





CLASSIC VIBE STRATOCASTER '50s £418

Classic design, Classic Vibe

BACK in 1954, the Stratocaster turned the guitar world on its head – and with eye-catching finishes such as the Sherwood Green Metallic we have here, it's still swivelling noggins today. Stealing from the rich archives of Fender and giving to the poor (ie, us), the Classic Vibe Strat offers 50s specs – maple fingerboard, single-ply pickguard – with contemporary playability, courtesy of the gloss-finished C shape neck, complete with skunk stripe down the rear.

The sound of the Strat is so ingrained, you know when it's not right; fortunately, Squier has captured the model's tonal mojo to a tee. Each of the five pickup positions is snappy with a woody midrange that's quintessentially

Strat, albeit a somewhat generic one – these aren't the most characterful or articulate single coils we've played, but comparing them to higher-priced Fender models is missing the point.

The cool neck, mellow middle and sharp bridge are all fine examples, but the stars of this Strat are the in-between positions; if you want to get your Nile Rodgers on, just plug in a compressor and let fly. The pickups are good overdriven performers, too; the maple 'board lends a little extra sizzle, which helps them to cut through, although, as with a lot of Strats, we'd rather the second tone control let you tone down the sharpness of the bridge pickup rather than the middle. Still, there's not much to dislike here.

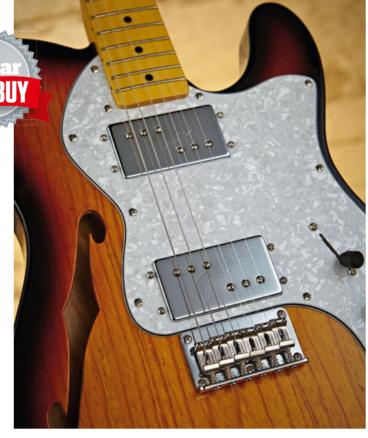
VINTAGE MODIFIED '72 TELECASTER THINLINE £406

Lightweight body, heavyweight tones

FOR a lot of players, 1972 was the year the Thinline grew up; the model was originally introduced to bring down the weight of the Tele, following a shortage of Fender's go-to light ash bodies, but the addition of two Fender Wide Range pickups transformed it into its own entity. Squier has now seen fit to introduce the '72 to its own range, and as with the Strats, it looks the business, with white pearloid scratchplate, finely carved f-hole and Fenderembossed humbuckers.

While you'll find the glossfinished modern C neck across much of Squier's range, you're unlikely to find tones quite like the Thinline's anywhere else, certainly at this price. Cleans from the neck and middle positions are punchy and persuasive, not dissimilar to fat P-90-ish single coils, but flicking over to the bridge humbucker yields a burly, resonant voice that screams for big open chords and an overdriven valve amp. Whichever pickup position it's in, there's an open, slightly hazy midrange, which makes the Thinline just at home with fingerpicking as it is with big distorted powerchords – indie and alt-rock players will find plenty to like here.

We can't fault the Thinline. Its price tag is seriously competitive, and considering the guitar's attention to detail and expensivesounding tones, we implore you to give it a go.





CLASSIC VIBE STRATOCASTER '60s £430

Purple craze

what's the difference between this and the '50s Strat? First, there are the finishes: the one you see here is Burgundy Mist, and were Prince a cash-strapped student, we could imagine him saving his purple pennies for this sexy number. There are a number of other subtle differences, too; most obvious is the rosewood fingerboard, but the two-ply Mint Green scratchplate and skunk-less maple neck are also faithful to Fender's 60s tweaks.

The biggest tonal differences come via the rosewood 'board; where the maple '50s Strat carries a neutral mid character with extra treble, the '60s Strat has a more scooped sound with a deeper low end and more high-end roll-off. If you find vintage-voiced Strats

too spiky, this fits the bill, while the rosewood will also suit players looking for a softer touch.

Adding overdrive accentuates the differences; it's hardly night and day, but you could find it tougher to cut through with the '60s model, although that's nothing a good Tube Screamer won't sort out. It's worth noting that build quality on both our review Strats was nothing short of excellent, with tight neck joints, well-applied finishes and superbly fitted frets, while both vibratos were as smooth as butter, with topnotch tuning stability. In this price range, you can land more versatile double-cuts from Yamaha, G&L and Fret-King, but few can top the Classic Vibe when it comes to nailing that authentic Strat mojo.

