

Guitarist

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HEAVY PETAL

Fender's flower power Teles are back...
and they're really groovy man!

Dig 'em in our far out demo



Gomez

"Glastonbury 1999:
I threw up about seven
times I was so nervous"

The Strokes

"If I could play like
Freddie King I'd give
away my testicles"

MAGGIE MAY
Guitarist
REVIEWS
★★★★★

Exclusive demos & reviews:
• Electro Harmonix Q-Tron, The Worm & Holy Grail mints guitar
• Real McCoy RMC3 Wah pedal • Behringer V-Amp 2
• Santa Cruz F & Vintage Jumbo
• Ashdown Peacemaker 50 head

Guitarist

Demos:

- ★ Fender Paisley Tele & Ibanez EDA bass
- ★ Ashdown Peacemaker 50 head
- ★ Behringer V-Amp 2
- ★ Real McCoy RMC3 wah
- ★ Santa Cruz F & Vintage Jumbo
- ★ Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail, The Worm & Mini Q-Tron

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FENDER PAISLEY & BLUE FLOWER TELES

PRICE: £599
ORIGIN: Japan
TYPE: Solidbody six-string electrics with ornate cladding finish
BODY: Solid basswood, papered with silver, pink and green paisley or multi-colour flower pattern
NECK: One-piece maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Plastic/43mm

FINGERBOARD: One-piece with neck, black dot inlays, 184mm (7.25-inch) radius

FRETS: 21, medium-fine
HARDWARE: Chrome-plated 'ashtray' style bridge/pickup plate with through-body stringing, Kluson-style vintage tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 56mm

ELECTRICS: Two Fender Japan single-coil pickups, three-way pickup selector switch, master volume and tone

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.75/8

RANGE OPTIONS: A multitude of Teles populate the Fender range, but the Mexican Classic '50s and '60s models (£549 and £599) offer comparable prices to these, in a range of finishes and timber options. The American Series Telecaster (£829) has bigger frets (22), modified six-saddle bridge, flatter fingerboard and modern tuners. US '52 Reissue Tele (£1,399) is a faithful repro of the original butterscotch and black scratchplate model. Time Machine series (£2,199 and £2,599) offers faithful vintage replicas in various forms of distress, from almost new to battered

LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Only as reviewed
Arbiter Group
0208 202 1199
www.fender.com

Fender Paisley & Blue Flower Teles

£599 each



Is flower power making an untimely return or has someone at the Fender factory been taking something they shouldn't have? by Neville Marten

Guitars from Fender Japan occupy a fond place in the psyche of many British guitarists. Coming after the initial Squier JV series they were many players' first foray into the world of 'proper' Fender Strats and Teles. Built to exacting standards and generally considered to be more accurate replicas than their more expensive American cousins, there was a genuine feeling of loss when it was reported we'd no longer be seeing them over here.

The good news for Jaguar and Jazzmaster fans is that Japanese versions are back, and in your shops now. And for those who like Fender's most traditional guitar in less than traditional guise, you'll also notice these unobtrusive additions to the line adorning dealer walls once more.

Despite the success of Fender's Ensenada facility in Mexico, they've as yet been unable to reproduce certain models, so these latest reissues – or 'Collectibles' as Fender once called them – come again from Fender Japan. (Fender use Fuji-Gen Gakki, who also build Ibanez, and the factory has never stopped producing guitars for the American company, despite there being no UK imports.)

In order to see where Fender were coming from when the original Paisley

and Blue Flower model Teles were launched back in 1968, you only need to look a few hundred miles up the coast to San Francisco. The year before had been the fabled 'summer of love' and the Haight Ashbury district of the town where Tony Bennett left his cardiac organ, was a magnet for every drug-induced group, social movement or lone hippy looking for someone to love – or to score from.

Hardly surprising then, that when a keen Fullerton eye spotted some groovy coloured wallpaper that looked like it could be pasted on the front and back of a guitar and lacquered over, Fender saw a new model in the offing. Even less surprising was the fact that the good old – or perhaps that should be poor old – flat-fronted Telecaster was the obvious choice.

In actual fact the process was not quite as simple as described above, because in order to obscure the trimmed paper edges, the alder bodies were cleverly sunbursted in metallic pink for the Paisley and blue for the Flower, coated in clear polyester and a see-through perspex scratchplate fitted. Even more cunningly, the underside of this was pink- or blue-bursted around the neck pickup area to hide the cavity that would have otherwise been an ugly blot on

a landscape that was otherwise totally mind-blowing, man.

General interest in these fancy models received a boost when Elvis Presley's guitarist of the time, the brilliant James Burton, was given a Paisley by Fender and used it on the '68 Comeback Special TV show. But even this was not enough to sustain serious sales and both Teles got their marching orders not long afterwards.

Jump forward almost two decades to 1985 and Fender Japan was making great versions of all the old models, with 'Squier' on the headstock. At the same time in California someone found a few bits of the old wallpaper lurking in a dusty corner, had them copied and, before you could say Jefferson Airplane, the Paisley and Blue Flower Teles were back on the streets. This time they had a late-sixties Fender decal affixed. These were great instruments and this limited run sold out almost immediately.

While they look amazing – or disastrous, depending on your viewpoint – in all other respects these are standard Telecasters, with the hardware, electrics and switching that we all know inside out. But for any Mars-dwellers still not familiar with the 52-year-old design, you'll find a slab body of basswood, with an all-maple



In Bloom: the humble Tele transformed by Fender into a truly outlandish guitar

Behind their garish exteriors hides a guitar so good that it gains our **Guitarist Choice** award for excellence of build, playability, sound and value for money

combined neck and fingerboard held on by four large screws through a chromed metal plate. Twin single-coil pickups are the order of the day, the bridge unit sitting in a metal housing that also carries three bridge saddles. Each bears two strings and can be adjusted forwards or backwards for intonation via a rear-mounted screw, with obvious tuning limitations over single-saddle-per-string designs such as the Stratocaster.

Like the guitar itself, the control layout is pure function, with single volume and tone pots and a three-way blade switch to select neck, bridge or both pickups together. The original production-line six-a-side headstock sports Kluson-style vintage tuners, although 1968 guitars would have been fitted with 'F'-stamped parallelogram-shaped heads, made by the same company.

Fit and finish in all departments is staggeringly good, as it always has

been from Fuji-Gen, with nothing to criticise on either guitar. Anyone who's owned a Fender Japan guitar will also know they invariably play well, straight out of the box. These patterned Teles are no different and it's great to see standards have not slipped since we last saw a new Japanese Fender some five years ago.

Twenty-one medium-fine frets sit comfortably atop a medium-depth 'C'-section neck with its lacquered, 184mm (7.25-inch) radius playing surface. As usual, all is perfectly executed, with polished metalwork and smooth-edged 'board adding to a feeling of homeliness. It's difficult to find fault with the way they play – and both instruments are identical in the hands, too, which augurs well for potential buyers. History reminds us

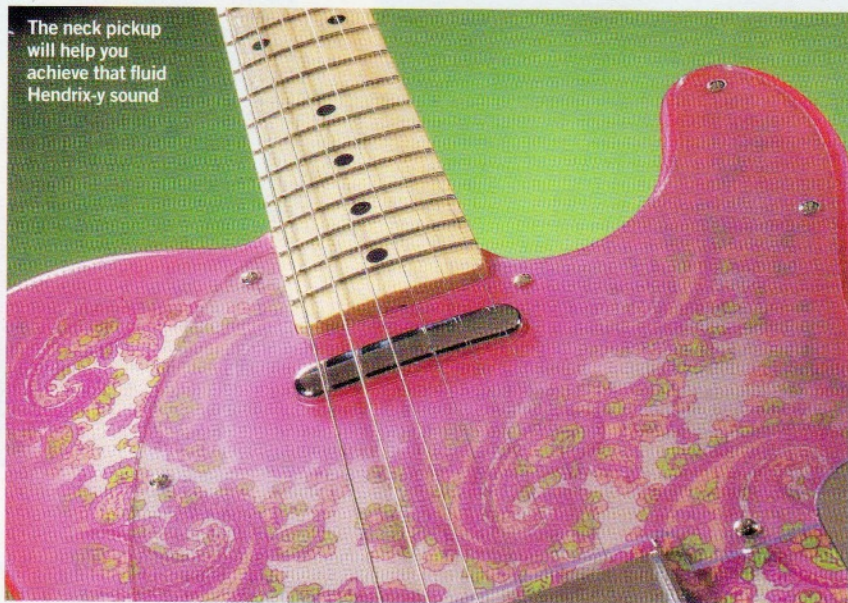
that all styles of popular music have been played on a Tele, and picking, strumming or thumbing either instrument brings out a host of different feels, each equally suited to this curiously brilliant guitar.

SOUNDS: Sonically, Telecasters are among the most versatile instruments →

FENDER TELE TEST RESULTS

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

WE LIKED Quirky looks, great build, super playability, Tele's innate versatility
WE DISLIKED Some will hate them; intonation of (especially) G and D strings is a compromise



The neck pickup will help you achieve that fluid Hendrix-y sound



Both sides of the Teles' bodies get the full-on sixties treatment

The rivals

Fender Classic '50s Tele £599.95
Daisy Rock £TBA
Epiphone Flame Kat £666
Danelectro U3 £365

If you want a basic, well-priced Tele but prefer it less outlandishly furnished, then the Classic '50s model is essentially the same maple-necked derivative, but made in Mexico to a very similar quality. If you're simply looking for something dainty or out of the ordinary, Daisy Rock produce snazzy looking guitars specifically for girls (who also love this Telecaster model). Or there's Epiphone's flame-covered rockabilly guitar, the Flame Kat, which is bound to get you noticed. Cheap and cheerful and available in a host of cool colours, Dano's U3 never fails to please with quality, tone and value

Anyone who's owned a Fender Japan guitar knows they play well straight out of the box

→ you can imagine, so expect to find anything from Albert Lee country to Jimmy Page rock, Blur pop to Muddy Waters blues and Jim Mullen jazz. True, these pickups don't possess quite the fat earthiness that you get with the best vintage Teles, Time Machine or even the American Series range, but they acquit themselves extraordinarily well for the price.

Hendrix-y fluidity from the neck pickup sits happily alongside raspy blues dirt from the bridge and, with both on together, the quackiest country licks and James Brown-style funk rhythms. Of course, noise is always a problem with single-coil pickups – your amp transformer, lighting dimmer switches or in-studio computer monitor will wreak havoc, given half a chance – and so an upgrade to Fender Noiseless, DiMarzio Virtual Vintage, Kinman AVN, or EMG could

be your only upgrade on these groovy guitars. Tonally though they can hardly be faulted – check out our CD demo!

Prices of £599 each set these Fender Japan guitars alongside the Classic range made in Mexico, and their build is the equal of the aforementioned line. Undoubtedly they'll be discounted somewhat in the shops, but even at RRP they look like a great buy. Remember to budget for a decent gig-bag though, because a cardboard box is all you get with your pretty Paisley or fab Flower Tele.

Verdict

Whether you see these instruments as tasteless abominations, an insult to Leo Fender's simple masterpiece or, as our trippy Ben Bartlett has done, fall instantly in love with one and find you have to have it, there's no way you'll be stuck for an opinion. These are no

fence-sitter's instruments. But whatever you think, behind their garish exteriors hides a guitar so good that it gains our Guitarist Choice award for excellence of build, superb playability, great sounds and good value. Add to that the Telecaster's inherent brilliance at so many styles and you have a guitar that warrants serious investigation.

One of the Tele's greatest strengths has been its ability to withstand dozens of amendments to its simple form over the years, both good and bad, and come through almost all of them with dignity still intact. We reckon these latest flower power incarnations of everyone's secret favourite guitar will do its reputation, and longevity, no harm at all. Fender Telecaster, we love you man... **G**

Fender Paisley & Blue Flower Teles

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★