

FENDER AMERICAN STANDARDS FROM £879
ELECTRIC/BASS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSE WILD

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American★ idols★

New for 2008, Fender has discontinued the American Series and reinstalled the previous American Standard range with a raft of subtle changes. Just how good are they?

By Dave Burrluck & Roger Newell



Fender American Standards

from £879, £879, £949 & £949

What we want to know

1 Aren't these just more cynical repackagings of ancient designs?

Er, well, we wouldn't put it quite like that. The original American Standards and the subsequent American Series represent the start point of the all USA-made Fender line. This year's makeover aims to squeeze a little more from the designs with some subtle changes.

2 So Fender expects us to job in our American Series instruments and buy these?

To be honest we feel they are better instruments, a little more lived-in and familiar perhaps, a little more vintage-y but with modern playability and mainstream sounds. The Tele might be the only question mark.

3 So who's gonna play these?

Any serious player who wants a USA-made Fender should start looking here. If you own an original American Standard, you'll see a massive difference with these, less so if you're an American Series owner. Above all these are pro-spec instruments and are very good value for money.

The original Fender American Standard (introduced in 1986) and the later American Series guitars (unveiled in 2000) were always about no-nonsense gigability. The new-for-2008 American Standards are no different. Pulling the Strat, for example, from the chunky and frankly excellent new rectangular Fender/SKB case there's a definite sense of purpose. These aren't instruments to covet – they need a stage. 1, 2, 3, 4...

American Standard Stratocaster

Little has changed from the American Series with the overall construction. Here we have an alder body (ash is only used on the sienna sunburst finish, see spec check), and though any jointing is hidden by the opaque Olympic white polyurethane finish we'd guess, typically, Fender uses a three-piece spread. Incidentally, the body is routed for an H/S/H configuration, something to bear in mind if you want to retrofit a bridge or neck humbucker at a later stage. As ever, the contouring is not quite as sexy as the vintage reissue, or classic examples of the original, but it's far from clunky and you're reminded, especially in this finish, just how futuristic the guitar with all its contours and curves must have seemed some 54 years ago – not least when viewed alongside the rudimentary Telecaster shaping.

As with the American Series both rosewood and maple 'boards

are offered. The rosewood, of course, is a separate piece added to the maple neck; the maple option doesn't have a separate fingerboard – the frets are installed into the front face of the thicker neck blank. One change here is that the fingerboard (maple only) is now gloss finished, as is the headstock face, though the neck back remains satin. It's not going to please everyone; it feels and looks very new but, unlike the horrible heavily finish on seventies-era Fenders, the finish looks thin and the big frets – approx 3mm wide by 1mm high – have more than enough girth for easy, slick playability. Typically we have a modern 'C' profile

(approx 20.7mm at the first fret and 22.6mm at the 12th) but the shoulders and fingerboard edges are nicely rounded, along with the fret ends, while the fret tops gleam, mirror-like. Set-up – with the supplied 0.009s – is low and snappy and with your first strums and licks it's unquestionable what instrument you're playing.

Subtle changes to the new series concern the finishing. The neck, for example, has a marginally deeper tint to the finish that looks less anaemic than the previous models, but less perma-tan looking than some lower-priced Fenders and numerous copies. This finish change, says Fender's Justin Norvell, "offers a more finished look to the instruments, providing a richer tint hue and gloss. The all-satin, barely tinted old version is more a remnant from the first American Standard incarnation in 1986, which was when these instruments were in step with the contemporaries of

Surprisingly quickly this Strat falls into the 'old friend' category. There's something very right about it



The American Standards feature a 'spaghetti' style logo for a vintage vibe



their time (like Charvel, now also owned by FMIC).” The undercoat on the bodies is, apparently, thinner too, for, “improved body resonance,” says Fender. Subtle, yes, but every bit helps we reckon.

Much of the American Series’ parts are retained – the electronics, all mounted on the parchment-faced three-ply scratchplate, for example, are the same. To recap, the Stratocaster has three American single-coils. The protruding (unchamfered) Alnico V slug magnets follow a vintage stagger save for the raised G string magnet; the five-way switch offers the standard selections; then we have master volume, neck pickup tone and, lastly, middle and bridge tone. The latter is the Delta Tone ‘No Load’ pot that when fully clockwise is effectively removed from the circuit and allows maximum highs – turn it down to ‘9’ and it then acts as a normal tone control.

The tuners too are identical to the American Series – the low E and A string posts are taller than the other four, which sit low to the headstock face, to facilitate a better behind-the-nut string angle – although there’s still the single string tree on the top two strings.

What does change here is the vibrato. The cast ‘block’ saddles are replaced with standard pressed steel ‘vintage-style saddles’. The string spacing is narrowed – from 55mm to 52.5mm – “for modern playability” although there’s no apparent change in the neck width so the outer strings sit a little further into the neck. The saddle height screws are “re-sized to reduce rough feel, and string slot on saddle elongated to reduce string friction or breakage,” says Fender. The two-point top plate pivot system remains the same but the actual ‘inertia block’, visible

only by removing the back plate, has changed. Instead of the cast Strat bridge block (powdered steel cast with resin) we have a copper infused steel cast Strat bridge block for, “increased mass and improved tone,” says Fender.

“We used the old bridge block as a base platform for retrofit and consistency reasons,” clarifies Norvell. “These blocks are chamfered for extra travel in the body cavity, and this way we just use the same mould as before with a new alloy (copper infused steel), which allows the costs to stay in check. We tone-tested these new blocks against machined blocks and were quite impressed, so you get improved mass and tone without the large increase in cost.”

Sounds - Stratocaster

Surprisingly quickly this Strat falls into the ‘old friend’ category. There’s something very right about it. Acoustically it’s lively, zingy and snappy and plugged in there’s nothing to surprise you. That said it does feel and sound quite a bit more vintage-like, loose and played in than many a modern Strat this writer has auditioned. There’s still a newness, a brashness to the sound that will more than likely mellow after playing time but there’s also a roadhouse toughness to the tone that falls right into the Texas-blues camp: less rock, perhaps, than the original American Standard, while a little more used sounding and soulful. The newness means you wouldn’t hear as much separation as you will on a Time Machine (or of course an original) but it’s nicely resonant with plenty of give to the dynamics. The shiny maple ‘board with its relatively lower frets brings its own feel – a little



All the Standards feature great neck-to-body joints with a sure, snug fit

more fight initially, though things can get rather too slippery towards the end of a sweaty set, but that very fight is part of the Strat’s almost clipped note decay: it’s funky but not pristine in the mixed pickup sounds, strong and hard but not over harsh on the back pickup and fruity but not dull at the neck. As ever the middle pickup on its own seems like an afterthought but proves more than tough enough with some gain. The hum-cancelling is handy in the mixed positions but we just feel this one is less rock and more blues – well, that’s what it seems to say.

American Standard Telecaster

The Telecaster, by nature, was – and remains – the Fender workhorse, so if the Strat here appears workmanlike, the Tele seems almost primitive. The rosewood ‘board offers a less slinky feel and although the dimensions are virtually identical (43.7mm at the nut, 21.8mm deep at the first fret, 22mm at the 12th), it does feel just slightly bigger in the hand. Fretwork is equally good, although without the finish to the face the frets feel, and measure, slightly taller for a subtle difference. Likewise the neck tint





here is a little yellowed compared to the more natural reddish hue of the Strat, while the rear skunk strip is much darker than the Strat's pale hue.

The square-edged, alder body appears to be one-piece through the nicely old-style three-colour sunburst. We suspect, however, that Fender still uses a pre-laminated body 'spread' with typically three pieces and a veneer to top and back. Either way it's a tidy job and, again, with a thinner finish it avoids looking over plastic-y. Both guitars use a four-screw neck fixing, with the micro-tilt adjustment, and both necks are extremely well fitting and don't want to budge even with considerable pressure. Like the Strat, the Tele retains the same tuners and electronics package – two Tele American single-coils,

the neck pickup covered and the bridge pickup with flush poles, a three-way lever selector and Delta Tone control – but changes occur with the bridge. Once again we get the improved 'vintage-style' pressed steel saddles – frankly very un-Tele-like – on a chromed brass plate (as opposed to the classic recipe of brass saddles on a steel plate) with a stylised Fender logo that, as Fender intends, is a nod to the design of sixties-era Fenders (like Jaguar and Mustang bridges). And although those intonation screws seems less tall than true vintage spec on the Tele, more than the Strat, they still protrude uncomfortably – to get them to sit in the saddles requires a deft tweak of the micro-tilt neck adjustment slightly raising the saddles' height.

But Strat saddles on a Tele? "We

just view the bent steel saddles as 'Fender saddles'. And the previous cast American Series saddles are hardly true Tele saddles... these actually have more history and rights to be on a Tele if you think about it," argues Norvell. "We wanted the bridge to have six saddles for intonation, but your typical six-saddle Tele bridge has those small lightweight saddles and the sharp ashtray edge. So, we tested the new bent steel Fenders out and they just opened the tonal spectrum up. They have a great and less compressed sound." Let's have a listen...

Sounds - Telecaster

If a guitar can be awkward then this Tele is, and frankly it's hard to put our finger on why. The neck feels more contemporary than the Strat's and the acoustic ring is lighter than either of our (ash bodied) reference Teles. Perhaps that's no surprise; the bridge here is going to play a major part in the guitar's fundamental tone and we hear a more open, less powerfully strident and modern sound than either the previous American Standard or American Series. So, the back pickup seems to have higher highs, less balls in the mids and a slightly softer, less brutal low end – some of which can certainly be attributed to the alder body's more woody, less spiky perceived tone. It sits therefore in an unusual place with plenty of Tele character, for sure, but perhaps not quite enough to satisfy a more experienced player. That said for a lot of more contemporary styles, quite gained and rhythmic, the American Standard more than shines. The mixed sound is very wide with more of a Strat-like zing to the



high end and, while the neck pickup lacks some of that percussive wood, the slightly softer but papery-edged sound proves more than effective for jazzier lines. It's hard to know what to think. For many, it looks like a Tele so it clearly sounds like one. For others – maybe like us – it'll be

a case of getting used to a slightly left-field Tele sound that lacks some of the original's frankly brutal character.

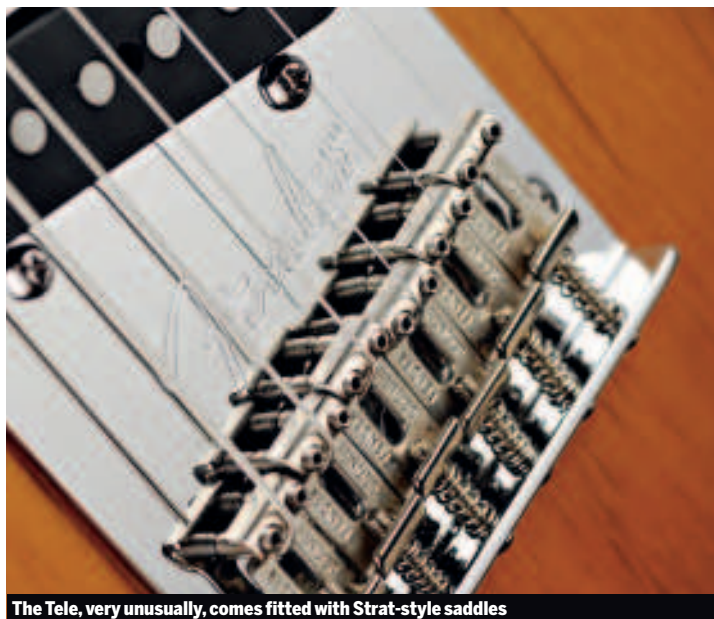
American Standard Precision Bass

Being the first ever solid-bodied bass guitar means that the Precision has become one of the most modified instruments ever. With the emphasis firmly focused on what made this bass so great in the first place, the tweaks for this new American Standard model enhance the playing experience as well as re-embracing the original sounds. Of course, like the Strat and Tele, this new American Standard has evolved from the original through the first American Standard and then the American Series, so the instrument we see today amounts to a substantial makeover of the original design.

The keyword here has to be Standard. "These instruments are the core of the line," Norvell reminds us, "its centre of gravity, if you will, so it's a better and more descriptive name [than the prior American Series]. American Vintage models are vintage, American Deluxe models are deluxe but American Standard models set the standard."

Close inspection of the bridge and tuning keys reveals the two major changes with this new version. The bridge is much more

For some it'll be a case of getting used to a slightly left-field Tele sound that lacks some of the original's brutal character





The Precision split-coil pickup delivers a mighty thump

The P-bass continues to give an authority, a big thump if you like, to any player – it's no wonder that it's truly stood the test of time

substantial, with increased mass overall – hence its High Mass Vintage (HMV) name – but with particular attention to the anchor plate. This is now beautifully designed and fully accepts the ball ends of the strings to hide them from view. This basic raised-tail design goes right back to day one and here vintage saddles are retained to offer those simple, but effective, space adjustment ridges – just a few steps away from the threaded saddles that were first used on the 1950s designs but actually work very well.

Both of these classic basses are beautifully balanced and while the bridge adds a little extra weight the new Hipshot-made tuners actually reduce it. Semi-

covered and significantly smaller in size than the traditional units, the gears here work smoothly and efficiently, while the shamrock (or 'elephant ear') tuning buttons retain that trademark look. And talking of trademarks, Fender has retained the much favoured spaghetti logo for the current headstock that also has the added depth of recent years as it has proved to be more stable and resonant.

You immediately notice that a lot of attention has been paid to the neck. It's graphite reinforced (like the previous American Standard and American Series basses) but as with the guitars we get more of a tint to the finish (the body also features a thinner

The Rivals



Fender Classic Series from £429

Mexican-made repros of the Fender classics with vintage-like details such as original small fingerboard radius and smaller frets, vintage spec pickups and fifties/sixties era finishes.



Fender Highway One Series from £599

American made with imported parts, the Highway One series was upgraded in 2006 to include nitro-cellulose finishes, seventies styling, big frets, Alnico pickups and a serious roadhouse vibe. Highly recommended.



Fender Deluxe Series from £1,069

The considered players' series, the American Deluxe guitars build on the American Standards with a raft of cosmetic upgrades (including flame maple) but primarily the S-1 switching (not the Precision but this has active EQ) which expands each instrument's tonality dramatically.



The Rivals continued...



Fender American Vintage Series from £1,299

Outside of the Fender Custom Shop, here's where you'll find the best USA-made vintage replicas. If it's classic features you want like nitro-cellulose finishes, old-style 'board, even a three-way lever switch on the Strat and original Tele wiring, dive in.



Fender VG Stratocaster £1,449

Fender's new 'super guitar' includes digital models of both a Strat and a Tele (plus acoustics) and various altered tunings. The result of a collaboration with Roland, the VG is the Swiss army knife of the Fender guitar range... and a lot more besides!



Fender Tony Franklin Fretted Precision Bass £1,399

One of the few USA Fender basses that combines both P and J pickups for a flavour of both basses in one. Brit-bassist Franklin is known for his fretless work too (there's a fretless version) with Jimmy Page, Paul Rogers and David Gilmour.



The improved bass anchor plate now hides the ball ends from view

undercoat), so this maple 'board and neck combination neatly avoids the pale look of new 'white' wood. Simple black dots are used in the fingerboard and, like the Strat on review, we have a gloss fretboard surface and hand-rolled edges that give the bass a well played-in feel. The neck itself has the popular modern 'C' profile and a silky smooth satin texture – a great player.

Although the colour choices are set to reflect current tastes there is still a decent variety to consider plus a choice of maple or rosewood fingerboards, left-hand models and, for the first time, a five-string version.

Sounds - P-Bass

Whether aware of it or not, everyone has heard the sound of a Precision bass many, many times because it's been used on countless recordings, in every musical genre, since its introduction. Thanks to the legendary split-coil pickup it produces a sound that is always solid with distinct notes no matter where the tone control is set. Without the coverplates that were associated with Fender basses for nearly three decades, this pickup is the dominating feature on the scratchplate and this Alnico, flush-poled unit is simply height adjusted to give an even delivery from each string, allowing the best balanced sound from the instrument.

As in the very first incarnation, the strings pass through the body for added resonance, and the electronics revert to that simple, original specification. So this is a passive bass with just a volume and tone control to alter the sound. But in a passive circuit the position of the volume control actually has an effect on the tone, and the more finicky among you can utilise this when shaping your sound. And whether you use fingers, pick or both, this P-bass continues to give an authority, a big thump if you like, to any player – it's no wonder that it's truly stood the test of time.

American Standard Jazz Bass

Naturally, much of the latest

specification seen on the Precision also applies to the Jazz bass. Although originally introduced as the 'two pickup Precision', the Jazz actually proved to be far more significant than that. From its introduction back in 1960 we were presented with the true delights of the 'sweet spot', the mix of the two pickups, for the very first time. It's something you never forget.

The first version utilised a pair of stacked knobs that offered volume and tone controls for both of the single-coiled pickups, but it was the revamped model with individual volumes and a shared tone that soon became the accepted standard for this instrument. And it is this second design that is the footprint for this latest model (and the first-version American Standard, then American Series). The high standard of satin urethane finish on the neck and gloss headstock is again utilised, although on this review model the fingerboard is made of rosewood. Having more slender neck dimensions than the Precision, this modern profile gives the neck a substantial quality yet it never feels bulky.

The slinky neck and offset body design has always given the Jazz oodles of visual style and playability and, although Fender is offering exactly the same selection as the Precision, some of the colours here look particularly good on this bass. The review colour – charcoal frost metallic – is a case in point. Sharp and clean it gives an old favourite a very contemporary look indeed. Left-handed (rosewood only) and five-string options are also up for grabs, as well as a fretless option.

Fender is also shouting about the new cases on all the guitars and basses that are included in the price. They are of a new Fender/SKB design and are strong, sturdy and quite sumptuous and shaped inside. They are also fitted with TSA locks approved by the Airport Security Authority in the States, and as they have skeleton keys you can lock your case and should they need to check inside they can. It's a good idea but a sad reflection of the current troubles facing the touring musician.

Playing this [Jazz] bass is like picking up an old friend. With a great set-up it's slick and comfortable to play...



The improved bass tuners are lighter than their predecessors, which proves an aid to strapped-on balance

The Jazz provides a greater variety of sounds and with it a certain finesse that only twin pickups can muster

Sounds - J Bass

Bearing in mind some of the electronic advances made over the years, with many employed on other J- and P-bass models, it would have been very easy to play around with the classic circuit and include things like the S1 switching system. But this is the new 'standard' model and Fender has avoided the temptation to over spec the electronics and is sticking with the now-classic circuit.

Playing this bass is like picking up an old friend. With a great set-up it's slick and comfortable to

play and offers great access to all frets – again with that well played-in feel. And while the Precision offers that robust solidity in terms of tone, it's the Jazz that provides the greater variety of sounds and with it a certain finesse that only twin pickups can muster. It's the subtle blending of these two pickups, achieved by using the individual volume controls, that gives the Jazz its own very special voice. In fact, the tone control really only provides the emphasis to the overall sound rather than being the core element.

This is the bass that brought us the 'sweet spot' – that seductive hidden element that is unleashed when this pickup blending reaches a critical point. With these upgraded and matched single-coil pickups this blend now sings with a new clarity and forcefulness. It's like you've just found the best version of the bass in the shop. Individually the pickups speak clearly, but it's the combined hollow tones that count when considering a Jazz.

Verdict

The upgrades on all four instruments are relatively subtle compared to the previous American Series versions and, aside (obviously) from the excellent new case, are very much sound-led with new bridges and a

thinner finish. You could certainly argue that Fender is trying to get a little more vintage-like resonance into the sounds, continuing what the American Series started to repair, if you like, from perhaps the too modernist, original American Standards.

The result is a foursome of frankly excellent gigging, working guitars. The Strat and both basses certainly get the thumbs up from us although the Tele leaves us slightly confused with its Strat-like saddles that to us put it into a 'Hot Rod' or 'Modified' category, not a 'Standard'. It's still a cracking guitar, and call us traditionalist, but of the four it remains the slightly left-field model.

Once again Fender has set the standard other manufacturers can only hope to follow. **G**

The bottom line

Standard Stratocaster

We like: The subtle updates improve on the previous American Series and create a 'no-brainer' modern Strat
We dislike: It would have been nice to see 'V' notches in the vintage saddles – the strings can still slip and slide
Guitarist says: A pro standard modern, gigging Strat that's better than the previous model

Standard Telecaster

We like: Again the subtle improvements in resonance and vibe
We dislike: The new saddles subtly change the Tele character – not bad but different
Guitarist says: A great performer, especially for modern rhythm styles but loses a little of the classic Tele in the process

Standard Precision

We like: The back-to-basics style, practicality and classic sounds
We dislike: No bridge and pickup coverplates – sorry, we like 'em
Guitarist says: If you want a quality classic P-bass with modern playability they don't come much better than this

Standard Jazz

We like: Ditto the P-bass – it's an old friend!
We dislike: Frankly nothing
Guitarist says: As 'right' as a production line, cost-effective bass can be

FENDER AMERICAN STANDARDS FROM £879
ELECTRICS/BASS



Fender American Standard Stratocaster

PRICE: £879 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Offset double-cutaway, solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: One-piece maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Melamine/43.3mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple, black dots, 241mm (9.5-inch) radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Fender two-point synchronised vibrato with Am Std pressed steel saddles, Fender Deluxe Staggered cast/sealed tuners – chrome-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm
ELECTRICS: Three American Strat single-coils, five-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume, tone 1 (neck pickup), tone 2 (Delta Tone, middle and bridge pickup)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.7/8.5
OPTIONS: Rosewood fingerboard (all colours, as below)
RANGE OPTIONS: The American Standard Stratocaster HSS (£949 solid colours) adds a Fender Diamondback humbucker at bridge and two Custom-Staggered Tex-Mex single-coils – maple or rosewood 'boards in three-colour sunburst (adds £50), black, sienna sunburst (ash body, adds £100) and blizzard pearl
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, five colours, maple or rosewood 'board (£949 solid colours, three-colour sunburst adds £50)
FINISHES: Three-colour sunburst (adds £50), Olympic white (as reviewed), black, candy cola, sienna sunburst (ash body, adds £100), blizzard pearl, charcoal frost metallic
Fender GBI 01342 331700
www.fender.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Fender American Standard Telecaster

PRICE: £879 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Single-cutaway, solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: One-piece maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Melamine/43.7mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, white dots, 241mm (9.5-inch) radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Fender Am Std Telecaster bridge with six pressed steel saddles and stamped brass plate, Fender Deluxe Staggered cast/sealed tuners – chrome-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm
ELECTRICS: Two American Tele single-coils, five-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume, Delta Tone
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.7/8.5
OPTIONS: Maple fingerboard (all colours, as below).
RANGE OPTIONS: None
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, three colours, maple 'board only (£949 solid colours, three-colour sunburst adds £50)
FINISHES: Three-colour sunburst (as reviewed, adds £50), black, candy cola, blizzard pearl. Natural and crimson red transparent both use ash bodies and add £100

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Fender American Standard Precision

PRICE: £949 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Offset double-cutaway solidbody electric four-string
BODY: Alder
NECK: One-piece maple with graphite reinforcement, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 864mm (34-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Melamine/41.3mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple, black dots, 241mm (9.5-inch) radius
FRETS: 20, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Chrome-plated Fender special design HMV bridge, Hipshot-made vintage-style tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 19.5mm average (centres)
ELECTRICS: Fender Alnico V split single-coil pickup, volume and tone controls
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/7.7
OPTIONS: Rosewood fingerboard only
RANGE OPTION: A five-string version is available from £1,119 (three-colour sunburst adds £70)
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, rosewood 'board only, in black (£1,049) and three-colour sunburst (£1,099)
FINISH: Black (as reviewed), three-colour sunburst (adds £50), Olympic white, candy cola, blizzard pearl, charcoal frost metallic

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Fender American Standard Jazz Bass

PRICE: £949 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Offset double-cutaway solidbody electric four-string
BODY: Alder
NECK: One-piece maple with graphite reinforcement, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 864mm (34-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Melamine/38mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, white dots, 241mm (9.5-inch) radius
FRETS: 20, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Chrome-plated Fender special design HMV bridge, Hipshot-made vintage style tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 19.5mm average (centres)
ELECTRICS: Two Fender Alnico V single-coil pickups, two volume controls and a single master tone
WEIGHT (kg/lbs): 3.75/8.3
OPTIONS: Maple fingerboard only
RANGE OPTIONS: A five-string version is available from £1,119 (three-colour sunburst adds (adds £70). The fretless four-string comes in black (£1,049) and three-colour sunburst (£1,109)
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, rosewood 'board only, in black (£1,049) and three-colour sunburst (£1,099)
FINISH: Charcoal frost metallic (as reviewed), three-colour sunburst (adds £50), Olympic white, candy cola, blizzard pearl, black

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★