

# SQUIER ROUND-UP

Stop saving, start buying with this trio of fine-looking electrics from Fender's long-running affordable brand

Words: Michael Brown Photography: Jesse Wild



**WHEN** Jerome Bonaparte Squier began crafting violins back in the late 19th century, we doubt he foresaw his name appearing on the headstocks of some of the world's most popular affordable guitars. Yet when the company began supplying Leo Fender with guitar strings back in 1955, a new partnership was formed, and Fender acquired Squier in 1965.

The Big F didn't use the Squier name until the early 80s, in order to compete with the Japanese guitar makers knocking off Leo's designs for considerably less money. Cue the arrival of the first officially licensed 'stop dreaming, start playing' Squier models, which maintained the key specs of the big-ticket Strats and Teles, but used Japanese manufacturing to keep costs down.

Today, Squier is a brand in its own right, offering a host of configurations you won't find in Fender's line-up, not to mention low prices, courtesy of Chinese construction. Here, we have three models that typify the current Squier catalogue: two Classic Vibe Strats and a Vintage Modified '72 Thinline Tele that offers semi-hollow thrills with modern playability. But do they all play like a dream?





## 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 Fender-embossed humbuckers.

While you'll find the gloss-finished 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 expensive-sounding tones, we implore you to give it a go.





# CLASSIC VIBE STRATOCASTER '60s £430

## Purple craze

**SO** 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 top-notch 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.

### Classic Vibe Stratocaster '50s

**AT A GLANCE**

- BODY:** Alder
- NECK:** Maple
- SCALE:** 648mm (25.5")
- FINGERBOARD:** Maple
- FRETS:** 21
- PICKUPS:** 3x custom vintage-style Strat single coils
- CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 2x tone, 5-way pickup selector
- HARDWARE:** See Classic Vibe '60s
- LEFT-HANDED:** No
- FINISH:** 2-Colour Sunburst, Olympic White, Fiesta Red, Sherwood Green Metallic (shown)
- CONTACT:** Fender GBI 01342 331700 [www.fender.com](http://www.fender.com)



<b>SUMMARY</b>	FEATURES	■	■	■	■
	SOUND QUALITY	■	■	■	■
	VALUE FOR MONEY	■	■	■	■
	BUILD QUALITY	■	■	■	■
	PLAYABILITY	■	■	■	■
<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★★★★★				

### Vintage Modified '72 Telecaster Thinline

**AT A GLANCE**

- BODY:** Ash
- NECK:** Maple
- SCALE:** 648mm (25.5")
- FINGERBOARD:** Maple
- FRETS:** 21
- PICKUPS:** 2x Wide Range humbuckers
- CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector
- HARDWARE:** 6-saddle vintage-style strings-through-body Tele bridge, vintage-style tuners – chrome
- LEFT-HANDED:** No
- FINISH:** Natural, 3-Colour Sunburst (shown)



<b>SUMMARY</b>	FEATURES	■	■	■	■
	SOUND QUALITY	■	■	■	■
	VALUE FOR MONEY	■	■	■	■
	BUILD QUALITY	■	■	■	■
	PLAYABILITY	■	■	■	■
<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★★★★★				

### Classic Vibe Stratocaster '60s

**AT A GLANCE**

- BODY:** Alder
- NECK:** Maple
- SCALE:** 648mm (25.5")
- FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood
- FRETS:** 21
- PICKUPS:** 3x custom vintage-style Strat single coils
- CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 2x tone, 5-way pickup selector
- HARDWARE:** 6-saddle vintage-style Synchronized vibrato, vintage-style tuners – chrome
- LEFT-HANDED:** No
- FINISH:** 3-Colour Sunburst, Candy Apple Red, Burgundy Mist (shown)



<b>SUMMARY</b>	FEATURES	■	■	■	■
	SOUND QUALITY	■	■	■	■
	VALUE FOR MONEY	■	■	■	■
	BUILD QUALITY	■	■	■	■
	PLAYABILITY	■	■	■	■
<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★★★★★				