

## FIRST PLAY



**PRS S2 STANDARD  
SINGLECUT SATIN**  
£999

**WHAT IS IT?** Satin nitro,  
all-mahogany Singlecut.  
A no-posh zone!

# Thin Skinned

Stripped down and nitro-finished, this new Singlecut takes the posh out of PRS

**Words** Dave Burrluck **Photography** Olly Curtis

**J**ust sneaking in at the tail end of PRS's 30th Anniversary year, the new S2 Standard Satins will probably be a highlight for many of us, ahem, less well-heeled guitar players. If you like your PRS guitars with multi-coloured 'dipped in glass' 10-tops and swathed in abalone-infested bird inlays, well, do not read on. If, however, you simply love your classic guitars and want your playing to tell your audience your status, you might well want to take a closer look.

Throughout its history, PRS has been constantly criticised for making über expensive guitars out of the reach of the everyman. Of course, over three decades, the company has made many attempts at creating more cost-effective USA-made models – like the CE and the EG – but in terms of longevity, it's only recently cracked the 'affordable' code with the 2013-introduced S2 range. Made in the same Maryland factory as the top-line Core models, the S2 guitars are built on an entirely different production line with, for example,











three-piece (as opposed to one-piece) mahogany necks, and asymmetrically carved bodies instead of the more complex violin-like top carve of the Core guitars. Most hardware and the pickups are USA-designed but are made in Korea, and the hugely expensive finishing process has been re-thought to cut production time. The net result is that the S2 models aim to offer all the playability and consistency of the Core models, but without the expense.

Of course, PRS's typically mahogany-backed, maple-topped guitar recipe accounts for the majority of the Core models and, indeed, the initial wave of S2 models. Since then, however, we've seen more all-mahogany S2 Standards, but up to this point all have used that new, faster S2-style gloss finish. For these latest Satins, however, the finish switches to an ultra-thin satin nitrocellulose, in a choice of four fairly dowdy colours. Unlike the more labour-intensive finishes used by PRS, and most other makers, this finish doesn't use a grain filler, so you can easily see the grain of the mahogany on the one-piece body and both see and feel it on the neck back. It's ultra thin, too: approximately a tenth of the standard Core or S2 finishes, says PRS.

As PRS completists will be aware, it's not the first time we've had satin-finished nitrocellulose models. The Modern Eagle, and most of its various incarnations, uses such a finish as did the SC 250 Satin (2007), the Singlecut Standard Satin (2006 to '07), the Standard 22 and 24 Satin (2006 to '08), the Singlecut Standard Soapbar Satin and the Singlecut Trem Satin (2006 to '13). But those didn't use the sort of open-grain finish we see here.

Finish aside, the three guitars all follow the specification of the existing all-gloss Standards (introduced at the tail-end of 2014),



including perhaps the most divisive detail: the scratchplate that not only holds all the pickups and electrics (with the exception of the shoulder-placed toggle pickup selector switch and the output jack, which remains side-mounted on its rugged metal plate), but profoundly changes the aesthetics of what we know as the PRS guitar.

The combination of that scratchplate, the satin 'open-pore' finish, the dot-only inlays (with no bird inlay options), not to mention our review sample's McCarty Tobacco finish – probably the most expensive-looking of the four offered finishes – add up to the most austere-looking USA-made instrument we've seen from PRS ever.

### Feel & Sounds

Less chunky than a core Singlecut with a chamfered slab body some 50mm thick, the Satin weighs and feels very businesslike with a very traditional strapped-on hang: it's an old friend straight from its gigbag. The Pattern Regular neck profile – based on the original PRS profile – is a little skinnier in width than the Pattern Thin (wide-thin) or



1. Unlike the Core models, the S2 guitars use a three-piece neck design with a spliced headstock and additional heel piece. Hardly new, of course; classical guitar necks have been made like this for ages
2. The pickups and controls are all mounted on the scratchplate, much like the 'modular' design of the Fender Stratocaster. The pickup switch is rear-mounted, however, and the output jack is side-mounted on a solid metal plate
3. To keep the price tag affordable, the pickups are PRS-designed but made in Korea. Here, the #7 'buckers are versions of the USA designs used on the original PRS Singlecut



Pattern (wide-fat), but suits the everyman vibe perfectly. No horses have been spared in the fretting or setup, though: PRS doesn't need a Plek machine to do the job properly. Okay, PRS's four-control layout is different to Gibson's – if you're used to that, it takes time to adjust and it's not as easy to palm both volume controls in mixed pickup position – but with such positive playability, intonation and a lively resonance, it's a criticism that soon dissipates.

Warming up our valves with a 2001 Singlecut, the Satin comes across as its punkier sibling. There's no shortage of clarity, despite the all-mahogany construction and while that might well tame down with playing, it sounds and feels, to us, like we're playing a 50s Gibson Les Paul Special compared to a 'Burst. PRS's S2 version of the #7 humbucker (made by G&B in Korea) doesn't seem to have the power or thickness of the USA originals, first used on that first-era Singlecut, and they also have quite a pronounced upper-mid cut. While we were less impressed with their performance on the recently reviewed Singlecut Semi-Hollow, here on this all solid, all-mahogany platform, they seem to sit better.



### PRS S2 STANDARD SINGLECUT SATIN

**PRICE:** £999 (inc gigbag)

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Single-cutaway, satin nitro-finished solidbody electric

**BODY:** Mahogany

**NECK:** Mahogany, Pattern Regular profile, glued-in

**SCALE LENGTH:** 635mm (25")

**NUT/WIDTH:** Friction reducing/42.8mm

**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood, cream dot inlays, 254mm (10") radius

**FRETS:** 22, medium jumbo

**HARDWARE:** PRS Stoptail bridge, PRS S2 locking tuners, nickel-plated

**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:**

52.5mm

**ELECTRICS:** 2x covered PRS #7 humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, volume and tone (with pull/push coil-split) for each

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 3.82/8.4

**OPTIONS:** None

**RANGE OPTIONS:** Satin Custom 22 and 24 are the same price. The gloss-finished S2 Standard 22, 24 and Singlecut cost £1,099

**LEFT-HANDERS:** No

**FINISHES:** Charcoal, McCarty Tobacco (as reviewed), Vintage Cherry, Vintage Mahogany satin nitro

**PRS Europe**

01223 874301

[www.prsguitars.com](http://www.prsguitars.com)

## 8/10

**PROS** High-quality build, playability, ultra-thin nitro finish and versatile sounds

**CONS** Some might find the colour choices limited, but the Standards also come in numerous gloss hues

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4. The proprietary PRS Stoptail bridge used here is the same USA part that's used on the Core guitars. It's machined aluminium, unplated, with brass posts. The preset intonation ridge should work fine with 0.009s and 0.010s and the solid design ensures excellent resonance

PRS has also sorted its coil-split circuit – instead of dumping one coil, approximately 11 to 17 per cent of the coil is still voiced

PRS has also sorted its coil-split circuit (instead of fully dumping one coil, approximately 11 to 17 per cent of that coil is still voiced): pull up the tone controls and the lighter tonality has some of the percussiveness of your favourite Californian brand, especially with some gain added. It sounds edgy, but not overly crisp, and for players needing some older, classic voices – blues, country soul or classic 60s pop – it's effortless. The combined clout and cut, however, of the full-coil mode also makes this Satin a perfect fit for heavier, gained tones.

### Verdict

On more occasions than we care to remember, we shy away from actually gigging whatever PRS it is we have on review, afraid that a belt-buckle or jean stud will ruin the all-too-perfect sheen of the finish. Not here. With big apologies, we'll be returning this one with plenty of marks and a few dings. The more you play it, the neck, for example, will burnish to quite a gloss. It's a finish that will age and wear. Put it another way: if your dentist or doctor is playing this guitar, choose another practice. It's taken 'em 30 years, but – finally! – here's a PRS guitar that you basically want to fuck up and play really, really hard. Standard? No. Exceptional? Yes. **G**