



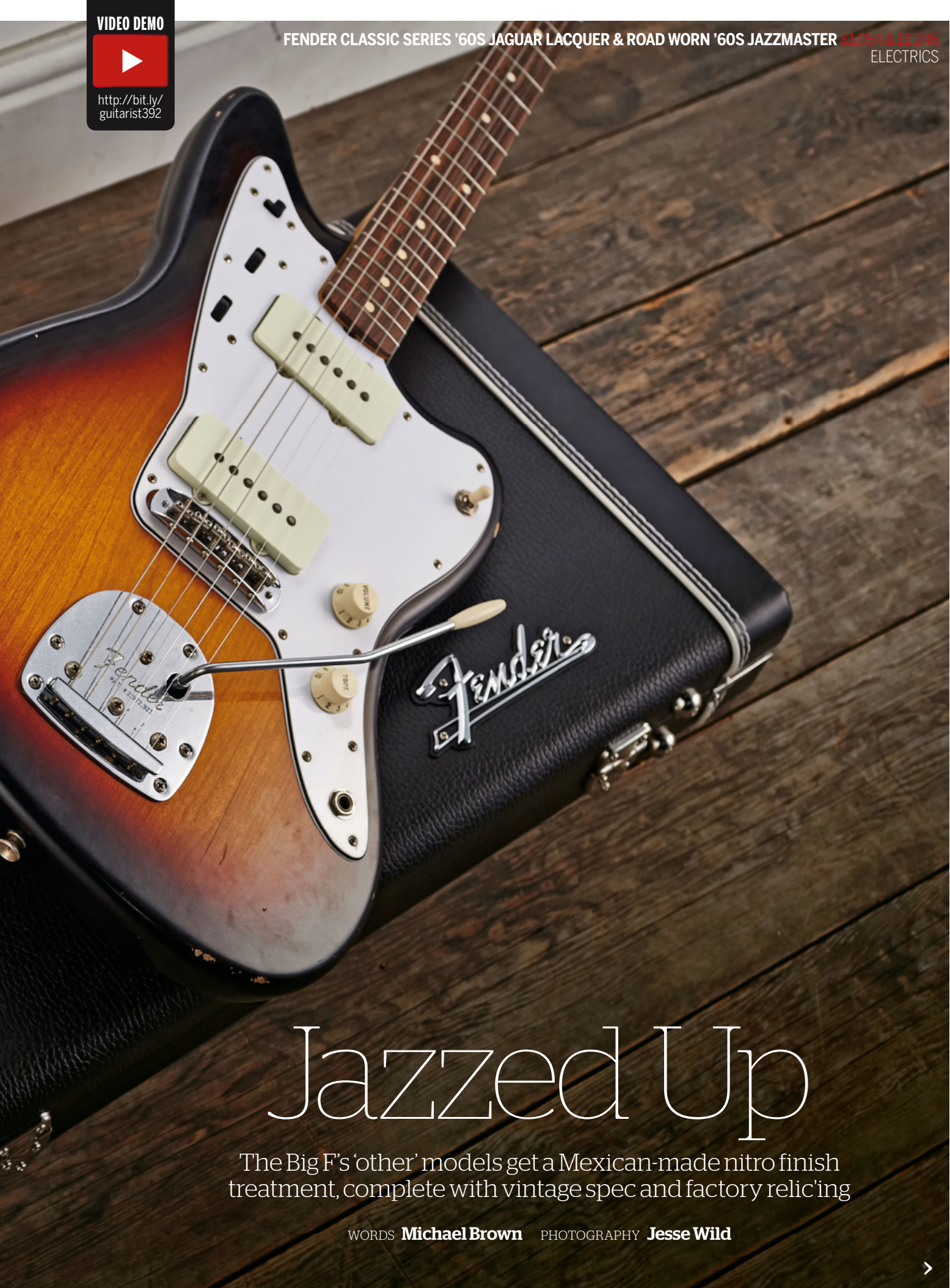


VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>

FENDER CLASSIC SERIES '60S JAGUAR LACQUER & ROAD WORN '60S JAZZMASTER £1,054 & £1,246  
ELECTRICS



# Jazzed Up

The Big F's 'other' models get a Mexican-made nitro finish treatment, complete with vintage spec and factory relic'ing

WORDS **Michael Brown** PHOTOGRAPHY **Jesse Wild**







# Fender Classic Series '60s Jaguar Lacquer & Road Worn '60s Jazzmaster **£1,054 & £1,246**

## What You Need To Know

1

### What's the deal with the 'Lacquer' tag, then?

Back in the 50s and 60s, Fender applied DuPont 'Duco' nitrocellulose finishes to some of its best-known instruments. Some swear by the tonal benefit of these finishes.

2

### So what's all the fuss about nitro?

Whether worn or not, there's just something about the look, the feel and even the smell of a nitro lacquer. It ages attractively, too – and the Road Worn series gives you pre-aged instruments straight from the factory.

3

### Aren't nitro finishes only for high-end vintage replicas?

Fender has been gradually rolling out the Lacquer treatment on Mexican-made models since 2013, starting with the Strat and Tele – and now it's the turn of the Jag and Jazz.

**F**licking through the Fender catalogue today, it's hard to believe that the company ever discontinued the Jaguar and Jazzmaster. Since those models' popularisation in the early 90s, fuelled by the alt-rock and grunge movement, both guitars have gradually found themselves peppered across the majority of Fender lines, making their addition to the Classic Series Lacquer and Road Worn lines the next logical step.

Whether you think a nitrocellulose finish is integral to the look and feel of a guitar or not, there's no denying that these two offsets might be fine. Stood next to each other, they strike quite a contrast, too; while the Classic Series '60s Jaguar's gloss nitrocellulose is buffed to a glorious shine, the Road Worn '60s Jazzmaster is designed to look as if that new-guitar sheen has been abraded over the years – the effect is equally glorious.

Both models echo their USA-made American Vintage counterparts in arguably the key areas. Aside from the finishes, they're also packing the same American Vintage '65 pickups and floating tailpieces –

notably *sans* vibrato lock switch – as well as vintage-style adjustable bridges, where most modern incarnations of the Jazz and Jag have made use of Fender's Adjusto-Matic unit.

The pair certainly look the part, and as we're increasingly noting, Fender's Ensenada factory is putting out some incredibly high standards of construction. The Jag's Fiesta Red finish looks beautiful in the flesh, and feels slightly sticky to the touch, something that should calm down over years of

playing. The Jazz, meanwhile, is designed to look like it's already received a few decades of touring, but Fender hasn't gone over the top here – unlike the first Mexican Road Worn relics – there are a few finish chips on the guitar's top and side, but much of the action is going on in less immediately obvious areas, from the faded rear belly cut and gnarled headstock to the worn chrome and plastic knobs. It looks like a guitar that's been lovingly played over a period of time, rather than one that's been



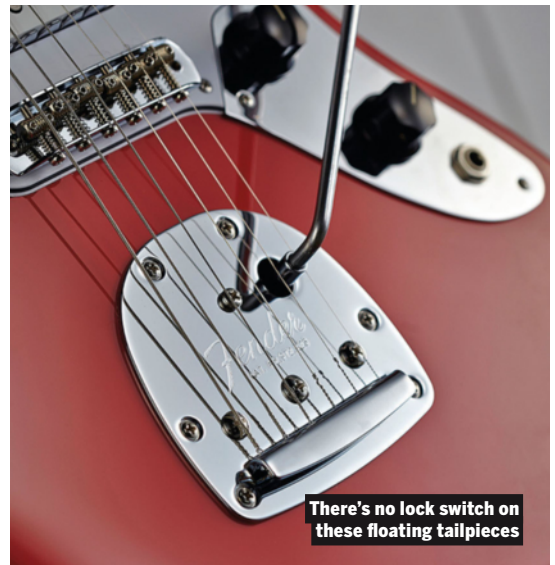
American Vintage '65 pickups are the order of the day here



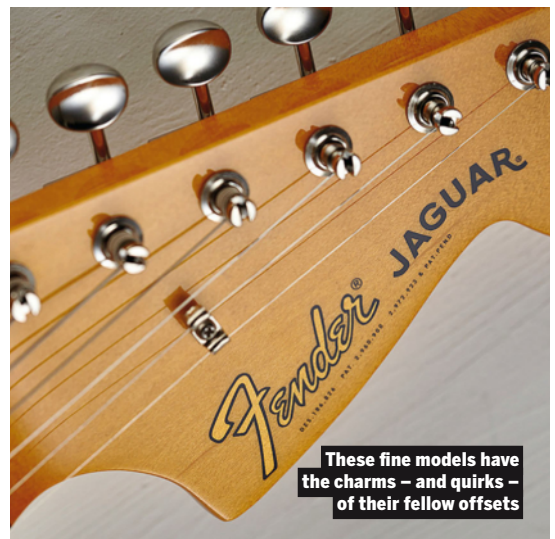
<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>



The Jag only comes in classic nitro Fiesta Red



There's no lock switch on these floating tailpieces



These fine models have the charms – and quirks – of their fellow offsets

subjected to a few random dings and scrapes in a factory.

This more subtle work continues to the Jazz's neck which, again, is beautifully worn with a natural, down-to-the-grain feel that any player could appreciate. It's a different story with the Jag, which also has a nitro finish applied to its neck, again giving it a slightly tacky feel, albeit one that's very different to the gloss urethane you'll find on, say, Classic Player models – with a bit of playing in this should be a beauty. Both

guitars feature fairly generic C-shaped necks, which feel more contemporary than vintage, but produce a comfortable playing experience nonetheless – the Jaguar especially, owing to its 610mm (24-inch) scale length, which makes add9 chords and minimum-effort bends a breeze.

What's less comfortable from a playing perspective is the vintage-style bridge and floating vibrato assembly. We noted above that most contemporary Jags and Jazzes

have Adjusto-Matics and there's a good reason for that: as players of vintage offsets will attest, the saddles on a traditional Jag/Jazz bridge simply don't have deep enough grooves to keep the strings in place. On our review models this was most notable on the Jazzmaster, which came set up with a lower action resulting from a lower bridge and therefore a lower groove. Hit the low E hard, or bend above the 12th fret, and be prepared for the string to pop over to the A saddle and increase in pitch as it does so – not a pleasant mid-gig experience. Of course, upping the string gauge beyond our review models' 0.010s and even employing flatwounds can help, but not every player wants to make that change.

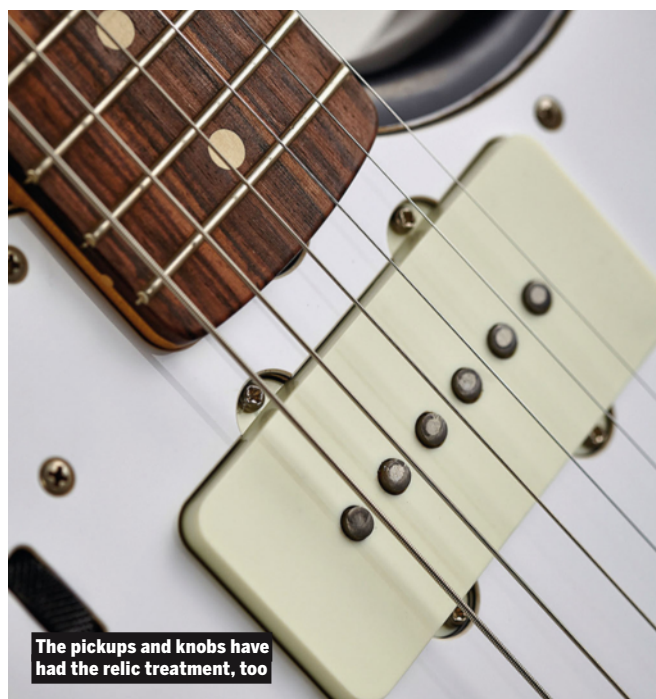
The Jazzmaster's neck is beautifully worn, with a natural, down-to-the-grain feel that any player could appreciate

## The Rivals

Aside from the USA-made **American Vintage '65 Jaguar** (£2,074), Fender's closest equivalent is the **Classic Player Jaguar Special** (£1,042), which has an Adjusto-Matic bridge and hotter single coils. Fans of aged finishes will also want to check out the **Kurt Cobain Road Worn Jaguar** (£1,402), with DiMarzio humbuckers. Jazzmasters? The closest alternative is the **Troy Van Leeuwen** model (£1,306), with American Vintage '65 pickups and a Mustang bridge. For a similar but more expensive vibe, check out the **Fano Alt De Facto JM6** (from £2,299)







We understand that faithful spec is the name of the game here, but the bridge assembly proves that vintage authenticity isn't always the best policy.

## Sounds

Of course, the saving grace of Fender's offset oddballs has always been their tones, and as you'd expect with the pair of American Vintage single coils filling the cavities, neither guitar slacks off in this department. You'll struggle to find purer, more pristine cleans than those you'll wring out of a Jag or Jazz, and these pickups make you understand why surf acts became bastions of the guitars in their original lifespan.

The Jaguar's switching system has foxed many a guitarist over the years, but it

also offers a tonal versatility that other single coil-loaded solids struggle to match. Ignoring the rhythm circuit for the moment, the lead circuit's neck single coil delivers sparkling open chords with a sweet, non-invasive high-end that begs for Bondesque 'spy' playing, especially with a touch of the smooth-riding vibrato. Switch in the bridge and engage the low-cut 'strangle' switch, and you get a hollow tone that's ripe for cutting through a crowded mix. Admittedly, the bridge pickup on its own is a fairly thin affair, even without the strangle engaged, but for brash indie barre chords, it's a blast.

Navigating the Jazzmaster's control panel is an altogether simpler business. Like the Jaguar, it features the rarely

The Jag's switching system has foxed many over the years, but it also offers a tonal versatility that other single coil-loaded solids struggle to match

used rhythm circuit, but with a familiar three-way toggle doing the switching business, tracking down tones is easy. And what tones they are. There's more presence and mids to the Jazz in all positions (the increased scale length over the Jag, not to mention the Jazz's wide-wound pickups are playing their part), giving it an almost hi-fi feel.

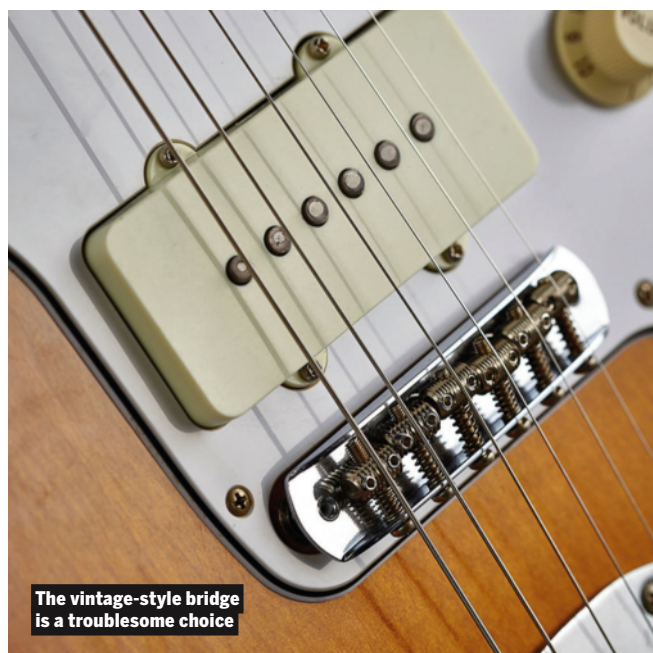
The mellow neck pickup invites arpeggios and open chords with its top-end chime, which transforms into a more

pronounced funk-ready quack with a flick to the middle position. Engaging the bridge pickup results in the most aggressive tone from either guitar, making this a better fit for alt-rockers eager to avoid retrofitting a higher-output pickup.

Then there's the oft-maligned rhythm circuit, which drops the high-end from the equation, leaving only the neck single coil engaged for a woolly tone that most guitarists struggle to



<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>



The vintage-style bridge is a troublesome choice



The Jazzmaster's neck has been beautifully aged

effectively employ. Admittedly, it's hardly suitable for all-purpose playing, but with a cooking valve amp or sufficiently raunchy fuzz it yields a gritty QOTSA-style rhythm honk, again proving these guitars deserving of their alt-rock credentials.

## Verdict

As Jaguars and Jazzmasters go, the Classic Series Jag and Road Worn Jazz are hard to fault: both offer sweet, shimmering tones redolent of the originals while delivering looks to match. However, as modern, road-ready guitars, we can't help but worry about those pesky bridges. Maybe we've been spoiled by Johnny Marr's Jaguar and Troy Van Leeuwen's Jazzmaster – both of which

feature the string-pop-combatting Mustang bridge as standard – but part of us wishes Fender would concede to the everyday player, especially with instruments like these, which are aimed at those who can't quite stretch to American Vintage or Custom Shop models.

Nevertheless, the wealth of tones on offer make both guitars superb recording instruments, if not onstage mainstays. For offset newcomers, we'd recommend you start with something a little more user-friendly (see Rivals), but for connoisseurs who don't mind a bit of playability unpredictability, or are handy with DIY setups, this is as close as you'll get to the real deal for around a grand. **G**



## Fender Classic Series '60s Jaguar Lacquer

**PRICE:** £1,054 (inc case)  
**ORIGIN:** Mexico  
**TYPE:** Offset, double-cutaway solidbody electric  
**BODY:** Alder  
**NECK:** Maple, C shape  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 610mm (24")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Synthetic bone/42mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood, 184mm (7.25") radius  
**FRETS:** 22  
**HARDWARE:** 6-saddle vintage-style adjustable bridge with floating vibrato tailpiece, vintage-style tuners – nickel/chrome plating  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 55mm  
**ELECTRICS:** 2x American Vintage '65 Jaguar single coils; lead circuit: master volume, master tone, neck pickup on/off slide switch, bridge pickup on/off slide switch, normal/low cut slide switch, 3-way toggle pickup selector; rhythm circuit: master volume, master tone; 2-way rhythm/lead circuit selector  
**WEIGHT (KG/LB):** 3.4/7.5  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISHES:** Fiesta Red only – nitrocellulose lacquer  
**Fender GBI**  
**01342 331700**  
**[www.fender.com](http://www.fender.com)**

## GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

**Guitarist says:** A beautiful-sounding, looking and playing example of Fender's short-scale cat, and faithful to the last detail, whether you like it or not



## Fender Road Worn '60s Jazzmaster

**PRICE:** £1,246 (inc gigbag)  
**ORIGIN:** Mexico  
**TYPE:** Offset, double-cutaway solidbody electric  
**BODY:** Alder  
**NECK:** Maple, C shape  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 648mm (25.5")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Synthetic bone/42mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood, 184mm (7.25") radius  
**FRETS:** 21  
**HARDWARE:** 6-saddle vintage-style adjustable bridge with floating vibrato tailpiece, vintage-style tuners – nickel/chrome-plating  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 55mm  
**ELECTRICS:** 2x American Vintage '65 Jazzmaster single coils; lead circuit: volume, tone, 3-way toggle pickup selector; rhythm circuit: volume, tone; 2-way rhythm/lead circuit selector  
**WEIGHT (KG/LB):** 3.3/7.3  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISHES:** 3-Colour Sunburst only – worn nitrocellulose lacquer

## GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

**Guitarist says:** An elegantly put-together offset, complete with wonderful tones, looks and vibe – for an old-school Jazzmaster at a reasonable price, look this way