



Until now, faux guitar wear has been strictly for the well-heeled. How will Vintage's fun-loving relics fare in the budget arena? Huw Price finds out...

# Vintage

## V6 Icon & V100 Icon

Relic finishes are all the rage at the moment. Some small specialists have refined their technique to a near art form, and new guitars from Fender's Custom Shop and smaller builders such as Dave Dearnaley and Bravewood can give you that vintage mojo straight off the shelf.

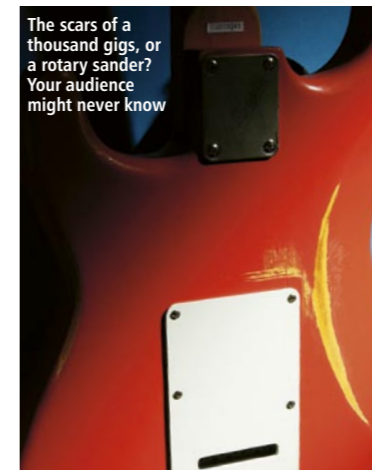
But these arcane and dark arts of lutherie have carried a price tag – until now. If creating a brand called 'Vintage' wasn't cheeky enough, Vintage is now making its guitars look old as well. Incidentally, we love visiting the JHS website to read their descriptions. The Vintage V6 we recently reviewed was trumpeted as 'soulful, sweet toned and articulate'; the V6 Icon is 'senescent, spirited and feisty'. We're not sure, but senescent might be Latin for 'old'.

The 'Firenza red' finish used for the V6 Icon is pretty close to an authentic Fender Fiesta Red and appears to have been sprayed over a yellow base coat. As part of the faux aging process there's been no attempt to flat the paint back to a shiny finish, so the whole body has a slightly textured surface that actually feels very pleasant and comfortable.

The colour coats have been sanded away in the usual (and some unusual!) wear spots, so there are no flaky paint

### First Impressions

At £249 we were worried, but the V6 has a better relic job than we hoped. Nice colour, too



The scars of a thousand gigs, or a rotary sander? Your audience might never know



Aged hardware and vintage-shaded plastics complete the knackered look

The V6 Icon's relicing has the desired effect – and it's a better job than most of us would manage

edges, and somebody has been at it with a blunt implement to impart some strategic scratches. The neck plate and vintage-style Wilkinson vibrato and tuners have also had some artificial ageing, and the back of the neck has ingrained dirt together with an orangey matte finish.

The only glossy part on the guitar, besides the spearmint scratchplate and spring cover, is the front of the headstock – but even here the edges have been lightly distressed. The good news is that the Wilkinson single coils have been retained, plus browned-up covers, and even the knobs and switch tip are off-white (pity that the push-in whammy bar tip doesn't match). So yes, the relicing has the desired effect – and it's a better job than most of us would manage if we tried to age our own guitar.

### SOUNDS

This V6 Icon plays much the same as the previous V6 model that we reviewed. The acoustic tone is quite warm and smooth but it isn't particularly snappy or chimey, and though the strings are fresh they seem a touch dead. Fortunately the Wilkinson pickups come to the rescue, ☺

### FINAL SCORE

Build Quality .....	14
Playability .....	14
Sound .....	13
Value for money .....	15
Vibe .....	16
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>72%</b>

Good for... all the things you choose a classic Strat for  
Look elsewhere... death metal, fusion, alt.rock

### FACTFILE

#### V6 ICON

**Description:** Solidbody electric guitar. Made in Korea

**Price:** £249

**Build:** Poplar body, bolt-on maple neck with 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, Wilkinson vibrato bridge, Wilkinson E-Z-Lock machineheads

**Electrics:** Three Wilkinson single-coil pickups, five-way pickup selector switch, master volume and tone controls for neck and middle

**Left-handers:** No

**Finish:** Firenza Red, Woodstock White

**Scale Length:** 648mm (25.5")

**Neck width:** Nut 42mm  
12th fret 52mm

**Depth of neck:** First fret 21mm  
12th fret 23mm

**String spacing:** Nut 35mm  
Bridge 53.5mm

**Action as supplied:** 12th fret treble 2.5mm  
12th fret bass 3mm

**Weight:** 3.6kg/7.9lb

### THE COMPETITION

#### SHINE S1:

An S-type with an added boost switch. Spending on a proper set up should be factored into the cost  
**RRP:** £150

#### VINTAGE V6:

The brand-new version of the Icon. You could save a few quid and relic it yourself – but it could take more work than you think...  
**RRP:** from £179

#### SQUIER Standard Strat:

An old favourite with a respected name and all the right appointments  
**RRP:** £210

Price: £299

FACTFILE

V100 ICON

**Description:** Solidbody electric guitar. Made in Korea

**Price:** £299

**Build:** Mahogany body with maple veneer cap, set mahogany neck, 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, tun-o-matic bridge, Wilkinson Deluxe machineheads

**Electrics:** Two Wilkinson humbuckers, three-way switch, individual volume and tone controls

**Left-handers:** No

**Finish:** Cherry Sunburst, Honeyburst

**Scale Length:** 628mm (24.75")

**Neck width:** Nut 42mm  
12th fret 52mm

**Depth of neck:** First fret 21mm  
12th fret 23mm

**String spacing:** Nut 34.5mm  
Bridge 52mm

**Action as supplied:** 12th fret treble 2.5mm  
12th fret bass 3.5mm

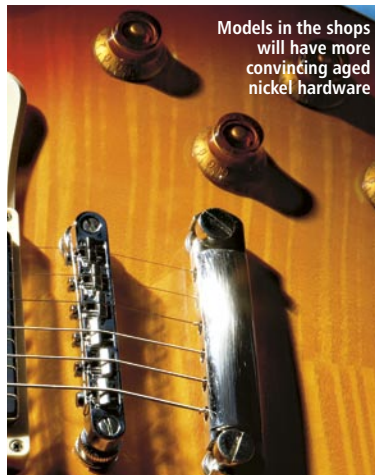
**Weight:** 4.2kg/9.2lb

**Contact:** JHS  
☎ 01132 865 381

**Web:**  
www.jhs.co.uk



The Wilkinson humbuckers are among the best you'll find in this price range



Models in the shops will have more convincing aged nickel hardware

The V100's pickups do a good job. The bridge barks and growls and the neck is blues rock heaven

injecting the requisite high frequency response to produce a complete range of classic Strat tones – minus the hum in the in-between settings. The pickups are wound for vintage output levels without a trace of harshness. What's more, the volume levels are consistent across all three, the medium-depth neck plays smoothly and the vibrato stays in tune.

V100 ICON

It's pretty easy to buy a Fender-style relic these days, but the only other readily available LP-style relic I'm aware of is made by Tokai and costs a cool £1200. Despite the deeper-than-original cutaway and the over-pointy horn the V100 Icon is instantly recognisable. What's more the website informs us it's 'muscular, resilient and formidable'. Fantastic!

The materials comprise a veneer maple cap over a mahogany body, giving a light weight of 4.25kg. Regular LP appointments include 1950s-style knobs and a greenish cream guard. I could nit pick about the over-white neck markers, the white switch tip and shiny chrome hardware, but JHS assure us that production examples will have distressed nickel-plated hardware and pickup covers.

This time the body relicing is a little more considered. The nicely figured mahogany back has a dose of buckle rash and there's some palm-wear at the set neck joint. The cherryburst finish is also

rubbed away under the strumming arm and around the cutaway, and we like the small pick wear patch above the pickups.

SOUNDS

This neck profile is really something – no baseball bat but more like a slender 1960 Standard neck, wonderfully grippy but fast, and the strings feel loose and supple. Tuning is rock-solid thanks to the Wilkinson Deluxe tuners. It feels familiar and really is a dream to play.

For those of a bluesy persuasion, recreating the timber-tinged tones of early Clapton, Green and Kossoff is a big ask even with a real old Gibson, and this is why the V100 Icon blows me away. Acoustically it's really happening with plenty of warm volume and undamped sustain, and boy, those pickups are doing a good job. The bridge barks and growls with thick, harmonically-loaded lows and screaming highs. Flick up to the neck and it goes 'oooh' with a warmth and transparency that's blues rock heaven.

One gripe: the controls. Everything's fine flat out, but things get muddy as you turn down the volume, and the high E does a disappearing trick when you back off the tone on the neck pickup for that 'Beano' sound. Nevertheless, I'd take this guitar over almost any other LP-inspired instrument I've played, and frankly quite a few genuine Gibsons too.

VERDICT

We're always impressed by the playability and value for money of Vintage guitars, but especially the set-necks. The bolt-on V6 plays well, and the pickups seem to extract every ounce of tone while adding a bite and transparency that wouldn't otherwise be part of the palette. In other



words, it's already as good as it's gonna get. As for the V100 Icon, it's probably better than all the other Far Eastern-built competition, and the light weight and doozie of a neck makes it so nice to play. Mind you, we feel that though the Wilkinson 'buckers are better than most, a pickup swap might unlock even more sonic potential and provide just a bit more transparency and articulation. Relic'd guitars are a contentious subject, going by the *Guitar & Bass* postbag, but if you have any serious objections to these, maybe you've lost your sense of fun!

THE COMPETITION

STAGG

**L500:** The same set neck and twin humbucker formula but alder/maple rather than mahogany, so the Stagg might give a brighter tone. Comes in cherryburst only  
**RRP:** £197

SHINE

**S1-860:** Set neck, maple cap and nato body. A pretty together guitar with better-sounding humbuckers than you'd expect at the price  
**RRP:** from £280

EPIPHONE

**Les Paul Special II:** Official maple/mahogany replica with humbuckers. Consider paying more for the upgraded top option  
**RRP:** £189-£235

First Impressions

Wow! This looks almost like the real deal. We can't wait to get our hands on it...

FINAL SCORE	
Build Quality .....	17
Playability .....	19
Sound .....	18
Value for money .....	18
Vibe .....	20
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>92%</b>
Good for... classic blues and rock	
Look elsewhere... death metal, single-coil tones or anything that isn't typically LP	