

VINTAGE GUITARS ICON V65V REVIEW: A PRE-AGED OFFSET FOR A BARGAIN PRICE

The Vintage brand sets out to boost its indie street cred by adding an offset-waist solidbody to its pre-roughed-up Icon series – does it sound as ‘alternative’ as it looks?

By **Matt McCracken**



SUMMARY

Potentially divisive looks don't take away from the quality and playability of this intriguing offset.

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★★★★☆
OVERALL SCORE

Vintage Guitars has been steadily building its reputation since the mid-1990s, when beginner brand Encore decided to add something more upmarket to its roster. Soon established as an entity apart from the Encore stable, Vintage made its name mixing homegrown design ingenuity with overseas manufacturing to deliver impressive value for money.

Nowadays the British-owned brand is well on board with the ‘relic’ craze, through its ever-expanding Icon series – and that brings us to this new, distressed version of the Jazzmaster-inspired V65.

Marrying the tastefully battered look of a classic offset-waist **Fender** with the nuts, bolts and electronics of a modern thoroughbred, the V65V features the time-tested combination of an alder body and a bolt-on maple neck. That ensures familiarity for offset aficionados but you're also getting Trev Wilkinson-designed metalwork (including a roller bridge) and a slippery **Graph Tech** nut.

Cosmetically, this guitar – with an appearance that suggests decades of use and abuse – may prove divisive. The body's matte finish has been purposefully worn by the luthiers at the Vintage factory, with pretty major scuffs and scrapes on the front, sides and back.



The worn look doesn't stop there either: the back of the neck has been sanded down too. There's little trace of the original glossy finish except at the extremes of the upper and lower registers, which should in theory enable players to skip the years-long process of playing the neck in themselves.

Wilkinson's award-winning design team provides the hardware and electronics, continuing a longstanding relationship with the Vintage brand. This guitar features a pair of P-90-inspired Soapbar pickups, rather than the typical Jazzmaster-style single-coils you might expect, plus Wilkinson WJ55 tuners. A Vintage tailpiece with an extra-long arm is meant to inspire shimmery chord work and wild single-note vibrato. Let's see if it does...



In use

Plugged into a clean black-panel amplifier, the twangy nature of these pickups is immediately evident in the bridge position, which causes us to reach for the treble knob on the amp right away. Switching to the middle or neck position warms things up significantly and, with the addition of some spring reverb, we're in blissful clean tone territory.

This guitar shines thanks to the ability to add subtle, textural vibrato via that long arm. The added motion to the ringing tails of chord work makes for seriously sweet-sounding progressions, putting everything from jangly indie to dark post-rock tonalities well within the player's grasp.



Adding drive to our signal chain, the V65V springs to life sonically, with that bridge position becoming eminently usable again in conjunction with a [Fulltone](#) OCD placed in front of the amp. With some fuzz thrown into the mix, great garage-rock riffing abounds, with plenty of sustain for lead licks and excellent chordal clarity.

The ready-worn feel of the neck makes it extraordinarily comfortable from the get-go, one benefit of a relic job that you'd be forgiven for thinking was purely an exercise in aesthetics. The wearing of the finish on the back makes this guitar feel oddly familiar, and its vintage C profile doesn't feel too slim in the hand, with a chunkier feel than the specs suggest.



Though the V65V doesn't sport locking tuners, the Wilkinson WJ55s do a remarkably good job of holding the tuning down – in spite of our heavy leaning on the vibrato arm during an excitable session. Even after some seriously harsh whammy play, the tuning required only a slight adjustment.

The bridge on our review instrument did buzz a bit, particularly as we moved further up the neck, but this was only really noticeable when playing unplugged. For the most part the roller saddles on the Wilkinson bridge cope extremely well at preventing the string-slip that's often a problem with this kind of ultra-shallow break angle – though we did pop the low E string out of its groove a few times.



Anyone familiar with traditional offsets will know to expect this and, for many players, the bridge design is key to the sound of this type of guitar. It certainly doesn't detract from the overall playing experience of the V65V, which is good fun, versatile enough for a variety of styles, and an inspiring option for those looking to make their first inroads into the enigmatic world of the offset.

Key Features

- **DESCRIPTION** Offset-waist solidbody electric guitar, made in Korea
- **BUILD** Alder body, bolt-on maple neck with vintage soft C profile, rosewood fingerboard with 10" radius, 22 medium jumbo frets, Graph Tech NuBone nut
- **HARDWARE** Wilkinson WJ55 tuners, Vintage offset vibrato bridge/tailpiece with roller saddles
- **ELECTRICS** 2 x Wilkinson Soapbar pickups, master volume and tone, three-way selector switch,
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.5"/648mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 43mm at nut, 53mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 22.9mm at first fret, 25.1mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 34.7mm at nut, 51mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 3.4kg/7.4lb
- **FINISHES** Distressed Black (as reviewed), Distressed Sunburst
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **CONTACT** vintageguitarsrus.com