

GEAR

REVIEW

SQUIER JAZZMASTER



SQUIER VINTAGE MODIFIED BARITONE JAZZMASTER

£394

The tuning's low, and fortunately for us, the price tag is, too

JUDGING

by the sheer number we've had through our doors in the past year or so, the baritone is on the rise. Although the instrument itself has been around since the 50s, its popularity has peaked and troughed over the decades. However, with guitar-emulating bass and drum duo Royal Blood topping the album charts and flying the flag for low frequencies, the time seems right for guitarists to get down and dirty too. Squier's latest affordable offering is primed for action.

This isn't the first guitar-bass hybrid we've seen from Squier recently; the Bass VI provided us with low-end thrills one octave below, but this Vintage Modified Jazzmaster is a baritone through and through. It's tuned A D G C E A (a perfect 5th below standard guitar tuning), with a 762mm (30-inch) scale length, which makes playing one of these quite different to, say, a 686mm (27-inch) Fender Blacktop Telecaster Baritone. 30 inches is the same as a short-scale bass, which gives you an idea of what you're grappling with here; this is no conventional guitar.

However you feel about its giraffe-esque appendage, the Baritone Jazz is one suave axe. The Antigua Burst finish is divisive, sure, but the matching scratchplate, vintage-style headstock decal and block inlays give the guitar a touch of 60s mojo.

And if you can stop yourself running your hands over its sultry curves, you'll find an attractive player here, too. It's a given that the extended scale length will be a transition for most guitarists, but it also makes this Jazz one of the most stable baritones we've played; it arrived in near-perfect tuning and stayed that way throughout our testing – the Danelectro-esque bridge helps to ensure there's just the right

amount of give when you whack the strings hard, too.

Like its Bass VI forebear, the Baritone Jazz is a gateway tool to new creative techniques; the lower pitch range makes you approach the instrument in a different way, and even the simplest open chords evoke a thunderous rumble, thanks in part to the Duncan Designed Jazzmaster single coils, which are the perfect enablers. There's a shimmering, almost hi-fi quality to the neck position – add a dash of tremolo and reverb and you're in surf and western territory; if soundtracking is your game, you'll find plenty of inspiration here. The bridge, meanwhile, offers a more traditional guitar tone, with a compressed, mid-heavy sound.

It sounds tasty with amp overdrive, but feed it to some distortion, and chunky grind is your reward – ideal for post-rock crescendos and stoner drones, with huge sustain available from the heftier string gauges. But while you can play metal at a push, this guitar is best suited to alt-rock and indie players looking for ways to expand their chordal repertoire.

We've played a lot of Squiers and a lot of baritones, and the Vintage Modified Baritone Jazzmaster is the perfect marriage of the two. This 60s-inspired design just feels right, from the knurled chrome knobs to the pickup selector placement. And, considering the faultless build quality, toneful Duncan Designed pickups and street prices around £300, you'll struggle to find a baritone that offers more for the money.

Michael Brown

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

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood
NECK: Maple
SCALE: 762mm (30")
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 21
PICKUPS: 2x Duncan Designed JM101 Jazzmaster single coils
CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector
HARDWARE: 6-saddle fixed bridge, vintage-style tuners – chrome
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Antigua Burst only
CONTACT: Fender GBI 01342 331700
www.fender.com

NECK

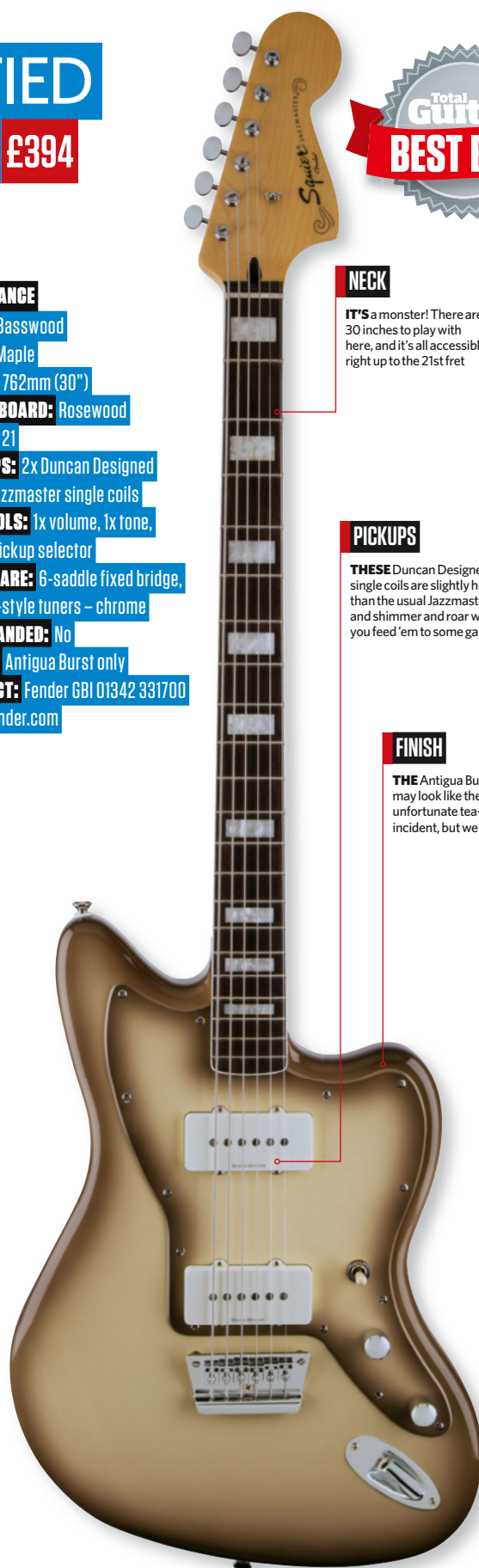
IT'S a monster! There are 30 inches to play with here, and it's all accessible, right up to the 21st fret

PICKUPS

THESE Duncan Designed single coils are slightly hotter than the usual Jazzmaster fare, and shimmer and roar when you feed 'em to some gain

FINISH

THE Antigua Burst finish may look like the result of an unfortunate tea-dunking incident, but we dig it



Total
Guitar
BEST BUY