



FAME

Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary Burl Stonewashed Blue

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

FAME IS CELEBRATING 20 years in the instrument game with a commemorative limited-edition series that includes this Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary model with a striking Burl Stonewashed Blue top and high-gloss finish. What started in Gdansk, Poland, with a small custom shop called Mayones has grown into an internationally known brand in cooperation with the German retailer Music Store Professional.

With Fame, Music Store aims to produce a luxurious guitar with an economy price tag, and the Forum IV Modern seems designed to fit the bill. The guitar is loaded with premium features that include a GraphTech Resomax Tune-o-matic bridge with a Ghost piezo pickup system that augments a pair of coil-splitting Seymour Duncan humbuckers. Gotoh locking tuners adorn the shapely headstock, capping off an ebony fingerboard that features a winged 20th Anniversary inlay at the 12th fret.

All instruments in the Fame Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary Series feature hand-selected premium burl poplar tops with unique grain and individual finish.

Having viewed the guitar online, I was curious to see if it looked as cool in person as it did virtually, and I can confirm that it does. Removing it from the gig bag revealed a stunning contoured top that lived up to my expectations. Players can browse through the product variants at musicstore.com and choose the exact guitar they find most appealing by serial number. This review unit was chosen for *GP*, and I couldn't have made a better selection myself. Its poplar burl has got a planetary vibe, rippled blue and tan, almost like islands in an ocean, with streaks of clouds above. I've

got a gang of stringed instruments hanging on my walls and must admit that it stands out as the fairest of them all. I showed it off at a respected recording studio and a backline company where folks see tons of guitars, and the Forum IV Modern struck everybody with its wow factor.

Players who have seen their share of solidbody electrics, including yours truly, will quickly notice the similarities between the Fame Forum IV and the hallmarks of a particular high-profile American manufacturer famous for its fancy double-cutaway designs. Some were quick to judge by comparison, but not everyone shared that opinion. One music biz veteran at the backline company said, "It looks like it has its own authority, to me. It looks like a beast!"

I plugged it into a Bogner amp, and it sounded beastly too as I ran some southern-style Dickey Betts licks. Gain tones were sweet and creamy from the pair of Duncans, which include an SH-2N Jazz in the neck position and an SH-4JB in the bridge. Power chords were robust, and single notes seemed to burst out like bubbles. You can feel the impressive body resonance and sustain even without amplification. With the guitar plugged into a Fender Deluxe at the studio, clean tones were strong and clear, and I got off entering slinky Strat territory via the coil tap.

Pulling the volume knob up to engage the Ghost piezo in the bridge saddles delivers even more pronounced clean pop with every pluck. You can blend in as much as you desire via the tone knob, which becomes a piezo volume with the Ghost system engaged. With the tone knob turned far left, the blend is at full piezo. I set it that way and tested the guitar through a Taylor Circa '74 acoustic amp, achieving a respectable acoustic-electric tone. Unfortunately, the magnetic and piezo signals are summed — I know, because I tried to create a dual-amp situation with a stereo cable — so you're limited to a single amp. But you probably won't mind, given the myriad tones available.

Playability out of the bag was pretty good and it could be great given a few fine-tuning tweaks by a setup pro. The action was a bit high for my taste for fretted playing, particularly way up in the short rows on this 24-fret lead machine, but I loved it for slide licks. You can play a 12-bar blues in E all above the 12th fret, which is so nice. The neck



The blue-stained burl poplar top is stunning to behold.



SPECIFICATIONS

Fame Forum IV Modern

CONTACT fame-guitars.de

PRICE \$1,308 street with gig bag

NUT Black Tusq

NECK Sapele mahogany with D profile

FRETBOARD Ebony with “20 Years” winged inlay, 24.72” scale, 12” radius

FRETS 24

TUNERS Gotoh locking

BODY Khaya mahogany with poplar burl top

BRIDGE Graph Tech Resomax Tune-o-matic with Ghost piezo pickup system (bridge

saddles) and active preamp

PICKUPS Seymour Duncan SH-2N Jazz

(neck) and SH-4 JB (bridge)

FACTORY STRINGS D’Addario .010–.046 set

CONTROLS Three-way magnetic pickup selector, mini-switch coil-tap, volume knob with push/pull piezo activate, tone knob/piezo blend

WEIGHT 5.8 lbs (as tested)

BUILT Czech Republic

KUDOS Stunning looks, fine craftsmanship and broad tonal versatility at exceptional value

CONCERNS Overseas shipping and service may be a problem for some buyers. Summed magnetic and piezo signal means no splitting into dual electric/acoustic amps

is voluptuous, with a D profile, and while I normally prefer a smaller neck with more of a C shape, this one felt pretty good to me. The fret edges were nice and smooth all the way up and down the fretboard, which is made of firm, dark ebony. The Gotoh locking tuners did a fine job of homing in and securing the variety of tunings I tried out.

The bottom line is that Fame hit its mark. For about \$1.3k, you get a beautifully crafted guitar capable of a broad tonal spectrum, with nice playability. The Forum IV Modern feels hearty and sturdy, but not too heavy in hand. The hurdles Fame faces are primarily about brand familiarity, the aforementioned similarity to another guitar maker and availability in America. Fame has no stateside retail distribution, so you must order from

Music Store and pay about \$50 for shipping overseas, which the website says takes five to 15 days — not too bad, all things considered. Though if you do have to phone customer service for any reason, bear in mind that you’ll be calling an overseas number.

In the end, what you get in the Fame Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary is a beautiful beast with a carved top and a set neck for an attainable street price, and it sure seems like a sweet guitar from a brand celebrating 20 years in business. I wasn’t eager to ship it all the way back to Europe, but that was mainly because I truly dig the guitar, not because of the hassles of mailing it. I’d recommend taking a good look at the model online and reaching out to Fame with any questions that you have. 🎸