



## Yamaha Pacifica 112V £199

**YAMAHA**  
**PACIFICA 112V**  
**PRICE:** £199

**ORIGIN:** Indonesia  
**TYPE:** Double-cutaway solidbody electric  
**BODY:** Alder  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 648mm (25.5-inch)  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Black synthetic/41mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood, pearlloid dots, 350mm (13.75-inch) radius

**FRETS:** 22, medium  
**HARDWARE:** Vintage-style vibrato with block steel saddles, enclosed tuners – all chrome plated

**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 53mm

**ELECTRICS:** Yamaha 'custom wound' Alnico V H/S/S pickups, five-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume and master tone (with push/pull switch to split bridge humbucker) controls

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 3.6/8  
**OPTIONS:** None. Maple fingerboard and expanded colours promised for 2008

**RANGE OPTIONS:** The Pacifica range kicks off with the 012 (£129) and includes the 412V (£299), 612V (£419) and 812V (£619). The more Single cutaway Pacificas are the start-up 120SJ (£179) and the upmarket 1511MS Mike Stern (£709)

**LEFT-HANDERS:** Promised for 2008

**FINISHES:** Natural satin, old violin sunburst (as reviewed), raspberry red, sonic blue (also pictured), black and silver metallic

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Yamaha's Pacifica is probably the most successful update of 'that' guitar ever. It's Yamaha's best-selling electric guitar and it's just got better! **by Dave Burrluck**

Originally the most affordable of the Yamaha Pacifica range (which debuted in 1990, and was designed by Yamaha's USA team, primarily ex-Ibanez designer Rich Lasner), the 112 first appeared in 1993 and not only overtook all previous (and subsequent) Pacifica models in terms of sales, it actually proved a benchmark for quality and specification. Back in the early nineties it was not uncommon to see plywood-bodied guitars in the low-end market. Not so the 112, which was made of solid wood. And not any old lump of tree, but solid alder. To advertise this Yamaha offered the 112 in a natural finish. But it wasn't just the body wood, the Pacifica 112 – from the outset – employed good hardware and pickups and classy design.

Earlier this year Yamaha introduced an upgraded model in all but price. The Pacifica 112 defies inflation and remains at £199 – the same price as it was back in 1993. Let's take a closer look at the 2007 model.

While no one has ever disputed the origin of the Pacifica design, its outline is very noticeably different to the Stratocaster. The horns are longer, sleeker and the lower bout appears a little more angular compared to a Strat. Up to this point in its history the 112 has featured a large scratchplate on to which all the pickups and electrics were mounted – like the Strat, but unlike the majority of other Pacifica models that use a more distinct design with the bridge pickup and rotary controls body-mounted, the other two pickups and five-way selector on the scratchplate. For this year the 112 now follows that style (including a three-ply, as opposed to single-ply, scratchplate material) and immediately the guitar looks less generic with more of the hot-rod vibe that's so much a part of the original



The chrome push/pull switch on the tone knob activates the coil-split facility for the bridge humbucker

**It's very clear that someone cares and, importantly, understands what a good electric guitar should feel like**

Pacifica design and concept.

The 112 is far from fancy and simply concentrates on the bare necessities. Yet the construction is of excellent quality. We received a two-tone sunburst guitar to evaluate and the matching of the body pieces – two or three, we're honestly not sure – is extremely good, as is the finishing. Only the very noticeable forearm contour to the body looks a little out of place – a more curved transition wouldn't distract from the clean, modern design.

The maple neck has a very thin satin finish – it almost feels like it's been oiled – and is tidily mounted to the body with the standard four screws and neck plate. The neck is well shaped, a full-ish 'C' that feels thinner in depth than it

actually is. Fretting is excellent from a medium size wire (approx 2.37mm wide x 1.36 high); the ends of the slots are filled, the side edge of the fingerboard is slightly curved, just like an old Fender, not straight like so many low-end guitars. There's even a little rounding to the top edge of the fingerboard. It's not quite James Tyler, of course, but it's very clear that someone cares and, importantly, understands what a good electric guitar should feel like in the hand. But perhaps most importantly the neck is really solid and stable, there's minimal whip. Trust us, if looked after this will be a guitar for life.

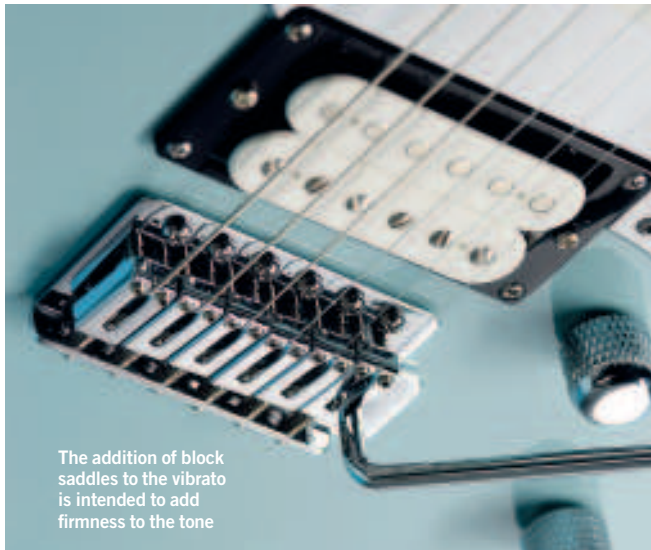
The original Pacifica six-in-a-line headstock has lasted well and still looks →



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PHOTOGRAPHY NEIL GODWIN





The addition of block saddles to the vibrato is intended to add firmness to the tone



Comfortable contouring and a sturdy neck joint: good stuff

## The rivals

Vintage VP6	from £159
OLP MM4	£199
Squire Vintage Modified Strat HSS	£269

Vintage has 'honoured' the Pacifica 112's classic status with a close copy including its bridge humbucker and natural finish over a mahogany body – colours cost £10 more. OLP's MM4 boasts a H/S/S pickup configuration, basswood body and choice of five colours. It's based on the Music Man Silhouette Special and gives the 112 a run for its money, in spec if not consistency. Squier's new Strat HSS again illustrates what great value the Pacifica is. There are no luxuries like a coil-split here, an unusual 'Indian red cedar' body and colours are limited to black and gun metal grey.

YAMAHA PACIFICA 112V	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

- **WE LIKED** Design; build quality; modern sounds; versatility; consistency
- **WE DISLIKED** We would have liked a more substantial upgrade to the vibrato

→ good some 14 years on. A simple silk-screened script logo dominates the functional, square Yamaha logo and the company's 'tuning fork' emblem is thrown in – just in case you don't already know you're playing a Yamaha!

A subtle change to the pretty standard vintage vibrato design is the addition of block saddles intended to add a little firmness to the tone. They also give a precise break-point for the string. The saddle height adjustment screws are all the same height and those on the outer saddles protrude – using shorter screws would be dead easy and solve the problem. It remains

a basic unit, however, with screw-in arm and no tension adjustment; the block is deep-drilled to lose dead string length and, in theory, help with tuning stability; it's also heavily contoured – typical of the modern rock guitars of the late eighties/early nineties.

We can't help thinking that more mass from a standard vintage-style steel block and maybe a push-in arm would be more suitable in 2007. Also, the vibrato coverplate has six individual holes for string access whereas one large hole is faster for string changes.

According to Yamaha the pickups have been upgraded, in line with other Pacifica models, with Alnico V-loaded pickups. "They used to be ceramic-loaded pickups," confirms Yamaha's Julian Ward. "We wanted to get that Alnico tone specifically for this guitar

but still create a vintage/modern sound. The Pacifica does have its own character – it's not the most unique – but where it fits is that it's hugely versatile. It's not overly vintage but it's not a super slim-neck rock axe with active pickups either – by design it sits in that middle ground." Also new for 2007 is a coil-split facility for the bridge humbucker – activated by a pull/push switch on the tone control – and even the knobs have received a makeover; they're now chromed and knurled metal: classy.

**SOUNDS:** The icing on the cake, of course, is that this £199 Pacifica blows the socks off a vintage Fender, right? Wrong. By design it's an altogether more modern, brighter and lighter take on a hot-rod Strat. But when we say brighter that doesn't mean overly shrill. In fact the bridge humbucker will surprise some, it's beefy without being too mid-range heavy and although the coil-split, which voices the screw-coil,

proves a little bland played clean, with a distortion boost it's a pretty useful gnarly and wiry rhythm voice. It's good to have the choice too when mixed with the middle pickup – switching between the full and split coil here is subtle but, especially with

cleaner 'class A' amp voicings, there's enough character difference to be useable. The solo single-coils impress – plenty of percussion and with a little mid-range beef added from the amp these get you to the correct Texas-toneland. Neck and middle combined produces a fine modern Strat-like mix – the added brightness will cut through a multi-FX patch nicely. Hum-cancellation is good too – only the lone single-coils will pick up hum, while any mixes and obviously the full bridge humbucker are nice and quiet.


On the down side the tone control gets too muddy fully off; perhaps a different value capacitor could nail a more Clapton-esque 'woman' tone. The volume taper, however, is excellent and ideal for subtle changes and smooth violin effects.

The vibrato can lead you into tuning stability problems but that's the nature of the beast; used for more old-school shimmer it adds a lot (and stays in tune) but don't expect, without some additional tweaking, for things to come back spot-on in-tune after a bout of heavy down-bending.

## Verdict

The added tweaks to this 2007 Pacifica 112 simply make what was already a perfectly good guitar better. It remains the absolute perfect start-up guitar for the serious student. Yes, there are cheaper no-brand instruments in abundance, but as we've said time and time again at Guitarist if you want an instrument that'll grow with you, the Pacifica remains, in a crowded market place, one of the best places to start.

Aside from the instrument itself – which let's face it after being in production for 14 years should be pretty good – there is the issue of consistency. This, in our opinion, is where Yamaha really scores. This writer really can't remember playing, reviewing or owning a Yamaha guitar that hasn't been, for the price, superbly built. Perhaps that's one reason why many professional teachers and players will recommend a Pacifica 112 to youngsters and students alike.

But the truth is the 112 is a good guitar whatever your age or ability. It's ideal as an affordable spare if you own a few instruments and ideal too for a bit of hot-rodding. Here's to another 14 years – and more – of the 112. 

## Yamaha Pacifica 112V

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★ →

**The Pacifica remains the absolute perfect start-up guitar for the serious student**



Left: The Original Pacifica 112

Below: the 2007 version

## Pacifica heights

Guitarist looks at the impact of the Pacifica 112 – past and present... by Dave Burruck

**W**e usually apply the word ‘classic’ to a handful of electric guitars, most of which were designed before 1965 and now cost thousands of pounds. We’d be a laughing stock, then, if we used the same word in reference to a £199 electric guitar from Yamaha. Well, laugh away because the Yamaha Pacifica 112 is indeed a modern classic.

The 112 is the most successful Yamaha ever by quite a margin and the company guesstimated that, by its 10th birthday, some 60,000 had been sold in the UK alone. Ken Dapron from YGD (Yamaha’s USA design and custom shop centre) reckoned annual sales worldwide numbered around 25-30,000. It’s undoubtedly one of the best-selling electrics in the history of the instrument – certainly outside of Fender/Squier and Gibson/Epiphone – and even has the dubious honour of being copied, originally by the UK’s Vintage brand and now by numerous far eastern factories.

The obvious question is, if the 112 is such a brilliant guitar, why did Yamaha feel the need to upgrade it this year?

“Basically, we just wanted to raise the specification,” boasts Yamaha’s Julian Ward. “You see, the market has changed a lot in the past 14 years and when companies market a product today, the number of features is really important – whether you need them or not. We thought we could up the stakes with the 112. It was always about being the best guitar at £199 but what we can do now is slightly different from what we could do 14 years ago. In essence the guitar didn’t need to change but we felt there was room for a little improvement.”

The major market change, of course, has been the virtual tsunami of low-end guitars from China – you can easily buy one of many Strat copies for about the same as a Chinese takeaway for four. “The popularity of the 112 definitely



The natural finish showed off the Pacifica’s solid wood construction

dipped a little when the price of an entry level electric seemed to drop to £100, as opposed to around £200, when we started to see Chinese guitars flooding our market. But to be honest, the 112 is very established and didn’t take a massive hit.

“We didn’t want to drop the price of the 112 because we believe after the romance people had initially with those entry level guitars they’re now realising that the unbranded low-quality instruments aren’t a good place to start and are coming back to a branded instrument that offers better consistency. I think people are realising the difference and don’t have a problem spending more to get a more serious instrument.”

In fact Yamaha has shot itself in the foot a little. By upgrading the 112 as we’ve described it’s made the existing 412V seem rather expensive at £299 and it’s now technically discontinued.

But, consistency remains a byword at Yamaha. “Across all the products we have the drive to produce things of consistent quality and value – but not in sense of being cheap,” continues Ward. “We have incredibly tight quality control. In fact when we’ve used OEM factories to make

instruments for us, it hasn’t always worked – very few OEM factories want to deal with us because of our strict QC. With our own factories, if there’s an issue with a product, in two steps we can get to the manager in the factory and we can fix it. We also have local quality control here in the UK – not for every guitar, that’s not necessary, but certainly when there’s a new model we will double-check the initial samples until we’re happy that the production has been really sorted out.”

The Pacifica 112 remains a good example. It was first made in Yamaha’s Taiwanese factory. Production slowly moved to Indonesia, around the year 2000, and today that’s where the model is exclusively made. “Nobody has ever noticed a difference – to the really trained eye you might notice a little difference but it’d be very, very minor,” says Ward.

To celebrate the success of the 112 – and a big part of that is down to Guitarist’s readers – look out for a very special competition in issue 295 of Guitarist. Later in the year we’ll be travelling to Indonesia to check out where, and exactly how, the 112 and numerous other Yamaha instruments are made.

