

Fender Jaguar FAQ Release 1.0

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This FAQ may only be used by Greg Morlan's www.jag-stang.com and Rick Saxon's www.fenderJaguar.net

This FAQ is to help Jaguar owners understand their guitar better, and to answer any questions that a potential buyer may have. This FAQ does not go into full detail of all facts, however, Rick Saxon's www.fenderJaguar.net FAQ's will go into full detail of the Jaguar.

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Should I get a Jaguar? Is it the right guitar for me?

The Jaguar is NOT a beginner's guitar. It's not for the easily frustrated either, nor light pocketed. It's one of the most expensive guitars Fender has ever put out, and to purchase one, one must do some self study before purchasing a Jaguar.

Unless you are a purist with Jaguars, or are a fenderphile, then a Jaguar is not for you. The Jaguar has a distinct "surf" sound – its design is specialized in that sector. Its pickups are not meant for heavy distortion, nor shredding - although you can try if you want. It's meant for either clean or lightly overdriven chords and occasional solos. You are buying the Jaguar for what it is, and not what you want to change it to. That would be defeating the purpose of the Jaguar!

If I want the Jaguar style, but want to make it for rock, are there any alternatives?

Accommodating a Jaguar for rock is not easy, nor reasonable. Changing out the unstable bridge, single coil pickups, and unstable tremolo are challenges in themselves. However, there are several alternatives built recently that will float your boat. The following guitars were probably made in the wake of Cobain's influence.

The Jagmaster is a Jaguar body and neck with a Strat bridge and dual Humbuckers – this guitar is very good for rock – its radius has been changed to be more suited for soloing.



The Jaguar HH (currently only in black) is a dual humbucker Jaguar with a TOM bridge and tailpiece, with all the controls of the Jaguar. It's literally a remake of Cobain's jag without the Les Paul style switch.



Other Jaguar HH's and variations are also available from guitargui, ikebe-gakki, and ishibashi, in other colors than black. However, they are only available from Japan, which means you'll pay the nice import price.



The Kurtified Jaguar (only offered in Japan, but can be imported) is a Jaguar made to look EXACTLY like Cobain's Jaguar – binding, TOM, switches and Humbuckers, not to mention the nice 3-color sunburst finish on it. Have fun translating Japanese – the website is www.ikebe-gakki.com



I want Humbuckers in my Jaguar. How should I do it?

My preferred way of getting Humbuckers in a Jaguar would be to use single coil sized Humbuckers such as the Seymour Duncan JB jr. and Hot rails. These pickups require no modification to the guitar to install. They also preserve the value, and tone of the guitar. However, if you are determined to get full size Humbuckers in your guitar, you must rout your guitar for them. This requires using a router to cut a space for the Humbuckers to fit. You have to modify the body, the pickguard, and the shield to get the Humbuckers safely installed. If you don't know power tools very well, or don't have a template, get a professional to do it.

Got any info on Kurt Cobain's Jaguar?

I feel like beating a dead horse. We should put this subject to rest. Kurt's Jaguar was a 1965 Jaguar, 3-color sunburst, alder body/rosewood fingerboard with white neck bindings. Nitro finish. It had 2 Humbuckers (both Dimarzio's) with a PAF in the neck and a Super distortion in the bridge. As his career went on, he taped off the switches at the top and bottom and replaced the pickup selector with a 3 way Les Paul style switch. The bridge was replaced with a GOTOH tune-o-matic. He had another pot installed in the control plate to accommodate another tone or volume. His wiring setup was basically a Gibson style guitar in a Jaguar body. Oh, and by the way, it was left-handed.

How can I buy a Jaguar? They are so expensive!

There is a reason Jaguars are so expensive. Their hardware and limited production (compared to strats and teles) make their prices skyrocket. Because third party production of parts is also rare, the Jaguar's base building cost greatly exceeds a strat by several times. Aside from buying them on ebay, regular guitar shops, fender dealers, and online stores are the only alternatives. They are so rare that pawnshops never really carry them either. Your best bet is to either buy a used one off of ebay, or save up money. You can also piecemeal it, but that is much more difficult, for not every part shows up on ebay. If you are lucky enough to travel to Japan, you can get new Jaguars and special Jaguars for an o.k. price. Another option is to get one custom built from warmoth. However, if you do the math, you'll see that to get an equivalent regular fender is actually cheaper than a warmoth replica. Your best bet is to just have a good 500-600 dollars ready to spend on an MIJ. Don't even try vintage pieces – they'll run a good 1000 or 2000+.

General prices for new and used Jaguars (in USD):

Used MIJ – 450 to 700 (550 for a moderately used)

New MIJ – 650+

Used AV – 850 to 1200 (generally 950 for a moderately used)

New AV – 1329+

Vintage - 2000 to 5000

How much is my jaguar worth?

These are general guidelines, so there will be many exceptions. Most MIJ jaguars in slightly used condition can only be valued at 500 – However, the Vintage white models with gold hardware will run at 700, and custom colors will get you anywhere from 600 to 800. AV models will retain their value from 900 and up. Modification of your Jaguar can greatly decrease its value if you install Humbuckers, a Bigsby, or some other piece of nonstandard equipment. However, if you upgrade your MIJ with AV parts or better Jaguar pickups, then it actually increases your value. Make sure you keep all of the parts you replaced – they'll come in handy later if you sell them. If you have a vintage piece, I recommend you not to sell it – its value is unmistakable. Since they stopped production in 1975, there are not as many Jaguars as Strats and teles. Vintage pieces can run from 2000 to 5000, depending on their condition and completeness. Having the OHSC (Original Hard shell Case), paperwork, and the mute rocker can make it retain its value much easier.

What year is my Jaguar?

One of the most common indications of what year a Jaguar was made is its finish. Because the Jaguar was discontinued during 1975, it's quite easy to tell whether a Jaguar is a remake or vintage piece. Nitro and Acrylic lacquer were used prior to 1975. New production AV Jaguar's are also Nitro. However, nearly all of the MIJ (Made in Japan) Jaguars are finished with rock hard polyurethane, or commonly named poly. However, the easiest indication of year is the serial number, neck stamp, and neck pocket marks.

These are dates for MIJ Jaguars.

JV+ 5 DIGITS	1982-1984	
SQ + 5 DIGITS	1983-1984	
E + 6 DIGITS	1984-1987	
A + 6 DIGITS	1985-1986	
B + 6 DIGITS	1985-1986	
C + 6 DIGITS	1985-1986	
F + 6 DIGITS	1986-1987	
G + 6 DIGITS	1987-1988	
H + 6 DIGITS	1988-1989	
I + 6 DIGITS	1989-1990	
J + 6 DIGITS	1989-1990	
K + 6 DIGITS	1990-1991	
L + 6 DIGITS	1991-1992	
M + 6 DIGITS	1992-1993	
N + 6 DIGITS	1993-1994	
O + 6 DIGITS	1993-1994	
P + 6 DIGITS	1993-1994	
Q + 6 DIGITS	1993-1994	
S + 6 DIGITS	1994-1995	
T + 6 DIGITS	1994-1995	
U + 6 DIGITS	1995-1996	
N + 5 DIGITS	1995-1996	
V + 6 DIGITS	1996-1997	
Crafted in Japan	A + 6 DIGITS	1997-1998
Crafted in Japan	O + 5 DIGITS	1997-2000
Crafted in Japan	P + 5 DIGITS	1999-2002
Crafted in Japan	Q + 5 DIGITS	2002-2004
Crafted in Japan	R + 5 DIGITS	2004-2005

These numbers may be located on the back of the neck, near the heel of the neck.

The neck heel will offer a month and year of the Jaguar – An example would be SEP 96’ or AUG 71. Again, these are general rules to go by. If the guitar was refinished or was faked, then there is no way to be certain what year it was made. However, in 99’, Fender reissued the AV Jaguar, or “American Vintage”. This guitar made near perfect replicas of pre-75 era Jaguars – Including Nitro finish, Fullerplast sealer coat, and the awesome mute rocker.

What's the difference in the American and Japanese reissues?

These are general guidelines – there are exceptions. Exceptions include MIJ specials, Gold hardware specials, and custom shop productions.

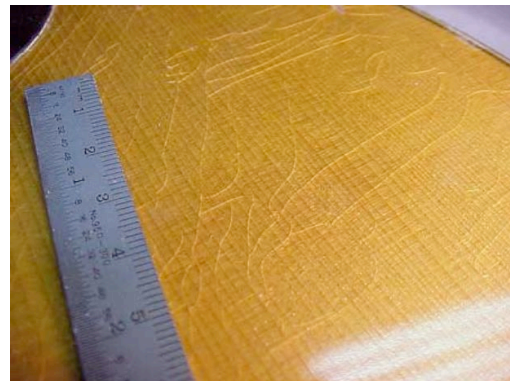
	American	Japanese
Wood	Alder	Basswood (Alder for sunburst only)
Finish	Nitro with Fullerplast sealer	Polyurethane
Hardware	Stainless Steel with Chrome plating + Mute Rocker	Polished Stainless Steel
Pickups	Wax Potted pickups	Non potted pickups
Pickguard	4 ply	3 ply
Neck type	Slab	Veneer
Potentiometers	CTS	Switchcraft or other brands
Hard Shell Case	Yes	No
Mute Rocker	Yes	No

How do I check what finish it is?

You can check the finish by first looking at it. Nitro “checks” because of temperature and humidity variations rubs off and scratches quicker. Nitro also has a “yellow” hue which poly does not exhibit. However, if you cannot pin down what finish it is, take off the pickguard or get behind the neckplate, and use an ear swap lightly dipped in acetone. Because lacquer is removable by acetone, it will melt or breakdown when exposed to acetone. Poly will not react to the acetone, and will simply wipe off. Poly is only reactive to extreme heat. Therefore, a light swab of the acetone will show if it's nitro or not. Most refinishes will not use poly, so there is a good chance that a refinish will be from Guitar ReRanch.



Testing the finish with acetone



An example of “Checking”

What's so different about a Jaguar to other guitars?

The Jaguar is very unique in that it was the first of its kind to have a floating tremolo, offset waist w/ body contours. It is also the first and only guitar to have the mute rocker. The switching system, although very confusing, is also unique to all guitars. Also special is the unique scale length (i.e. distance from nut to bridge), at 24" – smaller than the Strat and Tele's 25.5", it makes the Jaguar easier to move around and play for people with smaller hands. The Jaguar's sales actually didn't go too well until several bands popularized it in the late 80's/early 90's. The Jaguar has been notorious for difficulty in play and setup because of its design. Its reduced angle on the bridge and bridge saddle design make it a nightmare to keep correct. The 7.25" radius doesn't help either. Because of these imperfections, the Jaguar has been a guitar that has stayed with a select group of people willing to handle the risks of owning a Jaguar. However, its tone and looks are popular with many.

Where can I get replacement parts for my Jaguar?

You have several options when getting Jaguar parts. You can either do ebay or commercial guitar part stockers such as Allparts and guitarpartsresource. Guitarpartsresource carries both the MIJ and AV parts, including pickups, pickguards, hardware, switches, and mute. Allparts only carries unlicensed and unmarked parts, with no guarantee that they will fit – but they are cheaper. I've had no luck contacting the Fender corp. for parts.

What pickup replacements are available?

Other than getting the replacement Jaguar pickups from part venders, Seymour Duncan makes a line of Jaguar pickups under the SJAG model. The SJAG-1 is a vintage replica, the SJAG-2 is a quarter-pounder, and the SJAG-3 is the hot output. All of the pickups that they offer sound vastly superior over the stock MIJ pickups, but AV Jaguar pickups are the most accurate to the vintage specifications.

What the heck is that metal thing on the bridge of the Jaguar?

That is the infamous mute rocker that premiered with the early Jaguars, before the reissues. It's also featured on the AV. The purpose of the mute rocker is to slightly mute the strings when flipped up, as to give a "surf" tone. Although cool, it does throw off the tuning by a semi-tone or so.

Can you place a mute rocker on an MIJ?

Yes. With a simple drilling of 3 holes, you can install the mute rocker. The mute consists of the mute rocker plate, a plunger or "piston", and a spring. Two screws hold the entire assembly in place. The parts may be purchased from guitarpartsresource.

What's that metal thing around the pickups?

The metal device around the Jaguar pickups was Leo Fender's innovation for removing hum. It's called the "pickup claw". They are extensions around the pole pieces meant to

cancel out the hum and increase the magnetic field around the pickup to increase output. Not only do they look cool, but they also serve a purpose!

Will Strat pickups fit in a Jaguar?

Strat pickups will fit in a Jaguar, but with exceptions. Most Strat pickups cannot fit into the claw because of the triangular shape that comes out from the pickups. Aside from cutting that part of the pickup bobbin off, you can install the Strat pickups without the claw – although it will look very weird. Many Seymour Duncan pickups such as the JB Jr, the Hot Rails, and the little 59’ are the same shape as the jaguar pickup, and require no modification to fit into the pickup claw.

How do I fix the buzzing on my Jaguar?

The Jaguar is notorious for buzzing problems, and solving them is challenge within itself. There are several causes for buzzing on the Jaguar.

- 1) The 7.25” radius
- 2) The bridge is too low
- 3) The neck angle is not correct
- 4) The nut is too low
- 5) The pickups are too close to the strings
- 6) Saddles aren’t set to the correct radius
- 7) The Truss rod’s tension is incorrect
- 8) The strings are too small of a gauge

In order to correct these problems, consult Rick Saxon’s Setup on www.fenderjaguar.net, or take it to a professional to be done. Replacing the bridge is another option (Mustang bridge or TOM). The buzz stop may also be used – it increases the string tension to prevent too much slack in the string.

How can I fix the strings from popping off of my bridge?

This is more of a problem with MIJ jaguars than with AV Jaguar. Because the MIJ Jaguars are not made with proper tolerances, the string slots on each saddle are not shaped correctly, nor are they deep enough to house the whole diameter of the string. This causes a lot of strings to “pop off” of the bridge during play. One option to solve this problem is to use thicker gauge strings. Using 9’s or 10’s is a big mistake, for their gauge and tension is not suited for the Jaguar. 11’s or up are generally considered good. Aside from using a buzz stop, the best option you have to fix it is to use a better neck angle by shimming and raising the bridge.

The Bridge rocks around when I use the Tremolo. Is that normal?

The Bridge was designed to rock with the tremolo, hence the name “Synchronized Tremolo”. If you don’t like this, you can place tape around the posts, but you run the risk of getting your strings hitched on the bridge, which will throw off your tuning.

How do I use the Tremolo Lock?

The Tremolo lock is one of the key features on the Jaguar floating tremolo. By pressing down the tremolo arm and sliding the lock over, you are increasing the spring tension below the tremolo, locking down the trem. However, MIJ tremolos are not made very

well, and cannot lock as easily as AV Jaguar tremos. The MIJ tremolos commonly slip with their lock.

What Bridge replacements are available?

Bridge replacement is the most popular modification for the Jaguar. The easiest drop in replacement is the mustang bridge. This bridge already has a set 7.25" radius, and matches the string spacing and slot quite easily. Another popular bridge is the Tune-o-matic, or commonly known as the TOM. The TOM was used by Cobain on all of his 24" scale guitars, including his mustangs. The TOM requires some tape to be wrapped around the shafts, and the radius is incorrect at 12". This can be fixed with nut files and a radius gauge. If you contact Triskadecaepyon, he can modify your TOM to a 7.25" radius for a small amount of money. Both bridges are available from Stewmac, warmoth, allparts, and guitarpartsresource. You can also replace your bridge saddles with the "TUSQ" replacement saddles.

How do I fix the hum on a Jaguar?

Again, this is more of a problem with the MIJ Jaguars. Because both the AV Jaguars and MIJ Jaguars have extensive shielding, the only place they differ is in their pickups. The non-wax potted pickups, combined with their low quality copper wire, and adds to their ability to pick up noise and radio stations. This is much less of a problem with AV Jaguars, which are made with quality parts, not cheap parts. Seymour Duncan pickups rival AV Jaguar pickups also. If the noise persists, it may be that you have a grounding issue. Check with a multimeter to make sure all of your pots and shielding plates are properly grounded. Another method is to turn on your amp and see if the hum gets louder when you touch the strings. If they do, you have a grounding issue.

What string gauge is best suited for the Jaguar?

The Jaguar's 24" scale makes the required tension for pitch is much less than standard guitars. This in turn will cause buzzing with super thin string gauges. The best string gauge is 11's for a Jaguar. This is demonstrated by Cobain, as he uses LTHB strings, (10-52's) or strings with the wound strings of 11's, and plain strings of 10's. 11's are the perfect mix of tension and playability.

Where can I get replacement necks for Jaguars?

Aside from ebay, several companies create custom necks for Jaguars. Be warned, most companies such as Warmoth and USA custom guitars show only the base price. That means that the finish, the shipping, the frets, the dot markers, and tuner heads are all extra. They will NOT make the standard 7.25" radius either. That price can go well over 300 USD. However, several luthiers will build custom 24" necks for much less than commercial companies. Contact several local luthiers, or those on the forums. Triskadecaepyon on the forums is a luthier that will build Jaguar necks.