

FIRST PLAY



PRS SE CE 24
STANDARD SATIN
£499

WHAT IS IT? Hugely affordable mahogany-bodied satin-finished CE 24: PRS's new start-up guitar

Satin Stunner

Hot on the heels of the classic CE 24 launching in the SE line for 2024, this new satin Standard version loses the bling and drops the price. Yes, please!

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Phil Barker

It's hard to second-guess PRS these days. Having only just released a trio of new SEs for its 2024 line-up, including the Swamp Ash Special and CE 24 (featured in issue 506), the company has released yet another one: a Standard Satin version of the still-fresh SE CE 24.

PRS fans will know that 'Standard' refers to an all-mahogany body, rather than the more commonly used mahogany back with a figured maple cap. This all-mahogany style dates right back to the first PRS guitars of 1985. Originally, there was just the maple-topped Custom and the less expensive all-mahogany 'PRS Guitar', which became the Standard around 1987. The genus of this new SE whizzes back to the following year when PRS's first bolt-on was launched, the Classic Electric, which soon became the CE.

There have been plenty of Standards over the years, of course, including a few with satin finishes, and currently the mainly Indonesian-made SE line boasts the McCarty 594 Singlecut Standard, the







1

1. Unlike the USA-made CE 24 that has a natural headstock face, the SE uses what PRS calls a 'Black Bakelite' facing. The tuners are non-locking, too, unlike the low-mass locking types on the USA model

Standard 24-08 and the Hollowbody Standard (also available with piezo). But this new model is unique in that both the neck and body have a very light satin finish. And while the glossy maple-topped SE CE 24 lists at £695, this new version drops that to just £499 (including a gigbag). We're reliably informed that dealers will probably be selling it closer to £450: it's the lowest-cost PRS guitar.

To be honest, at that price we wondered if we might get a bag of bits and some instructions... but, no, the CE 24 Standard Satin is fit to go from the off and any savings are clearly down to the finish type, the lack of a maple-veneered top and, we'd wager, a few trimmed margins.

Available in three translucent colours, our review sample is coined Turquoise, although 'Forest Green' might have been more accurate. Like the SE Swamp Ash Special, you can clearly see that the 44mm deep body is three pieces, and while the jointing is immaculate, on the treble side you can see that things are slightly mismatched. That said, the machining and sanding is superb and with this light, slightly open-pore finish there's nowhere to hide, unlike a coloured, opaque gloss. In fact, plenty of us might argue that this style

looks and feels classier, more expensive even. Just remember, though, that a finish such as this will mark and ding easily. There's no binding, like we see on the other glossed SE Standards, the top's edges aren't radiused, either, unlike the back, and we have the same lightly dished 'shallow violin' carve with a light ribcage cutaway.

Aside from the body change, then, everything else is identical to the glossed model: the same 635mm (25-inch) maple neck with scarf-jointed headstock, a 24-fret

2. PRS's SE and USA-made S2 use this cast (as opposed to machined) two-piece all-steel vibrato. Don't feel short-changed, though – it's a great design with push-in, tension-adjustable arm and is set up here with four tension springs

We're scratching our heads a little. How can such a guitar be so perfectly crafted and sound so good for this money?

rosewood fretboard, the generic enclosed PRS logo'd non-locking tuners, the all-steel 'cast' vibrato, a pair of double black 85/15 'S' humbuckers, controlled with a three-position toggle switch, master volume and tone (with a pull switch to voice PRS's usual partial splits). The pearloid solid bird inlays are retained, even though dot inlays might have suited this slightly more lowly start-up style a little more.



UNDER THE HOOD

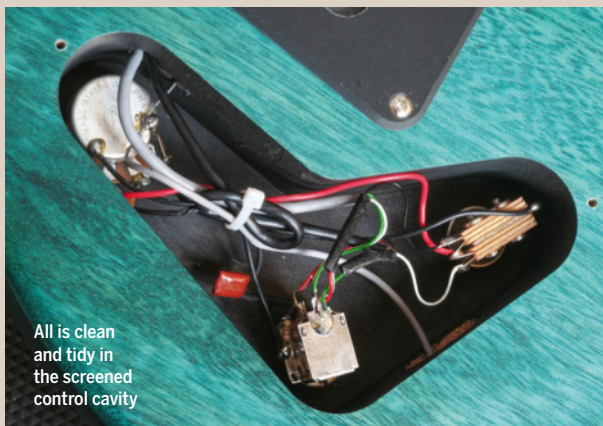
Any changes to the control circuit? Let's take a look...

As you might expect, the control circuit here is exactly the same as the gloss-finish SE CE 24 using an Alpha 'Made in Korea' 500k audio taper volume pot and an unmarked tone (also 500k nominally) with its pull-switch to switch both pickups to single-coil mode. But these are partial coil-splits, so the screw

coil isn't fully dumped to ground, like a standard coil-split, achieved with a 2.2kohms resistor on the bridge pickup and a 1.1k on the neck. The tone cap is valued at .033µf and the volume has a 108pF capacitor for its treble bleed circuit.

Unlike some PRS pickups, the 85/15 'S' humbuckers are four-conductor, so there's

plenty of potential for expanding the wiring here if you're handy with a soldering iron. PRS describes the 85/15 'S' humbuckers as "uncovered pickups with clarity and extended high and low-end – perfect for modern applications". Our bridge pickup measures 7.63kohms (5.16k when split) and the neck is 7.04k (4.37k when split).



All is clean and tidy in the screened control cavity



Made in Indonesia, these PRS-designed 81/15 'S' humbuckers aim to replicate the USA-made versions



3. With the tone control down you're in humbucker mode, but pull it up and both humbuckers are simultaneously split to single coil

4. Like the gloss-finished SE CE 24, the satin version uses 85/15 'S' pickups with their double black bobbins. As per the name, it's a 24-fret guitar, like the original from 1988. There's no SE CE 22... as yet!

Feel & Sounds

At 3.37kg (7.4lb) it's virtually identical in weight to the SE CE 24 and a great weight for a solidbody. As we noted in that previous review, the neck could probably do with a rub with a light abrasive or 0000 wire wool to burnish it to a more played-in silky smooth satin, which would elevate it further, along with just a little more fingerboard-edge rolling. But there's nothing wrong here.

The Wide Thin neck profile suggests some kind of shredder's neck, but it doesn't feel like that in the hand. Instead,

For any player, at any level, needing to cover a lot of sounds, this really takes some beating

5. Another change from the USA style is the more Fender-like bolt-on join (also used on the SE Silver Sky and the SE Swamp Ash Special), which means the bass-side cutaway has a slightly different shape compared with the USA CE 24 model

we have a generous nut width and string spacing – 43.23mm and 36mm respectively – and a depth of 21mm at the 1st fret, 23mm by the 12th. It's a pretty classic C profile, although the relaxed shoulders do make it feel 'thinner' than it actually is. Think 'all-rounder' and you're not far off. Typically, the medium jumbo frets are perfectly installed and the setup is bang-





5

on. It plays superbly, holds its tuning well, even with some pretty vigorous vibrato use. We'd take it on a gig as is.

The 85/15 'S' humbuckers continue the impression of a well turned-out machine aimed at very mainstream use that, in typical PRS style, offers well-voiced single-coil sounds and bigger humbucker sounds that sit nicely between vintage and modern, both in terms of sound and output. Just like the original PRS proposition, it sits rather beautifully in that middle ground between a Les Paul and a Stratocaster.

Compared with an original alder-bodied Classic Electric, the SE doesn't quite capture the more vintage-y depth and vibe of the neck humbucker, it's a little fuller and more balanced, while the bridge has less of the Classic Electric's mid-focus. There are big rock voices here, but even with some throaty gain there's welcome clarity.

Pull back the volume and a rootsier sound emerges, plus you'll find some smooth jangle that removes a little of the new-string sparkle in a good way, while the partial splits move easily into the single-coil realm – not as authentic as the SE Silver Sky but more than usable. And whether it's the lack of body finish or the material, there's a very woody character here; the sort of

thing that attracted this writer to those original CEs back in the day.

We're scratching our heads a little here. How can such a lowly guitar be so perfectly crafted and sound so versatile and good for this money?

Verdict

With PRS having only just launched the first-ever SE CE 24, this second Standard version almost seems an afterthought, rather than a carefully considered marketing move. Save for its all-mahogany satin finished body, it's the same guitar – and if the less-posh style ticks your box, you can happily save yourself nearly £200. Surely, then, its introduction will dilute the sales of the glossed maple-topped version?

But that's not our problem. Instead, we now have a new entry point into PRS world that, on paper, is equally valid for any youngster to start their journey with, or as a spare or modding platform for a more experienced player. The thing is, as is, for any player, at any level, needing to cover a lot of sounds, this really takes some beating: the pared-down essence of PRS, if you like, and a guitar we really can't fault. Try one of these before someone realises they've made a mistake with the price. **G**



PRS SE CE 24 STANDARD SATIN

PRICE: £499 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: Indonesia

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody electric, bolt-on

BODY: 3-piece mahogany with 'shallow violin' top carve

NECK: Maple, wide-thin profile, bolt-in

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: Friction reducing/43.23mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 'old school' bird inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 24, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: PRS patented vibrato (cast), PRS designed non-locking tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PRS 85/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers (open coil, double black bobbins); 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone (w/ pull switch to simultaneously coil-split both humbuckers)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.37/7.4

OPTIONS: Colour only

RANGE OPTIONS: Maple-topped, gloss-finished SE CE 24 (£695). Other SE Standards: McCarty 594 Singlecut Standard (£899), Standard 24-08 (£699) and Hollowbody Standard (£1,035), also available with piezo (£1,399). USA-made CE 24 (£2,775); 24- or 22-fret S2 Satin Standard (£1,629)

LEFT-HANDERS: Not this model

FINISHES: Turquoise (as reviewed), Charcoal, Vintage Cherry – satin open-pore body finish; satin neck back

PRS Europe

01223 874301

www.prguitars.com

Guitarist
GOLD

10/10

PROS Stripped-down vibe but with the crisp execution we've come to expect from the modern PRS SE, not to mention expansive sounds; that price!

CONS Nothing. Just get your order in quick...