



PRS SE CUSTOM 24-08

The best SE ever?

£899

It's hard to believe it's been 20 years since we saw the first PRS SE guitar. Where have those decades gone? It took PRS some time before they created their 'import' line – their Squier or Epiphone, if you like – and from a slow start with a single Santana guitar, the SE range now outsells the exclusive USA models by quite margin. Do the maths: a USA Core PRS Custom 24-08 will cost you around £3,799; the SE version we have here is nearly three grand less.

Originally made in Korea, the SE line is now built in Indonesia in a special tie-up with Cor-tek who also make for numerous other brands as well as manufacturing their own Cort range. Now, many of us don't care where our guitars are made but we should *all* care

it was hard to tell the difference between veneer and solid wood.

Yes, the glued-in neck here is maple, not mahogany, and is a longitudinal laminate of three pieces, nicely grain matched for stability. The Wide Thin profile isn't vastly different to Fender's American Pro II Strat HSS we recently reviewed, slightly wider at the nut (42.8mm) with a similar depth at the 1st fret of just over 20mm that fills out to 22.7mm by the 12th fret. The back carve is a wide C, certainly nothing like a flat-backed D shape of a shred axe either. It might be the thinnest depth profile PRS offers but it still feels very mainstream not least with its 10" fingerboard radius and medium jumbo frets: not too big; not too small – the middle ground.

Part of the recent rise in detail of the SE guitars lies in the pickups.

1 NECK
PRS's USA-made guitars typically use mahogany for their glued-in necks. The modern SE's use maple. What doesn't change is the 10" radius fingerboard with the trademark bird inlays.

2 PICKUPS
The 'S' humbuckers are made in Indonesia but closely follow PRS's designs. Here, the TCI 'S' humbuckers, as used on the SE Paul's Guitar, are designed to maximise the humbucker and single coil voices.

3 VIBRATO
Closely modelled on the vibrato PRS introduced with their original Custom back in 1985, the modern SE version is cast, not machined, from steel. As ever, the arm push-fits and can be adjusted for swing tension.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany with figured maple veneer over maple top

NECK: Maple, wide thin profile, glued-in

SCALE: 25" (635mm)

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood/10" radius

FRETS: 24, medium

PICKUPS: PRS 85/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers

CONTROLS: Master volume and tone, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone, two mini-toggle coil split switches

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

FINISH: Eriza Verde (as reviewed), Vintage Sunburst

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PERFECT FOR THE PLAYER THAT WANTS TO CROSS GENRES

how well they're made, and this relatively recent location change has put a real rocket up the backside of the SE team.

The new SE Custom 24-08 is based on the USA model and the key elements are the same: that now-classic body and headstock outline, the 'halfway 25" scale length for starters and while the vibrato, like the rest of the hardware and pickups are based on the pucker USA parts, they're not made in the USA. New here is a 'shallow violin' top carve that more closely emulates the USA models though, as ever, the figured maple we see is a thin veneer applied over a plain maple cap. But comparing our review model with a USA made CE 24,

These are not your off-the-shelf Asian fare. The TCI 'S' humbuckers here closely ape those of the USA Core Paul's Guitar and have, we're told, been tweaked from those used on the SE version of that guitar. As we explain in our boxout, the single coil switching, achieved via those two mini-toggle switches, is slightly different too and with a switch for each pickup you can combine bridge humbucker with neck single coil, and vice versa giving us the two extra sounds over the standard six of SE Custom 24. The drive is simple: master volume (with a treble bleed to keep things clear as you roll the volume down), master tone and a three-way toggle switch to





TRUE SINGLE COIL

What's under the hood?

PRS use many different ways of switching their pickups from full humbucking mode to single coil. Typically, the split wire from the junction of the two coils is grounded leaving just one coil active. That's the way most people do it. PRS usually places a small resistor between that split wire and ground which means some of the coil that's usually fully dumped is retained for a slightly bigger sounding single coil. On this Custom 24-08, the two coils are treated like separate single coils and the unused screw coil is completely removed from the circuit when we switch to single coil. Finally, the 500k ohm volume pot's value is 'tuned' by a parallel resistor, bringing it closer to 300k and sweetening the high end.

select bridge, both and neck as usual.

All you have to remember is that pushed away from you those two-position mini switches voice the pickups in humbucking mode, switch them towards you and you're in true single coil mode. And it's this duality that makes the 24-08 such a versatile guitar; in fact we started our sound test in single coil mode and where some coil splits sound thin and sharp we're not hearing that: the highs are clear and clean but don't rattle your fillings as you turn up to gig levels. Through a Helix into our



DAW we're hearing a classy single coil that loves even quite dense FX yet also sounds very classy and soulful with a clean amp. A bright green axe with bird inlays might not shout old blues but the sounds certainly do if you want. The single coil mix is very Fender-y too; to be honest if this was all we had we'd still be raving about this guitar.

But it isn't. Listening to the full humbucker voices, gone is the overwound midrange clout of the original PRS sound. These are very different, a more classic P.A.F.-like clarity – but again without the sharp edge at the bridge – with

a bit of heat. We'd call it hot vintage, classic with a bit of kick.

Impeccably fit for purpose, here's a guitar for the player that really wants to cross genres, a superb studio guitar and a perfect fit for those function gigs when they return. And, hey, it comes in Vintage Sunburst, too!

Dave Burrluck

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

ALSO TRY...

PRS SE CUSTOM 24 £825

Very similar to the reviewed 24-08, the flagship PRS guitar has two less sounds but uses a three-way lever pickup selector and pull switch on the tone control to voice the simple single coil splits.



PRS SE CUSTOM 22 SEMI HOLLOW £825

Arguably a more traditional style semi-solid version of the Custom 24, but with 22 frets like a good ol' Gibson. As on the Custom 24 it uses 85/15'S' 'buckers with the same circuit.



CORT G300 PRO £749

A different flavour but Cor-Tek's own brand have great specs for the money. Here you get a roasted maple neck with a great vibrato and Seymour Duncan pickups.

