

Back in Black

Anonimo's new Ox-Pro treatment sees three new models weathering wear and tear better than their PVD-blackened predecessors

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For that authentic military feel and of course practicality 'in the field', black dials have always been *de rigueur*, but black cases less so. While steel poses a genuine danger in the reflective sense, a tough-enough blackening treatment has always proved elusive. The likes of Panerai, Fortis and Anonimo itself have occasionally flirted with a process known as 'physical vapour deposition' (PVD). This – very basically – involves depositing a layer of strongly adherent metal (usually titanium nitride) onto another, electromagnetically. The end result is a dark, gunmetal finish. Unfortunately, at just a few microns thick, PVD is as easily scratchable as the steel beneath and never really posed much functionality beyond the cosmetic. Indeed, Panerai's US centre never replated PVD, but, for \$150, would strip the scratched PVD

to leave the steel beneath with a brushed and slightly less shiny finish.

Military credentials

This year, Anonimo unveiled three new watches – blackened of case and yet mysteriously scratch-resistant to boot. Further enquiry does little to shake this mystery, beyond the fact that the cases are subject to the 'Ox-Pro' oxidation process. It was tested and produced for military purposes, which is probably why the technicalities still remain under wraps. However, since it is the actual steel that is treated, it does not take a military engineer to figure out that an Ox-Pro watch case will be tougher than PVD, without relying on a thin and vulnerable mask. After 14 stages of production, the process modifies the surface molecules of the steel itself,

imparting a warm black colour. Until now, this process was only available on optical tools or small weapons such as knives, designed for military assault teams – the Lagunari amphibious regiment and the Folgore airborne brigade for example.

Repeated testing of Anonimo's Hi Dive Millemetri, Militare Automatico and Match Racing Valencia cases has yielded encouraging results so far. Normal day-to-day impacts have not exposed the base metal, as has been the history with other case finishing processes. What is more, restoration of the watch to as-new condition after years of wear and tear costs a fraction of that for PVD. As such, Ox-Pro is already, and rightly, a permanent fixture at Anonimo. The marque can now afford to enjoy the exclusivity it has always deserved. ○

Limited to just 250 pieces, the Match Racing Valencia (£2,140) features colour-coded reaching indicators for wind angles, flags and signs, plus an 'applique' 10-minute countdown scale.

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