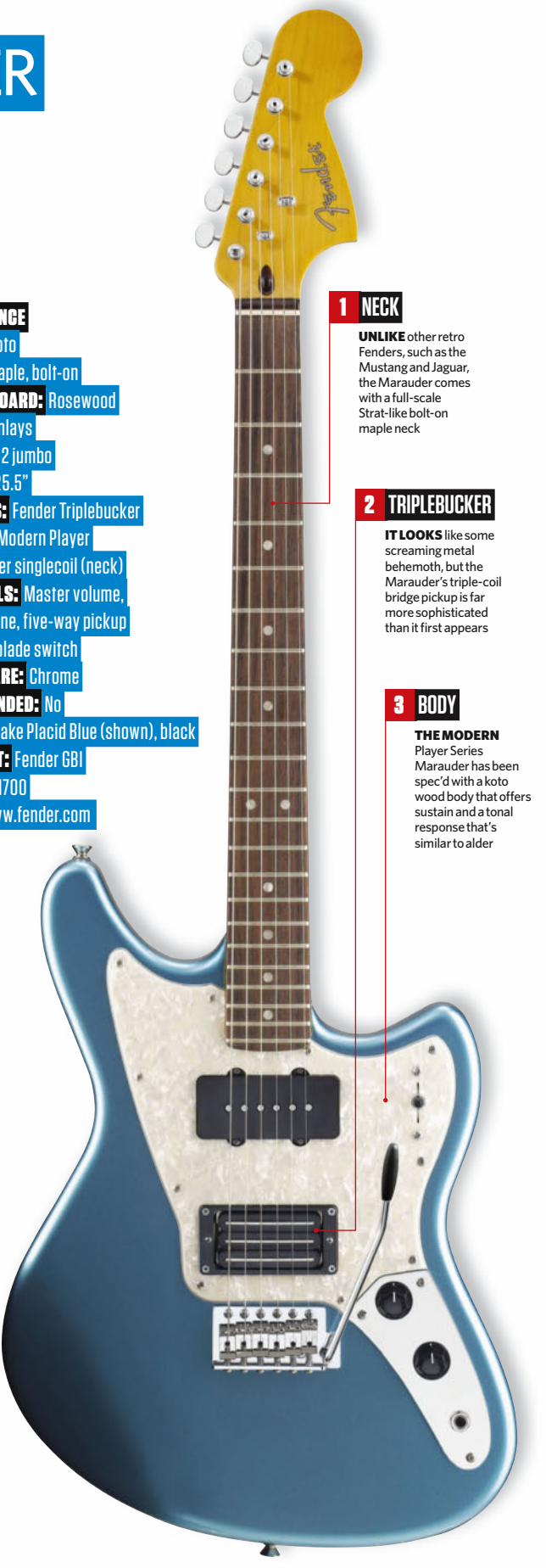
Ed Mitchell

SUMMARY

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

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Koto
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with dot inlays
FRETS: 22 jumbo
SCALE: 25.5"
PICKUPS: Fender Triplebucker (bridge), Modern Player Jazzmaster singlecoil (neck)
CONTROLS: Master volume, master tone, five-way pickup selector blade switch
HARDWARE: Chrome
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Lake Placid Blue (shown), black
CONTACT: Fender GBI 01342 331700
WEB: www.fender.com



1 NECK

UNLIKE other retro Fenders, such as the Mustang and Jaguar, the Marauder comes with a full-scale Strat-like bolt-on maple neck

2 TRIPLEBUCKER

IT LOOKS like some screaming metal behemoth, but the Marauder's triple-coil bridge pickup is far more sophisticated than it first appears

3 BODY

THE MODERN Player Series Marauder has been spec'd with a koto wood body that offers sustain and a tonal response that's similar to alder