



PRs S2 VELA £1,289

The first all-new S2 design, the Vela might just be the coolest PRs yet

TO many of us, PRs guitars just ain't cool. Why? Well, it's not that they don't attract a huge roster of artists and users, it's just that with those fancy looking maple tops and shell adorned fingerboards, they are, well, not always as rock 'n' roll as we'd like. The trouble is, from the SE range upwards, they are very good guitars, known for their high build quality, perfect intonation, tuning stability and classy tones. Believe it or not, there are plenty of people within PRs who think the same, and it's those guys and gals who fought to create the S2 range, which launched in 2013.

Guitars such as the S2 Mira and Starla may have appeared previously in the high-line USA 'core' range, but S2 models are almost becoming the 'anti' PRses, with their mainly all-mahogany

also accommodates the majority of the electronics: the Filter'Tron-like Starla Treble bridge pickup and the new-design neck pickup, a single coil with protruding polepieces and what look like height-adjusting screws for the magnetic pole pieces, as featured on the DeArmond-made Gretsch 'Dynasonic' pickups. They don't adjust the height of the poles, though, they're just for show – albeit magnetic, so they possibly influence the sound a little, too.

Pickup selection is via a three-way lever switch, while we have master volume and tone – the latter with a pull/push switch that, pulled up, operates a coil-split voicing on the bridge-facing single coil. As ever, the output jack is on the side of the body, securely fixed to a metal plate and very gig-ready. Another notable new addition is

If you think it looks like an offset Custom, you're bang on

construction, scratchplates and bevelled-edge tops; hey, you can even have ordinary dot inlays if you want, not just those polarising birds. Now, for the first time, there's a brand new S2-only creation: the astronomically named Vela.

From the off, however, it sports plenty of PRs DNA: the 'halfway' 635mm (25-inch) scale length, chunky but well-shaped Pattern Regular set neck, top-locking tuners and friction-reducing nut. What is different, though, is the body shape, and if you think it looks like an offset Custom, you're bang on. The design team cut a Custom outline in half up the middle, moved the bass side up a bit, redrew the curves and voila: the Vela was born.

That retro-looking scratchplate adds another level of style, again differentiating the majority of S2 models from the core guitars. It

the top-loading 'plate-style' bridge, with its L-shaped aluminium base, key-hole slots for the strings and pair of brass saddles, which can be intonated by the four adjustment screws.

It all adds up to a very different-sounding PRs guitar, even strummed acoustically: compared with a core-line Custom, it's more attacking in the upper midrange. Amp'd, there's cut and chime from the Starla in bridge position, which is bigger than a single coil, but not as thick as a hotter humbucker. If you're after bridge single-coil tones, it splits nicely, too, for more edge. The neck pickup, meanwhile, is like an overwound Strat single coil. It drives your amp more, is less spiky, but has plenty of definition. If we're honest, it's not a million miles away from the oh-so-trendy Gold Foil single coil. The mixed pickup position adds more texture and width –



AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE: 635mm (25")
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 22
PICKUPS: 1x PRs Starla Treble (bridge), 1x PRs Type-D (neck)
CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x tone (w/ push/pull coil-split for bridge pickup)
HARDWARE: Chrome-plate 'plate-style' bridge w/ two brass saddles & top-load stringing, S2 locking tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Antique White, Seafoam Green, Black, McCarty Tobacco, Sienna, Vintage Cherry (shown)
CONTACT: PRs Europe 01223 874301
www.prsguitars.com

TUNERS

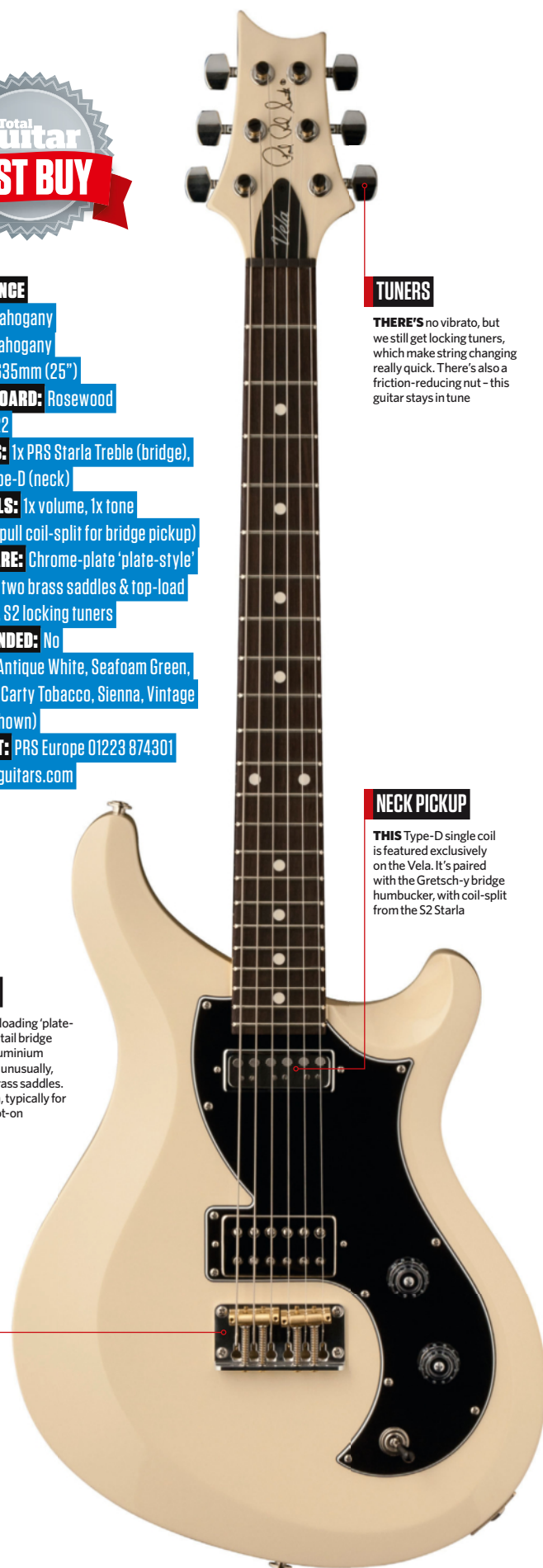
THERE'S no vibrato, but we still get locking tuners, which make string changing really quick. There's also a friction-reducing nut – this guitar stays in tune

NECK PICKUP

THIS Type-D single coil is featured exclusively on the Vela. It's paired with the Gretsch-y bridge humbucker, with coil-split from the S2 Starla

BRIDGE

THIS top-loading 'plate-style' hardtail bridge uses an aluminium base with, unusually, just two brass saddles. Intonation, typically for PRs, is spot-on



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Build 'em faster!

What's the difference between an S2 and the 'core' PRS guitars?

S2 guitars are still made in the same Stevensville, Maryland factory as the high-line USA 'core' guitars, but while they sit in the upper £2,000-range, S2 guitars are half the price. How do they do that? PRS invented a second production line (creatively called Stevensville 2), which is a faster, more cost-effective way to build guitars without compromising quality. The S2 necks, for example, are three-piece, instead of one-piece, so there's a saving in the cost of the raw materials. The finish is a different process, which is less time-consuming to apply. S2 guitars mainly use more cost-effective PRS-designed Korean-made parts. For example, the top-locking tuners look very similar to the ones fitted to the core guitars, but are made completely in Korea. The same goes for the pickups, but these are extensively batch-tested in the USA and not just off-the-shelf Korean designs. Each S2 also comes with a rugged gigbag.

especially with the Starla pickup in split mode – for a very funky Fender-ish voice.

Underpinned with its resonant, all-mahogany construction and set neck, there's a relative roundness and thickness (certainly when compared with a Stratocaster), which works just as well for retro styles as it does under heavier, effects-laden gain. There's something about this tonal balance that makes for a really good slide guitar tone, too, not least with



The top-loading plate-style bridge is one of several innovations on the Vela



The Type-D single-coil pickup at the neck is exclusive to the Vela

some power amp gain and that Type D single coil.

Strapped on, the Vela hangs a little differently to a 24-fret Custom, for example: it feels a little more Fender-like. At 6.7kg, it's light but not insubstantial, and overall playability is certainly in line with the much higher-priced core models. The mainstream chunky-but-not-big neck profile, 254mm (10-inch) fingerboard radius and well-sorted medium-gauge frets all combine to produce

a slick player. Add a hugely playable rock 'n' roll vibe, and this is the finest S2 to date... and a PRS guitar that certainly isn't for doctors and dentists!

Dave Burrluck

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

ALSO TRY...

FRET-KING BLACK LABEL ESPRIT V £599

This Korean-made original design with dual humbuckers redraws Gibson's modernistic Explorer

GODIN RICHMOND SERIES DORCHESTER W/ BIGSBY £849

A Ricky-meets-Mosrite mash-up, this Canada-made electric features a chambered body, Lace Aluminone pickups and Bigsby

ST BLUES JUKE JOINT SCOUNDREL £1,149

Made in Memphis, this double-cut Tele-shaped bolt-on mixes a humbucker with a P-90, plus vibrato and locking tuners

