



# Fender Player II Modified Telecaster

Fender's latest Tele puts a decidedly modern twist on an all-time classic. I get hands-on to find out if it's worth the upgrade or not

BY MATT MCCRACKEN

**▶ REPRESENTING THE MORE** modern and forward-thinking arm of the Player II series, much like the original Player guitars were augmented by the Player Plus instruments, Fender's new Player II Modified electric guitars are very much the contemporary outreach of the Fender mid-range stable.

The Fender Player II Modified Telecaster keeps a lot of what was great about the original Player II Tele, with the rosewood 'boards, rounded fingerboard edges, and upgraded pickups, but has a few neat tricks up its sleeve to differentiate it from the original. series wiring gives you the option to add even more tones to the already-versatile Tele staples, with a treble bleed circuit on the volume knob, while locking tuners enhance the stability and speed up string changes.

From the visual look of the guitar, it's very much a standard Telecaster. There's nothing here that would make you think it isn't a classic spec Tele, apart from modern-looking knobs and the six-saddle bridge. They're brass saddles coated in a silver finish, again straddling the line of vintage versus modern. It's the two single coils with the plate-mounted bridge pickup and covered neck pickup, master volume and tone knobs, and the ever-present three-way pickup selector.

The only real hint of any difference is in the locking tuners, which is only obvious when you look at the rear of the guitar. They all feature short posts to help create more of a break angle over the nut, and are chrome-finished with the Fender 'F' emblazoned on the dials. A 9.5-inch radius fingerboard is the same as what you'll find on the core Player II guitar, as is the modern 'C' neck profile which is pretty much ubiquitous on Fender guitars these days.

**Build quality**

When the Player II Modified Tele arrived I was very pleased to see a return of the soft case that was missing from the previous Player II iterations of MIM Fender guitars. It's a good quality one too, with an ample selection of pockets, and dual straps that let you wear it like a backpack.

Unpacking the guitar from it and removing the light covering I conducted a close inspection of the finish, finding nothing amiss in the Sunshine Yellow body. It looks great with the contrasting black pickguard, like a classic Butterscotch Tele with a slightly more modern feel. Unlike the Fender Player II Modified Stratocaster Floyd Rose I reviewed alongside it, there were zero issues with the finishing, and no hint of any blemish throughout.

The knobs and switches all feel rock solid, and the push-pull knob comes up with a satisfying click. The neck snugly fits into the pocket with no movement, and the fingerboard edges are beautifully rounded off, giving a smooth feel over its full length. The tuners are nice and straight, the nut cut well, and the pickguard is applied with no bumps or bubbles. It isn't until playing that I notice an issue.

**Playability**

I find the maple 'board to be lovely and smooth feeling under my fingers, and the radius of the fretboard is a nice balance between flat and rounded. The neck profile is up to Fender's usual quality, again balancing nicely between heft and slinkiness that suits a variety of playing styles from fast scale runs to fingerpicking open chords.

I never feel as though anything was beyond the guitar, whether bending huge notes or grooving to some Tom Morello-inspired riffs. You can shred on it if you want, lay down some sweet blues licks, or just knock out some power chords without ever feeling as though you're making it do something it doesn't want to. It's super versatile and will suit a huge variety of

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players, whether they prefer modern or classic guitar styles.

That issue I mentioned? The frets higher up the neck do feel scratchy, which is particularly noticeable when playing the guitar unplugged. It doesn't massively impact my ability to manipulate the notes when bending, but it does change the feel and is especially noticeable when performing wide vibrato. It might be something that fades over time as the guitar breaks in, or can be remedied faster with polishing, but it's a small annoyance. Still something you'd hope not to see when you're spending this amount of money.

**Sounds**

Sitting down with the Tele and my trusty Orange Rocker 32 tube amp, I start with some clean tones as that's what my amp was set to. With no effects engaged and pickup selector in the bridge position, it's classic Tele through and through. Twangy and bright without getting ice-picky, it's that cutting tone that's made the Tele a classic, although I'd say ever so slightly hotter than the more vintage-inspired Player II.

Moving to the neck position, there are no surprises here either, just lovely warm and round tones. It doesn't feel too woolly to my ear, which can often be a complaint from Tele users, but then I've always enjoyed the Tele neck tone. It sounds delightful with picked arpeggios, giving plenty of thickness whilst still managing to be articulate across the bass and treble strings.

In the middle position, the sound is tilted more to the low end of the register, with the introduction of some more high-frequency content that makes it a little more cutting. It's not quite as balanced as I expected it might be, feeling very similar to the neck position overall. I find I prefer either one or the other in terms of the pickups, seldom able to settle on a truly satisfying use for the middle position during my testing.

Adding in a healthy dose of modulation, reverb, and delay brings some truly delightful sounds whether strumming open chords or picking the individual notes of a lead melody. I own a Player Plus Telecaster, the forefather of this guitar and it doesn't feel outwardly different to me in terms of tone, able to deliver across a vast array of playing styles. One advantage the Player II Modified does have is a treble bleed circuit though, which keeps your tone sounding great even on the lowest of volume knob settings.

The secret sauce of this guitar is that you can pull the tone knob up to engage the two pickups in a serial circuit. This means that rather than running side by side, one pickup is fed into the other, creating a tone that's not miles away from that of a humbucker.

Turning my amp to the dirt channel and adding in a Klon-clone to the signal path gives me some properly hairy sounds that could cover everything from heavy metal, to angry punk rock, self-indulgent blues licks and back again.

Laying into some power chords in this mode gives me plenty of opportunity for hard rock riffs, from 80s-inspired hair metal right through to the more modern groove metal sounds.

This Telecaster is already a versatile instrument but the addition of the series circuit makes it even more of a multi-role guitar, able to

## GUITAR VERDICT



**We all know Tele's are versatile but the Player II Modified Telecaster takes it to a different level. The addition of the series circuit to this instrument takes it from being yet another Tele iteration to something well worth considering even if you already own a Tele-style guitar. Add in an ultra-comfortable fingerboard with some locking tuners and you've got yourself a proper workhorse that will cover a huge array of sounds, and stay in tune whilst doing so.**

- PROS**
- + Maple fretboard feels gloriously smooth under your fingers.
  - + Series circuit adds even more options to the classic Tele versatility.
  - + Locking tuners and hardtail bridge combo make tuning super consistent.
  - + Treble bleed circuit keeps your tone intact when you roll off.
- CONS**
- Frets were a little scratchy out of the box.
  - No belly cut which will make it uncomfortable for some.

**SPECS**

**MADE:** Mexico  
**TYPE:** Six-string electric guitar  
**BODY:** Alder  
**NECK:** Maple, Modern 'C'  
**FINGERBOARD/RADIUS:** Maple, 9.5"  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 25.5" (64.77 cm)  
**NUT/WIDTH:** TUSQ, 42 mm  
**FRETS:** 22-frets, medium-jumbo  
**HARDWARE:** Deluxe cast/sealed locking tuners (all short posts), 6-saddle string-through-body Tele bridge with block brass saddles  
**STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE:** 54.2mm  
**ELECTRICS:** 2x Player II Noiseless Tele single coils, master volume with treble-bleed, master tone, push/pull tone control activates series mode, 3-position blade switch  
**WEIGHT:** 8.1lbs  
**LEFT-HANDED OPTIONS:** Only standard Player II Telecaster  
**FINISHES:** Sunshine Yellow (as reviewed), Electric Blue, Olympic Pearl, Harvest Green Metallic, Dusk, 3-Color Sunburst  
**CASE:** Fender soft case included

cover all but the most extreme forms of metal. Even then if you whacked some heavy gauge strings on it I reckon it could still do a good job there.

**Verdict**

As the owner of a Player Plus Telecaster, I naturally wanted to compare this guitar to it, and they're pretty much the same as far as specs and sounds go. The Player II Modified Tele does up the ante in giving you a rosewood fretboard versus a laurel one on those colorways that have the darker 'board, but the Player Plus has a belly cut which makes it a lot more comfortable if you wear your guitar higher up.

Whilst I'm not going to trade in my Player Plus for one of these, I do think they're both brilliant guitars in their own right and those additional modifications really elevate them above the standard Player II instruments, which I've also reviewed. For me, I think it's totally worth it to spend a little more and get one of these - unless you're hell-bent on a vintage-type Tele.

