

Teye

Jazz Cat

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLEND

IF YOUR PERSONAL STYLE OF ARTIS-tic enthusiasm veers toward the unique and funky—like a Le Corbusier cowhide lounge or Salvador Dali’s lobster telephone—then a Teye guitar will likely become your favorite jam (as the kids used to say). Teye combines elements such as acid-etched metal plates, mosaic tiles, and wood to create functional guitar art that simultaneously turns heads and seduces ear-drums. The tariff for these wonders can make your cheeks flush—they’re expensive machines—but just about every editor who has reviewed a Teye has succumbed enough to their charms to consider a purchase. As the Jazz Cat is the first Teye I’ve evaluated, I wanted to experience precisely what the *GP* editors love about these mad mash-ups of materials and electronics.

There’s a certain hand-tooled wonkiness about the Jazz Cat that telegraphs its resolutely one-of-a-kind nature (much like the ’70s Tony Zemaitis models that are close cosmetic cousins to the Teye designs). However, “wonky” doesn’t mean the craftsmanship is unsatisfactory or inconsistent. In fact, every Teye we’ve reviewed is quite nicely done. But screwing metal to wood—as well as manufacturing hardware with almost Moorish appointments—can leave some edges brusquely finished. It also seems like the top of the semi-hollow Cat is so thin that I could push my finger right through it. But while I wouldn’t drop a hardcover Stephen King novel on it, the top’s willowy density is actually very tough—the maple cap is 3mm thick and well supported—and it helps produce a loud acoustic zing with good sustain and shimmering midrange clarity. Furthermore, I did some rehearsals, gigs, and sessions with this cool Cat, and it never buckled

under my rough style of play, nor did it serve up any trouble at all. It’s an enjoyable guitar to play, with a comfy neck, easy-to-reach controls, and an overall weight that doesn’t produce shoulder aches or cause fatigue. The vibrato is responsive for producing tasty warbles, and it’s also capable of punk-rockabilly wails and feedback-driven howls if you get all Tazmanian Devil with it. (Note: Future Jazz Cats will include a Duesenberg vibrato, rather than a Bigsby.)

The not-so-secret sauce of the Jazz Cat’s electric sound is in the proprietary Teye Mojo control. I love that the inner workings of this tone-sculpturing device remain kind of mysterious, but, as we’ve said in previous reviews, it’s broadly capable of transforming studly humbucker timbres into very dimensional single-coil sounds. The Mojo is truly magical, and you can almost lose yourself in the seemingly infinite variations of Mojo-control positions, Master Tone tweaks, and Master Volume adjustments with each choice of bridge, neck, or combined pickup settings. Another mindblower is the stout complexity of the Jazz Cat’s tones. I had a friend use it for some solos on a project I was producing, and I knew he was plugged straight into his Vox AC30, but the resulting sound presented itself as if it were compressed, EQ’d, and tailored for a final mix. Impressive!

The only downer about the Jazz Cat is that, for some, its price will be a heck of a budget buster. But considering that it can cover almost any musical style, and deliver an astounding armament of tones from two pickups, you can view it as a Tag Heuer Monaco watch. It will hurt to actually buy the thing, but you’ll amortize the cost across many years of joyful use. **■**

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT teye.com

Jazz Cat

PRICE \$6,250 street

NUT WIDTH 1.75"

NECK Korina, set

FRETBOARD Ebony, 25.5" scale length

FRETS 24, StewMac 149

TUNERS Grover Super Rotomatic, Teye Master-Series buttons

BODY Korina with maple caps (front/rear)



BRIDGE Teye SuperSustain, Duesenberg vibrato tailpiece

PICKUPS Two TV Jones

CONTROLS Two Volume, Master Tone, Master Mojo, 3-way selector

FACTORY STRINGS D’Addario EXL110, .010-.046

WEIGHT 8.68 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Varied sounds. Mojo control. Fabulously unique look.

CONCERNS None.

