



the Wishlist

Dream gear to beg, borrow and steal for...

Vintage V52 ProShop Unique Black Icon with Bigsby £1,199

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This Wishlist section is usually reserved for high-end guitars that few (aside from the very well heeled) can afford. So, what are we doing writing about a Vintage lookalike? Well, a couple of years back the UK-designed brand introduced its ProShop concept where the team takes one of its Eastern Asian-made standard models and puts it through a makeover at its parent company's HQ in Leeds. This means you can get a good-looking 'relic' of a familiar model – or indeed a custom-colour finish – way below the cost of the real deal. And the 2023 range of stock 'Unique' models certainly displayed a diverse range of custom guitars, of which this Black Icon with Bigsby is one.

While it started life as a standard Vintage V52 Icon, the model's finish has been stripped off and replaced with a white undercoat and black nitro top-coat (which, in this case, has been heavily aged). The one-piece maple neck gets a gold ProShop logo and goes through the time-machine (along with the metal parts, including that Bigsby B50 vibrato), before it's assembled using Wilkinson parts and pickups. There's also a kill switch added for good measure.

Relics always divide opinion, of course, especially the apparent accuracy (or not) of the wear. In fact, it's

become a bit of an art form. Our Black Icon certainly creates the illusion of having had a pretty hard life, modded along the way with a bit of DIY refinishing. The hardware, not least that Bigsby, looks like it's been in a garden shed for a few years, too, although the white scratchplate appears to be a more 'recent' addition.

Each ProShop also goes through a detailed setup – and it's hard to find fault here. The vintage-style frets have been lightly levelled and perfectly polished, and there's a light, fast playability. Intonation is good, too, thanks to those compensated saddles, although we wouldn't have been surprised to find heavier strings and a tougher action. In fact, with that Bigsby onboard, we hear quite an open steely voice from the Alnico WVTB at the bridge, contrasted by some percussive warmth from the WVTN at the neck, and bouncy jangle with both combined. It's possibly more rockabilly and country than the hardcore punk that the wear and that kill switch might suggest.

Importantly, while these one-off ProShop Unique models show off the concept, you can also create your own specification via the Custom Build programme. Which is exactly what we've done – and you can see the results in a full review in our next issue. **G**

1. You can imagine quite the backstory here – the chipped 70s-looking original finish appears to have been rescued from a barn fire and subsequently restored. Or whatever!

2. The ageing of the metal parts, particularly the Bigsby B50, is so well done that we're tempted to pull the parts off, give them a rub with some fine wire wool and oil them. The compensated and very antique-looking Wilkinson WTB saddles are a nice touch

3. The neckplate is also heavily weathered, while the 'over-sprayed' top-coat nitro is already cracking – probably done with a fine knife, rather than temperature. It has a solid weight of 3.74kg (8.23lb), too

4. For stock or dealer builds, the ProShop models mix up relics with unrelieved custom colours. If you create your own, you can invent a backstory of which the finish is just one part. As to hardware and parts, again, that's down to you, although obviously fitting a set of Bare Knuckles, for example, over the standard Wilkinson pickups will affect the overall cost

5. The control plate here is reversed so that red-topped kill switch sits where the tone control would have been – there's just enough room to put the tone where the volume was and squeeze a volume control in between. Thankfully, the wiring is neat...



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