

COUNTRY COMPOSITE

Fender's Brad Paisley Road Worn Telecaster

One of the newest models from Fender's Artist series is designed to appeal to vintage Telecaster fanatics, country twangers, and even new converts taste-testing the Tele waters.

The new Brad Paisley Road Worn Telecaster has a body made of paulownia, a fast-growing wood that has long been used in China, Korea, and Japan for the soundboards of traditional stringed instruments. It's becoming popular in the building of electric guitars in the region due to its high availability/low cost, weight, and a fine grain that makes it strong and warp-resistant. On this instrument, it's sandwiched between a spruce top and back.

Modern touches include a 9.5"-radius fingerboard and medium-jumbo frets. Its personal aesthetic is derived from a silver-sparkle Road Worn lacquer finish, aged hardware, clear pickguard with black and silver paisleys, and a cowboy-hat insignia on the headstock.

Its patina will find fans among those wanting the Relic look without having to pay prices typical for the segment. The dull chrome of the tuners and hardware looks tastefully weathered, as if exposed to skin oils, pick scratches, humidity, and general use for many years. Likewise, the aged-brass bridge saddles appear incredibly realistic, with the color and feel of old screws in your grandpa's workbench bins. Even little details like the strap buttons and string ferrules are given the weathered treatment. Plus, the frets are masterfully flattened ever so slightly to match the feel of good used frets without affecting playability. There were no buzzing or intonation issues on the tester – quite an achievement considering the difficulties of creating an "old" guitar such as this.

With its satin finish and no discernible Relic treatment, the neck has a modern feel. For some, this will be a plus. The new Enhanced V shape – fatter near the headstock, flatter in the upper registers –

Price: \$1,199
Info: www.fender.com

may prove less than comfortable for smaller hands or those accustomed to a vintage profile, but those with typical or larger hands who feel lost on a vintage Tele neck will feel right at home here, with plenty of room to grab those harder-to-hit notes.

Unplugged, the guitar was surprisingly resonant, which carried over to the sustain when plugged in. Double-stop bends on frets that might be a problem on other guitars have almost unnaturally long sustain. Fender says Paisley himself ap-

proved the pickup configuration, which includes the company's '64 Tele bridge and a Custom Shop Twisted Tele neck pickup. The latter has a clear sound that isn't overly bright or piercing, with a tinge of warmth that works well when paired with brighter amps. The '64 Tele pickup also has that classic Tele bite, with popping, bright dynamics and subtle warmth. Digging in, the sound jumps with more bite and grit, and powerful response. Those dynamics make the Road Worn Paisley work impressively at low- and high-gain settings – a quality not often seen with vintage-style pickups.

Through a 30-watt 6V6 amp into a paired 2x12 cabinet, the guitar maintained a wonderful snap and low-end tightness. Into a 20-watt class D lunchbox amp, those driven dynamics remained obvious, with silky highs, biting mids, and taut lows.

The Brad Paisley Road Worn Tele may not be a pure "Relic," but its combination of vintage aesthetics and modern comfort is sure to make many players jaded by the sterility of modern guitars excited to make great music. – *Yoel Kreisler*

