



Ibanez Mode MDM1300

Ibanez takes on the boutique-styled ‘super Jazz’ market - has it cracked it?

BY CONNOR FLYS

▶ **IT’S THE NATURE** of electric guitar and bass design - no matter how brilliant the blueprint is, once it reaches the market, there will almost always be a subset of owners who find joy in tweaking, adding or removing components, and stamping their own identity on it.

The Fender Jazz Bass is one of those instruments whose design was nearly perfect from the off, and remains so after almost seven decades, but there’s now a sizeable market for Jazz-inspired bass guitars with the added power and flexibility of active electronics.

It helps that the Jazz is such a versatile platform to begin with; further enhanced, it really can end up being the clichéd “everything you ever need” bass - comfortable and stylish but traditional, and distinctive-sounding but with masses of flexibility.

Strangely, for a company that has made inroads into so many diffuse areas of the guitar and bass market, Ibanez had never hopped aboard.

The company’s long-running Soundgear and BTB ranges, and the newer EHB headless models, cater particularly well for the rock and metal crowd; its Talman range adds a couple of quirky retro models. But in between, there’s a long-standing gap; we’ve never seen an Ibanez take on the do-it-all ‘Super Jazz’. Until now

In 2026, we’re seeing a whole new range of basses from the Japanese giant - the Mode, or MDM (Mode Modern) series. A clearly Fender-inspired outline, and all-important Jazz-sized single-coil pickups, but with the accoutrements of modern bass guitar.

The £999 entry to the range is the solid-coloured MDM1000, available with four, five or six strings, but here we have a four-string example of the next model up - this is the sunburst-finished, ash-bodied MDM1300.

Build quality

The body shape is instantly recognisable as Jazz-inspired, but with a deep treble-side cutaway for access to all 24 frets. The prominent grain of the ash, and the subtle burst finish, are very attractive; like the best of this style of instrument, its aesthetics would be just as suited for a soul/R&B band as for a metal project.

The build is fantastic overall; the hardware is tactile and high-quality, and the fit and finish is extremely well-executed, with no real flaws to mention anywhere - not necessarily a given with basses around this price.

The only sticking point with this review sample is the weight - at around 4.2 kg, it’s more than most will want for a four-string Jazz-style bass.

Playability

I’ve heard Ibanez’s slim, narrow Soundgear neck profile described as being “like playing bass on

“Every note comes out with abundant punch and clarity. You could immediately slot it into a mix”

‘Easy’ mode” - and that statement came back to mind immediately when I began playing the MDM1300’s roasted maple neck.

It’s a Jazz-spec 38mm nut width, with a slim profile and a very smooth satin finish, and its easy playability is exactly what we’ve come to expect from an Ibanez bass - really superb.

There’s even a detachable finger ramp supplied; it’s as if the bass is egging you on to play faster and more technical fingerstyle passages.

Sounds

Another feature of the Mode series is an exhaustive EQ section - not satisfied with the conventional Bass/Mid/Treble layout, Ibanez has added a three-way mini-switch to offer a choice of midrange frequencies.

Then, set into the rear cavity cover, a second DIP switch for Ibanez’s new Hexa Mid circuit, which shifts the mid response to a lower register - combined with the first switch, this is a total of six possible frequencies for the Mid knob to boost or cut.

If you’re dialing in a very precise tone, it’s great news; if you’re prone to option paralysis, it’ll confound you. But you can pull up on the passive tone control and bypass the whole lot.

After you’ve found your way around the smorgasbord of midrange possibilities, the Ibanez starts to deliver on its promise of versatility, taking everything my bass test rig could throw at it - from a clean, compressed Gallien-Krueger to a gritty Sansamp tone, a vintage Ampeg overdrive to a modern-day Darkglass Roar.

The Sonitech S preamp is clean, articulate and, of course, has that incredibly powerful EQ; fingerstyle, slapped, or picked, every note comes out with abundant punch and clarity. It doesn’t sound like a vintage Jazz Bass, but you could immediately slot it into a recorded or live mix as a polished, professional modern Jazz-style tone - which is more the point.

There’s also something to be said for how much better it’s possible to sound on an instrument that simply makes playing smoother.

Verdict

It’s strange that Ibanez has never entered the ‘Super Jazz’ space before but, on this evidence, the Mode series stands as one hell of a first effort.

This example is a heavyweight, but makes up for it with stunning playability and a preamp

GUITARWORLD VERDICT



Ibanez has come into the modern Jazz Bass-style market for the first time, and pulled it off with quite some aplomb. The Mode series is a class-leading package - an excellent, unique preamp, good looks and the kind of silky-smooth playability that Ibanez fans will know and love.

PROS

- + It’s an attractive-looking bass, and one that’s built very well too.
- + The neck and overall playing experience are simply top-notch.
- + The preamp sounds excellent and offers masses of adjustment.

CONS

- Our review sample is quite heavy - if weight is a concern, try before you buy.
- The Hexa Mid system might take a while to get your head around.

SPECS

MADE: Indonesia
TYPE: Four-string active bass guitar
BODY: Ash
NECK: Roasted maple, MDM profile
FINGERBOARD MATERIAL/RADIUS: Roasted maple, 12” radius
SCALE LENGTH: 34”/864mm
NUT/WIDTH: Plastic, 38mm
FRETS: 24, medium, stainless steel
HARDWARE: Ibanez Aero-light tuners, MR5S bridge, black
STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE: 19mm - adjustable at bridge
ELECTRICS: 2x Delta S4J pickups, Ibanez Sonitech S preamp, controls for Volume, Balance, Tone (push-pull for activating EQ), Bass, Mid, Treble, 3-way Mid selector switch, 2-way Hexa Mid selector switch on rear panel
WEIGHT: 9.3lb/4.2kg
LEFT-HANDED OPTIONS: N/A
FINISHES: Natural Stained Amber Burst
CASE: Ibanez gig bag included

that offers a borderline-excessive amount of adjustment.
At its price, it’s very difficult to rival the degree of quality and versatility shown here - if a modernised Jazz Bass is what you’re after, you’d be doing yourself a real disservice by not auditioning the Mode series.