



Vintage Guitar[®] Gear Reviews

magazine

Twang for the Buck

Squier Vintage Modified Jazzmaster

Standing in the tall shadows of the mighty Stratocaster and Telecaster, some of Fender's other classic models faded from prominence over the years. Luckily, over the past decade, a few of these less-famed Fenders – the Jaguar, Mustang, and Musicmaster – have returned from the brink of obscurity.

As their popularity rises, however, so do their prices, leaving in the dust those who crave a vintage original. Leave it to the good folks at Fender's Squier division to help fill that void, as they've just reissued the Jazzmaster at a price everyone can afford.

Iconic in its own right, the original Jazzmaster had a lot of things going for it, but, like a number of early models,

it could have used some tweaks. Enter Squier's Vintage Modified Jazzmaster. A classically contoured alder body yields a vintage feel and is attached to a one-piece maple neck finished in a natural amber tint.

The maple fingerboard sports 21 medium-jumbo frets, and the neck has a comfortable, slightly beefy C-shaped profile. The maple fingerboard has a 9.5" radius and Fender's traditional 25¹/₂" scale length. Inlays are black plastic, tuners are vintage-style chrome, and there's a traditional headstock profile with the black-and-gold Squier logo.

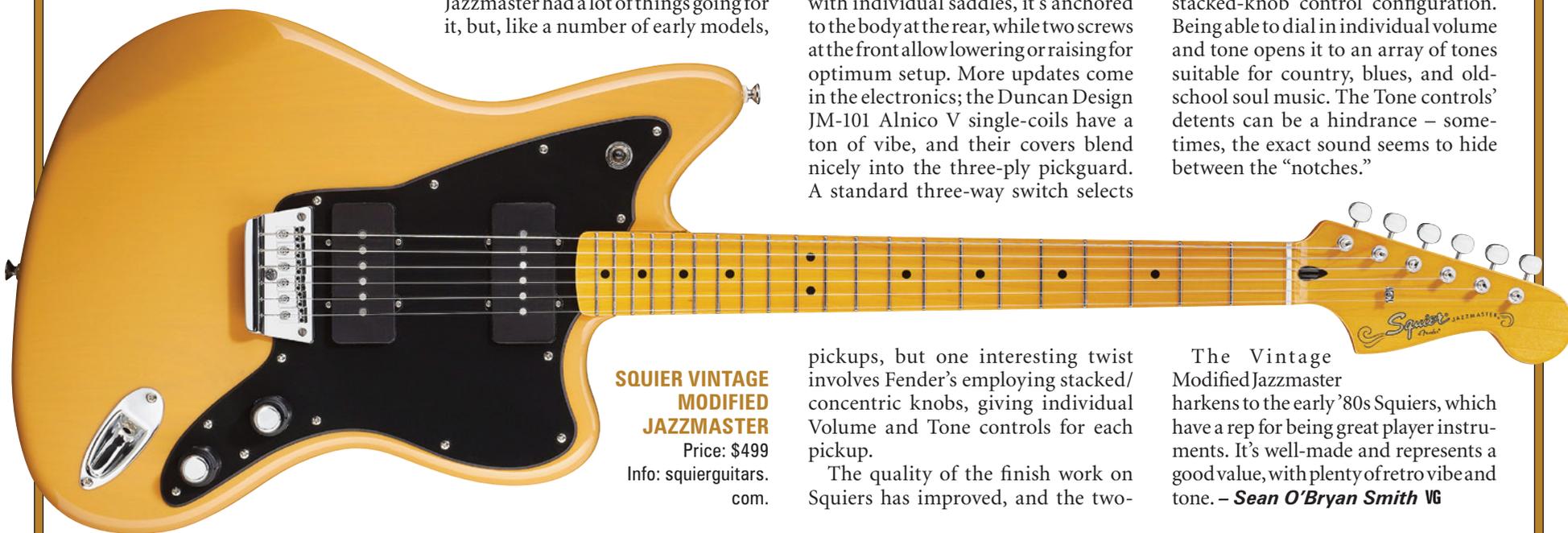
Beyond those elements, the "modified" aspects become more apparent. One thing that immediately differentiates this guitar from its older kin is its top-loading hardtail bridge. Equipped with individual saddles, it's anchored to the body at the rear, while two screws at the front allow lowering or raising for optimum setup. More updates come in the electronics; the Duncan Design JM-101 Alnico V single-coils have a ton of vibe, and their covers blend nicely into the three-ply pickguard. A standard three-way switch selects

tone sunburst on our test guitar looked more authentic than prior versions. The top ply of the pickguard is parchment colored instead of white, which gave a bit more vintage look. The amber-tinted neck didn't hurt, either.

One potential downside of this particular guitar could be its weight. While not obnoxiously heavy, it is beefy.

Plugged in, the Jazzmaster does what it's supposed to do – rock. The Jazzmaster can flat-out hang with a number of more-expensive guitars, and do it with style. Through a variety of amps live and in the studio, it had a presence that worked well. The Duncan Design pickups had great jangle, with a fatness that kept them even in terms of output.

The Jazzmaster does offer a fair amount of flexibility, aided by the stacked-knob control configuration. Being able to dial in individual volume and tone opens it to an array of tones suitable for country, blues, and old-school soul music. The Tone controls' detents can be a hindrance – sometimes, the exact sound seems to hide between the "notches."



SQUIER VINTAGE MODIFIED JAZZMASTER

Price: \$499
Info: squierguitars.com.

pickups, but one interesting twist involves Fender's employing stacked/concentric knobs, giving individual Volume and Tone controls for each pickup.

The quality of the finish work on Squiers has improved, and the two-

The Vintage Modified Jazzmaster harkens to the early '80s Squiers, which have a rep for being great player instruments. It's well-made and represents a good value, with plenty of retro vibe and tone. – **Sean O'Bryan Smith VG**