

PRS SE STANDARD & S2 STANDARD ROUND-UP

We celebrate the Maryland guitar company's 30th anniversary by plugging in a pair of new sub-£400 electrics and a cut-price American model

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30 years down the line, Paul Reed Smith is still treading new ground. In 2013, the S2 series brought American-made instruments down to more realistic prices, while the tail end of last year saw the S2 Standard and SE Standard lines introduced.

The S2 Standard range further trims back the high-born fancy of top-end PRS guitars – primarily, the figured maple tops – and offers an all-mahogany build with pickguard-mounted electronics that won't offend vintage snobs. It's the SE Standards that have us most excited, though: shifting production to Indonesia and keeping things simple in the looks department courtesy of top-less mahogany bodies, the SE Standards clock in at a cool £399, making them the cheapest PRS models ever.

We're looking at both S2 and SE Standard 24s, which pack coil-splittable humbuckers and a vibrato, plus the twin-humbucker, stoptail-loaded Tremonti Standard, the latest incarnation of one of the SE line's longest-serving models. The guitars come with quality gigbags – black for the S2 and brown for the SEs.







PRS S2 STANDARD 24

£1,317

Standard in name only

OTHER than the solid-colour finish, pickguard-mounted electronics and missing maple top, the S2 Standard is spec'd the same as the 'regular' S2 Custom 24, right down to the S2 locking tuners. And while it can't quite be considered affordable, the price above includes bird inlays; regular dots see the SRP drop to £1,198.

As we've noted with past S2 models, it's hard to see where cost-cutting has taken place: there wasn't a spot of lacquer out of place on our review model, and while the Seafoam Green won't be to all tastes, there's no denying it's a sharp contrast to the PRSes of yore. The playability, however, is universal: as with the 635mm (25-inch) scale length, the Gibson-

meets-Fender Pattern Regular neck feels good in the hand.

You can't argue with the Standard 24's tones, either: the rounded neck humbucker works for everything from open chords to jazz vamping, while activating the coil-split brings in a cutting single-coil vibe. The bridge humbucker has everything you need for distorted solos, with a weighty girth and sustain. The tones are a little darker than their maple-topped PRS brethren, but they're no less satisfying. Throw in the middle-position coil-split funk, super-stable tuning and liquid-smooth vibrato, and the Standard 24 would make a great workhorse for covers-band guitarists who need sonic versatility – or just about any player of any style.

PRS SE STANDARD 24

£399

SE does it

YOU might expect the SE Standard to pale in comparison to the S2, but on first impression, that certainly isn't the case. Considering the price, this is one impressively put-together instrument; we scoured our review model for signs of the guitar's price tag, and all we could find was a slightly loose vibrato arm fitting – a minor point.

Like the traditional USA-made Custom 24 design, there's no scratchplate, so the SE Standard 24's electronics are installed in a cavity. As a result, the SE is lighter than the S2, and its plain-looking Vintage Cherry-finished top does make it look a little bit cheaper, although unlike the S2, it comes with bird inlays as standard. But while the hardware also differs, the non-locking SE-level tuners

are smooth-handling, and visually, you'd struggle to distinguish the vibrato from the S2's.

The SE Standard isn't quite as refined or sleek a playing experience as the S2, courtesy of the chunkier Wide Thin profile, higher action and slightly creaky vibrato response, but a more player-personal setup helps to rectify that. The tones are here, though: searing solos, toasty rhythms and coil-split quack are all within reach, and while they don't quite have the shimmering top-end of the S2's pickups, at this price it's an impressive performance. Overall, that's what the SE Standard 24 delivers, equipping its owner with a comfortably playable guitar and a huge range of tones, which you're unlikely to outgrow in a hurry.





PRS SE TREMONTI STANDARD £399

The full Tremonti

AS the second artist to receive a PRS signature model (after Carlos Santana), Mark Tremonti has become an important ambassador for the brand, and the Tremonti SE's debut in 2003 bestowed an affordable weapon on guitarists of a heavier inclination. The Tremonti Standard retains the key features of the SE model, with black binding around the Platinum-finished body and PRS SE Treble and Bass humbuckers.

With a finish like this, you're unlikely to be knocking out major 7ths, and the Tremonti puts out some serious meat. Its clean tones are punchy, and lend themselves to the kind of extended chords Mark employs in Alter Bridge's quieter moments. Kick in the distortion,

and the bridge humbucker handles downtuned distorted riffs without any mud; there's enough presence to handle just about any kind of driven playing, and the hefty mid push gives powerchords real momentum.

There are no coil-splits (though the middle position gives you a taste of lower-output flavour), but this is a big rock guitar. That's reinforced by the Wide Fat neck shape, which is chunkier than the Pattern Regular, but with our model's low action, it retains a slinky playing feel for solos, especially with the considerate carve at the upper frets. The Standard 24 may have the versatility, but when the Tremonti Standard rocks hard, there's little in this price range that can touch it.

PRS S2 Standard 24

AT A GLANCE

- BODY:** Mahogany
- NECK:** Mahogany, Pattern Regular
- SCALE:** 635mm (25")
- FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood
- FRETS:** 24
- PICKUPS:** 1x PRS S2 HFS (bridge), 1x PRS S2 Vintage Bass (neck)
- CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector
- HARDWARE:** PRS S2 vibrato, PRS S2 locking tuners – nickel
- LEFT-HANDED:** No
- FINISH:** Antique White, Black, McCarty Tobacco, Sienna, Vintage Cherry, Seafoam Green (shown)
- CONTACT:** PRS Guitars Europe 01223 874301 www.prsguitars.com



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

PRS SE Standard 24

AT A GLANCE

- BODY:** Mahogany
- NECK:** Mahogany, Wide Thin
- SCALE:** 635mm (25")
- FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood
- FRETS:** 24
- PICKUPS:** 1x PRS SE HFS Treble (bridge), 1x PRS SE Vintage Bass (neck)
- CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone (w/ coil-split), 3-way pickup selector
- HARDWARE:** PRS SE vibrato, PRS SE tuners – nickel
- LEFT-HANDED:** No
- FINISH:** Tobacco Sunburst, Platinum, Translucent Blue, Black, Vintage Cherry (shown)



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

PRS SE Standard Tremonti

AT A GLANCE

- BODY:** Mahogany
- NECK:** Mahogany, Wide Thin
- SCALE:** 635mm (25")
- FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood
- FRETS:** 22
- PICKUPS:** 1x PRS SE Treble (bridge), 1x PRS SE Bass (neck)
- CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector
- HARDWARE:** PRS SE stoptail, PRS tuners – nickel
- LEFT-HANDED:** No
- FINISH:** Vintage Cherry, Black, Platinum (shown)



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