



FACTFILE

AMERICAN STANDARD TELECASTER

Description: Solid body electric guitar. Made in the USA

Price: £879

Builds: Alder or ash body with bolt-on maple neck, 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, brass bridge, cast tuners

Electrics: two Alnico V single coils, three-way switch, volume and Delta tone controls

Left-hander: Yes

Finish: See website

Scale Length: 648mm/25.5"

Neck width:
Nut 42mm
12th fret 52mm

Depth of neck:
First fret 19mm
12th fret 20mm

String spacing:
Nut 35.5mm
Bridge 51.5mm

Action as supplied:
12th fret treble 2.5mm
12th fret bass 3mm

Weight: 3.75kg/8.25lbs

For many players a black Tele is just as iconic as an olympic white Strat. Joe Strummer, Wilko Johnson, Syd Barrett, even Keith... they all played them, and in various states of disrepair. But would they have bought the new American Standard version if they'd had the chance?

There's a lot to tempt them, including many of the features we've already seen on the Stratocaster. These include the satin finish on the back of the neck, the staggered cast tuners, headstock adjustment for the two-way trussrod and

the Delta tone circuit. The alder body has been refined for a sharper 1952-style body radius on the edges, and there's even a 'router hump' in the cutaway. The bridge has been heavily worked over, too, with a 52mm string spread and six pressed steel saddles. It's chrome plated solid brass, with five fixing screws and through body stringing. The ashtray sides have been removed to open up access to the strings; it works fine, but I wouldn't fancy bashing my hand against that sharp-cornered lip at the back.

The neck profiles of these American Standards are an almost identical 'modern C', which translates as a very slim and fairly flat shape with little or no taper towards the body. Depending on your point of view it's hard to criticise, but perhaps not easy to love. Once again the pickups are Fender's own brand Alnico Vs. An H/S/H routed alder body lurks under the parchment scratchplate and the poly finish, but ash is available in some of the colours. You can get a maple fingerboard too, as well as this slab rosewood with off-white plastic dots.

SOUNDS

Acoustically, this one shows a bit more promise than the Stratocaster.



The sharper vintage-style body edges work a treat. Ash is available on the transparent finishes



Again, a satin/gloss neck with an amber tint, a Bi-Flex trussrod, staggered keys and rolled neck edges

Fender

American Standard Telecaster



Some Tele bridge pickups are voiced for rock or punk, others for country or roots. This guitar manages both

Maybe it's just the brass bridge, but we think we can hear more inherent depth, sustain and volume. The flat slug pickups do a grand job of turning these characteristics into an alternating current, because this guitar sounds big and powerful.

Some Tele bridge pickups are voiced for rock or punk, while others are snappier and twangier for country and roots. This guitar manages both, and once again it's down to that Delta tone circuit. With the volume flat out and the tone rolled back you get a thick sprang that will overdrive any amp. Then roll back the treble and turn up the tone, and the bypass feature compensates for the usual treble roll-off through the volume control. It's a similar story with the neck and in-between positions, with biting blues attack, sweet-toned jazziness and precise fingerpicking.

FINAL SCORE

Build quality.....	16/20
Playability.....	17/20
Sound.....	16/20
Value for money.....	14/20
Vibe.....	16/20

TOTAL.....79%

Good for... modern and vintage Tele sounds
Look elsewhere... vintage authenticity



VERDICT

I can't help feeling that a committee designed these guitars after consulting various focus groups. Many of the little quirks and peculiarities that have always made Fenders what they are have been cast aside - but the reality is that they will probably feel and sound better to a wider variety of players than more traditional models did.

The new American Standards are easy-playing and functional. The tuners work smoothly, they hold their tuning and the pickups

combine with the innovative circuitry to provide a wide range of traditional and modern Fender style tones. I'm not convinced that guitar collectors will be fighting over these instruments in 20 years time, as these are not personality-packed, retro-styled tone monsters - but they're not designed to be. They're 'everyman' guitars that won't confine you stylistically or sonically, and you can't criticise them for that. There's something for everyone in the Fender range, and these will do their allotted task very well.

COMPETITION

G&L

Legacy

Leo Fender continued refining and developing long after he sold out to CBS, and many of the features seen on today's Fenders have been standard on G&Ls for years

RRP: £1220

TOKAI

GS 100

A Japanese-made alder bodied three-pickup model with a Wilkinson trem and a satin finished neck

RRP: £499

G&L

ASAT Classic

An American-made T-type alternative with top quality woods and hardware. Very popular with the Nashville crowd

RRP: £1230