

SQUIER VINTAGE MODIFIED BASS VI

£358

A six-string bass that guitarists will love

WHAT'S this? A six-string bass? In *Total Guitar* magazine?! Well, technically, but this is no slap-happy funk machine. Introduced in 1961 as a competitor to the Danelectro UB2, the Fender Bass VI's 762mm (30-inch) scale, Jazzmaster-style vibrato and trio of single coils marked it out as a killer lead and rhythm instrument, despite being designed to be tuned a whole octave below a conventional guitar.

A unique sound and too-cool-for-school looks saw the Bass VI find favour with plenty of 60s rock 'n' rollers, and Beatles John Lennon and George Harrison used one on Fab Four album sessions.

Even partial chords are rich with fresh harmonic overtones

The original Fender instrument was discontinued in 1975, and prices commanded by vintage examples have skyrocketed. Recent sightings have been rare, but fans of The Cure and Placebo will recognise the Bass VI's tones.

The NAMM show in January 2013 saw the Bass VI make a comeback in Fender's Pawn Shop Series. It's a super-cool, deeply inspirational instrument, but 826 sheets is still a serious wedge to sink into an axe that most would regard as a luxury rather than essential purchase. Happily, this much more affordable new Squier Vintage Modified model has arrived, sharing the Fender's scale length and modern C-shape neck, but bringing back the individual on/off pickup slider switches and low-cut 'strangle' switch that featured on the classic Fender version from 1962 onwards.

Out of the box, the Squier is strung with wound 0.025 to 0.095

gauge strings, compared with the Pawn Shop's 0.024 to 0.084 set, which give it more of a bass-like feel and response as opposed to the Fender's baritone guitar vibe. It's worth trying different string gauges to see what suits your playing style best. This Squier model stands up admirably in terms of build quality for the price, and the floating Jazzmaster-style vibrato bridge is smooth, stable and highly musical.

If you've never played a Bass VI before, you're in for a treat. With the factory strings, full chords work best when you choose shapes with root notes from A upwards, but even partial two- or three-note chords are rich with fresh

harmonic overtones. Into a clean amp, adding reverb and vintage amp-style tremolo is a recipe for losing hours to wondrous tones. The bridge pickup and 'strangle' switch are particularly useful with added drive, and this is such a versatile axe, you might find you don't even get the urge to pick up a regular six-string at all if you're using it to put a demo together.

Flick through the pages of this very magazine and you'll find street prices for the Bass VI as low as £274 – in light of this, the hardest decision to make isn't whether or not to buy one, but rather what colour to go for.

Chris Vinnicombe

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

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood
NECK: Maple
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 21
SCALE: 762mm (30")
PICKUPS: 3x Custom Jaguar single coils
CONTROLS: Master volume, master tone, 3x on/off slider switches for each pickup, 2-position bass cut 'strangle' switch
HARDWARE: 6-saddle vintage-style bridge with non-locking floating vibrato, vintage-style machineheads
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: 3-Colour Sunburst (as reviewed), Olympic White, Black
CONTACT: Fender GB
 01342 331700 www.fender.com

NECK

DESPITE the chunky strings, the 762mm (30-inch) scale length and modern C neck shape make for a spongy, easy-to-play feel that suits guitarists better than bassists

STRANGLE

WHEN engaged, this two-position switch cuts lows and allows the Bass VI to get spiky – from this to the deep, rich neck pickup voice and all points in between, there's an enormous tonal range

VIBRATO

UNLIKE the classic vibrato sported by the Fender Pawn Shop Bass VI, the Squier's bridge has no locking mechanism, but offers a smooth musical ride

