



Godin 5th Avenue Jazz

£1,999

Godin's 5th Avenue range gets a top-of-the-line addition. Time to get down with your flat fives *by Dave Burrell*

From humble beginnings in 2008 as a non-cutaway acoustic archtop, Godin's 5th Avenue range has expanded into quite a family (see spec for full details). It's a clever concept – the same 406mm (16-inch) wide, 76mm (three-inch) deep (at the rim) body is used for all the models, with or without the rounded Venetian cutaway. At the head of the table is the Jazz, which comes complete with the aforementioned Venetian cutaway and an all-laminate body; constructed wholly from wild cherry on the all-black version or, as here, with added flame maple facings.

For the most part it's a tidily made and lightweight guitar, which at its asking price (expect to pay £1,659 on the street) it

really should be. The 'bursting is very classic and evocative, nicely polished with clean cream plastic body edge binding and tidy inner black/white purfling on the top.

The neck joins the body at the 14th fret. The heel is laminated from a slightly mismatched piece of wood nicely 'hidden' by the 'burst finish; likewise the better-matched headstock splice. It has an enjoyably mainstream, slightly square-shouldered 'C' section, the fingerboard cleanly fretted with small gauge 'vintage-style' frets and edge bound with black binding, which hides the fret slots from view. The actual neck angle seems a little steep to us, meaning that the adjustable top of the synthetic Graph Tech

Tusq bridge sits some way from its foot.

Powering comes from a single Godin humbucker, which screws to the fingerboard end and floats over the top. Controls are conventional volume and

tone units, complete with classy ebony knobs. Classy is a word you keep coming back to when describing this guitar, especially the classic three-a-side headstock and those open-backed Waverly-style tuners. On top of that, of course, the price includes an excellent Godin-made TRIC case, which is lightweight and quite 'space age' in contrast to the look of the guitar itself.

Sounds

Out of the box, the action is a little on the high side (approx 2mm at the high E at the 12th fret and just under 2.5mm on



Tidy binding and a beautiful 'burst' adorn the guitar's 14th-fret join



The Rivals

Ibanez has a very good range of affordable jazz-specific guitars. The **PM35** (£675, inc case) typifies the classic big-bodied laminate jazzbox with single neck humbucker and top-mounted volume and tone. **Gibson's ES-175** is a bona fide jazz standard. Average street prices are around £2,750 including case. The ES-175, of course, has dual top-mount humbuckers. **Eastman** guitars are made in China. The 16-inch wide **AR605-CE** (approx £1,299) is all-solid spruce/mahogany, with a Venetian cutaway and floating neck humbucker by Kent Armstrong.

the bass-side) and many would probably prefer some flat- as opposed to round-wound strings, also of a heavier gauge. However, as supplied, we have a very playable guitar with a typically laminate archtop-like pushy mid-range projection.

Plugged in, the humbucker drops us right into that classic jazz territory with a full-bodied voice that has just the right amount of clarity to accurately reproduce complex voicings. But not too much, so that higher string runs and licks sound thick and strong, not thin and stringy. This tonality is replicated over numerous amps both electric and acoustic that we try. The only adjustments we need to make are in regard to the low end, which through some amps can be a little overcooked. Through the fuller



The humbucker has a full-bodied voice with excellent top-end clarity

There's lively acoustic resonance and a very jazz-specific plugged-in voice

range reproduction of an acoustic amp you'll hear more high-end clarity too and with some specific EQ'ing an altogether more acoustic voice emerges; though still with plenty of jazz thrum.

Verdict

The 5th Avenue Jazz is certainly aimed at the more experienced jazz player. Yes, that neck pitch and bridge seem on the high side but the overall lightweight and classy build, not to mention good playability, a clean fingerboard with plenty of air to the string spacing, a lively acoustic resonance and very jazz-specific plugged-in voice all tick the right boxes.

Our only reservation is the price. Even at the lower street price it faces very stiff competition from the likes of

Eastman, Peerless and Ibanez. But we'd suggest you take time to play this one; maybe it'll speak to you, as it did with us. Price alone isn't everything, especially when a guitar sounds as right as this one. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Luxuriant build; lightweight; classy feel; jazz-specific tonality both acoustically and plugged in

We dislike: The neck pitch/bridge height is a little steep; side-mounted jack socket may work loose; price

Guitarist says: From humble beginnings, the 5th Avenue range now looks very attractive and the Jazz is a fine-quality addition

Godin 5th Avenue Jazz

- PRICE:** £1,999 (inc case)
- ORIGIN:** Canada
- TYPE:** Single-cut archtop electric
- BODY:** Laminated Canadian wild cherry with maple veneer facings
- NECK:** Flamed maple, glued-in
- SCALE LENGTH:** 630mm (24.84 inches)
- NUT/WIDTH:** Graph Tech Tusq/44.3mm
- FINGERBOARD:** Ebony, pearloid dots, 406mm (16-inch) radius
- FRETS:** 21, small
- HARDWARE:** Graph Tech adjustable Tusq bridge with trapeze tailpiece, Waverly-style open-back tuners
- STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 54mm
- ELECTRICS:** Godin floating mini-humbucker, master volume and tone
- WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.6/5.75
- OPTIONS:** The all-black Jazz has laminated wild cherry construction and silver leaf maple neck. A AAA grade flamed maple version is expected to retail at £2,299
- RANGE OPTIONS:** The 5th Avenue (£649) is a non-cutaway acoustic archtop; the 5th Avenue Kingpin (£809) adds a neck P-90; Kingpin CW (£1,029) adds a cutaway and bridge P-90-style single-coil. The Uptown (£1,320) adds a Bigsby
- LEFT-HANDERS:** No
- FINISHES:** Sunburst (as reviewed), piano black and natural flame
- 440 Distribution**
- 01132 589599**
- www.godinguitars.com**

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★