

PRS SE CUSTOM 22 SEMI-HOLLOW £759

A double-cutaway semi-hollow Custom makes a return to PRS's SE line. An affordable masterpiece? We think so

PRS is marking its 30th birthday with a bewildering number of new models. The affordable SE range is seeing plenty of these – including an SE edition of the Custom 22, and Semi-Hollow version, which is what we're looking at today. While the two guitars are close in spec, the solidbody version features a pair of Tone Furnace humbuckers from the SE Marty Freidman, while the Semi-Hollow features the more traditional 'original spec' 'buckers.

The Custom arrived in 1985 as a 24-fret guitar, and a 22-fret version finally followed in 1993. Why the fuss? Well, removing those two frets has a real impact on the guitar's feel. The Custom 22 has a slightly more classic vibe, your

This value perception, enhanced by the quality gigbag, continues with its plugged in performance. There's a beautiful light weight, generous ring and sustain, and a classic tonality that has slightly more midrange colour than you get from the solidbody version. It's no ES-335, but it has a different ring to the solidbody Custom 22, even when it's unplugged. It's a great axe for classic rock and blues: raunchy but not over spiky in tone or output, with musical harmonic feedback aplenty if you kick in a level boost from your pedalboard. It's quite the contrast to the solidbody Custom 22, with it's quite ferocious Tone Furnace bridge 'bucker which pushes out more power and drops you metal

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left-hand doesn't have to reach as far and, importantly, the shorter neck is also stiffer. A stiffer neck brings a slightly different sound – it's a bit more LP-like, especially combined with the wrapover Stoptail bridge here, as opposed to the Custom 24's vibrato.

The Custom 22 S-H has a maple top with flame maple veneer and single f-hole, just like the fantastic SE Zach Myers Singlecut. Unlike that guitar, however, the top here is contoured. Maple is used for the set neck instead of the more usual mahogany of the USA core and S2 models, here with a 'wide thin' profile that's slim-depthed but far from a 'speed' neck. Bird inlays decorate the rosewood 'board, which also sports tidy medium gauge frets and the sort of set-up you'd expect from a much higher-priced guitar.

territory. That said, switching to the neck pickup on either guitars offers a similar voice – classic, vocal, and really emotive for solos.

If you think PRS's SE guitars are just poor man's versions of the USA models then, not for the first time, you might have to reconsider. The S2 version of this guitar costs twice as much, remember – and it isn't twice as good. With classic rock and blues tones in abundance, easy modding and upgrading options, and good playability, this guitar is ready to gig.

Dave Burrluck

| SUMMARY | FEATURES | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-------|--|--|--|
| | SOUND QUALITY | | | | |
| | VALUE FOR MONEY | | | | |
| | BUILD QUALITY | | | | |
| | PLAYABILITY | | | | |
| OVERALL RATING | | ★★★★★ | | | |



AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany w/ maple top
NECK: Maple
SCALE: 635mm (25")
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood w/ bird inlays
FRETS: 22
PICKUPS: 2x PRS-designed Original SE uncovered humbuckers
CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch
HARDWARE: PRS-designed Stoptail bridge, enclosed tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Orange (as reviewed), Gray Black,
CONTACT: PRS Europe, 01223 874301, www.prsguitars.com

PICKUPS

THESE 'ORIGINAL' SE humbuckers are medium-output, 'traditional' units: both have Alnico V magnets and 42-gauge wire; the bridge pickup has a few more turns for slightly increased power

BRIDGE

THE STOPTAIL bridge first appeared in 1991 on the first Dragon guitar. There is no specific intonation adjustment for each string, but the bridge's pre-intonated ridge means its very in-tune for 0.009 and 0.010 string sets.

BODY

WHILE WE'VE seen semi-hollow guitars before in the SE range, this is the first to sport a contoured maple top with f-hole. It's hollowed out on the bass-side and behind the bridge – the rest is solid.

