



PRS SE £1349 HOLLOWBODY II PIEZO

The first Piezo-equipped model in the SE series makes a rather stunning debut...

Originally launched in the early 2000s, the PRS SE range has proven incredibly popular for guitarists desiring the brand's iconic sounds and looks at a lower price point. But few would have dared to dream of a Hollowbody II Piezo – easily one of the most coveted offerings found in the company's Core and Private Stock catalogues. There are, of course, the aesthetic reasons for this – gorgeous f-holes to complement all those other finishing touches that PRS is renowned for, virtually unrivalled in its knack for creating true works of art. Then there are the tonal advantages of a semi-acoustic

no toggle for switching between the humbuckers, the piezo or a blend of both – meaning you have to dial out what you don't want when using the mixed output. It's a fair concession, to be perfectly honest. Speaking of pickups, this version comes fitted with the Indonesian-made, PAF-style 58/15S pair whereas the Core model utilises the slightly less hot, vintage-voiced American 58/15LT set. There are differences between the piezo systems too, this one is slightly brighter and less rounded than its US counterpart, though very much still in the same ballpark. Finally there's the finish, using a flamed maple veneer instead of a more costly carved

“AN UNMISTAKABLY RICH AND LAYERED CLEAN SOUND”

body fitted with the LR Baggs/PRS Piezo system, covering everything from high-gain rock and blues to woollier jazz tones and deceptively convincing acoustic sounds in one tight package. Naturally, its introduction into the SE line – costing roughly a third of its Core series equivalent – has come as most welcome news...

So where exactly have the savings been made? Well, as you might have guessed this version isn't manufactured in their Stevensville, Maryland factory – though neither is it made in Indonesia, where the other SE electrics are produced. These guitars are actually made in China by Cor-Tek, in the same building the SE acoustics are put together – which we think says a lot about what they're hoping to achieve. Other notable differences include

figured maple top. Again, it's to be expected and a small price to pay in return for affordability – especially with a brand so indoctrinated with the boutique end of the guitar manufacturing.

Before its even plugged in, our review model sounds bright and resonant – with no shortage of natural sustain and deep harmonics. The action was slightly high, though thanks to the adjustable PRS stoptail bridge this was corrected in minutes, with no discernible loss to its volume or low-end. Using the mixed output with the humbuckers and piezo volume controls on full, there's an unmistakably rich and layered clean sound many will find addictive – bringing an almost 3D-like effect to anything you play through it. Add some gain and you'll find no shortage of

1 NECK

The Wide Fat neck feels deep and chunky, but still very playable – beautifully decorated by the aquamarine gleam of “old school” bird inlays.

2 BINDING

Some players will judge a guitar on its binding. Thankfully PRS has spared no expense here... it's one of many touches that make this guitar scream class.

3 OUTPUT JACK

Having the two output jacks allows for uncompromised versatility, with the option to run your electric sound one way and your piezo or mixed tones elsewhere.

AT A GLANCE

TOP WOOD: 5-Ply Laminated Maple with Figured Maple veneer

MIDDLE WOOD: Mahogany

BACK WOOD: 5-Ply Laminated Maple with Figured Maple veneer

NECK: Mahogany

FRETBOARD: Ebony

FRETS: 22

SCALE LENGTH: 25"

FRETBOARD INLAYS: “Old School” Birds

TREBLE PICKUP: PRS 58/15 “S”

BASS PICKUP: PRS 58/15 “S”

PIEZO SYSTEM: LR Baggs/PRS

CONTROLS: Volume (Magnetic), Volume (Piezo) and Tone Control with 3-Way Toggle Pickup Switch

FINISHES: Black Gold Burst, Peacock Blue Burst

WEBSITE: www.prguitars.com





Good Vibrations

A look into the science behind piezo pickups...

Typical electric guitar pickups, like the 58/15S set here, are magnetic. When you hit a string, the vibrations are translated into electrical signals by the field of magnet/magnets wrapped in wire coil. It's the same concept used by microphone manufacturers, engineering transducers to transfer acoustic energy into a signal which can be amplified.

Piezos work in a different way. Usually built into the bridge, and nowhere near as visible, they capture the combined pressure of the string and wood vibrations. What you end up hearing is the actual acoustic energy from the guitar, brighter and more wooden than the sound captured by magnetic pickups. It's this combination of increased articulation and less compression that can give an electric guitar a completely different voice that, while not quite rivalling a vintage Martin, opens up new worlds of tones.

thickness, more suited to melodic leads than anything too ambitious because of the overriding acoustic warmth. Turn the piezo volume down, however, and you'll have more definition and attack – perfect for faster-paced leads. Unlike many other guitars of this ilk, there is minimal fuss with feedback here and we're pleased to report the guitar can more than hold its own at loud volumes.

Switching back to a clean channel, it's simple enough to dial out the magnetic pickups to hear a piezo-only sound, which is arguably where a guitar like this



simply has to shine. And that it does, the system designed in partnership with one of the world's leading acoustic preamp and pickup specialists boasting all the snap and clarity you could hope for. Whether you're fingerpicking old folk patterns or strumming away at full pelt, it's an acoustic sound that truly caters for all.

As for extras – you get the old-school bird inlays, some exquisite binding on both sides, a sturdy hard case and the choice of two highly desirable finishes. Which is a lot of bang for your buck, so to speak. If PRS had underperformed

on this model, it would have brought into question the quality they've strived to maintain under the SE banner for two decades. Thankfully, this is not the case. If anything, we're amazed at how close this feels to the 'real thing' – to the point of it being a very real instrument in its own right.

Amit Sharma

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

ALSO TRY...

PRS SE HOLLOWBODY STANDARD

£899

Though it doesn't have the piezo system, this mahogany-bodied sibling offers incredible value for money and still looks the part too.



GIBSON ES-339

£2099

Not as bulky and slightly less expensive than the hugely popular ES-335, the 339 would be a worthy consideration if you're looking for a new semi-acoustic.



FENDER AMERICAN ACOUSTASONIC STRATOCASTER

£1549

It might be a bit too out there for some. But if you're after acoustic and electric tones in one, you might want to check out Fender's creation.

