

VS

Words: Ed Mitchell

PEAVEY HP SINGLE CUT SC-2 VS CORT CR250

Upgrading from your beginner's electric is the perfect opportunity to expose yourself to the majesty of set necks and humbucking pickups



IN CONTRAST to this month's Group Test, if you've paid your dues for long enough with that budget electric guitar starter pack, now's the time for an upgrade. You just need to decide what kind of guitar to get next. We can help you there.

Chances are that your starter pack guitar is loaded with a mix of pickups, designed to give you a taste of what's available while you form your first chords, before you start going after something more specific. If you want to ratchet up the quality of your gear a few notches but hanker for something different, consider plumping for a humbucker-loaded singlecut guitar such as the Peavey HP Single Cut SC-2 (£212) and Cort CR250 (£349) models in this Head to Head. Taking

their design cues from the classic Gibson Les Paul, these guitars offer some advantages over their singlecoil-based rivals, and the difference in pickups will compliment, rather than replace that of your original guitar, so you can get started on building your arsenal. If you like to get dirty, humbuckers offer more output than singlecoils, yet they produce less background noise. That's a fact.

It's not just about pickups, though. LP-derived guitars have a slightly shorter scale length than a Strat, which makes string bending easier; even with heavier-gauge strings fitted. Set-neck examples, such as the two guitars on this page, can also provide more sustain than their bolt-on counterparts. Convinced? Great. Now you just need to choose a new guitar...

PEAVEY HP SINGLE CUT SC-2 **£212**

Here's a cool, stripped-down reworking of a vintage classic

THE Peavey HP Single Cut SC-2 is part of a range of guitars that also includes the two-humbucker, bolt-on neck SC-1 model (£191) and the triple-humbucker, set-neck SC-3 (£265). It's not just a clever name: the SC-2's spec sheet positions it directly between its brothers. It has the two-pickup setup of the SC-1 and the set neck of the SC-3.

Like the Cort CR250, it's obvious where the inspiration for the design of the SC-2 originates from.

It has a basswood Les Paul-style single-cutaway body, albeit with a narrower waist that gives it a bit of a PRS Singlecut vibe. Unlike the Cort, the SC-2 has body contouring. There's a scoop on the back to accommodate your ribcage, and a scallop on the front edge of the cutaway to allow easier access to the guitar's top frets. The SC-2's neck has a beefy profile too. That might set teeth a-chattering for those of you with small hands. Actually, regardless of your digit dimensions, fat necks can feel more comfortable in your palm than the lollipop sticks fitted to some modern rock guitars. Give it a try – you might be pleasantly surprised.

Moving on to electronics, the Peavey's twin Alnico magnet-powered humbuckers are wired to an unconventional control layout. What we mean is the bridge (aka back) pickup's controls are those located nearest to the bridge and tailpiece; the neck (aka front) 'bucker's knobs are closest to the floor. That's the opposite of the

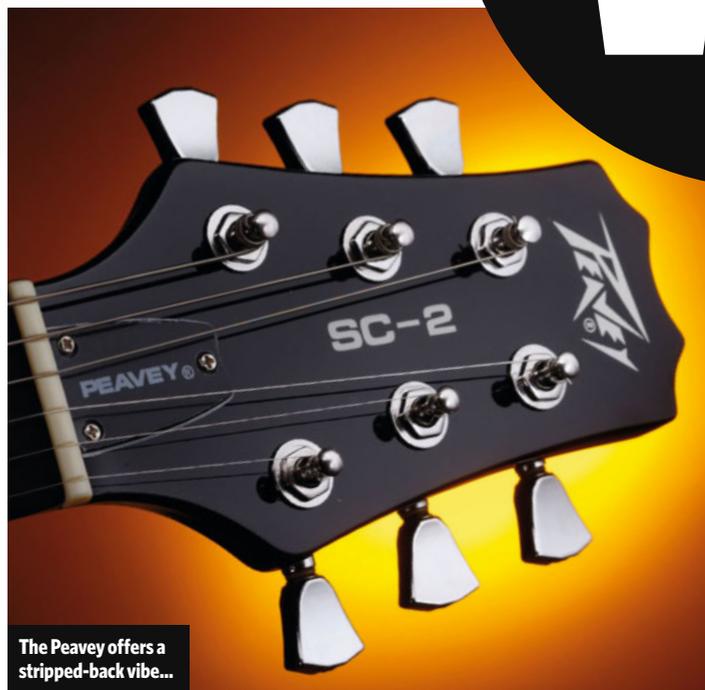
classic Les Paul layout. It takes a while to get used to the reversed controls, but we have to say it makes perfect sense having the bridge pickup's volume knob so close to your right hand, especially if you like to pull off volume swells.

Plugging in, it's immediately obvious that the SC-2 has a punchier rock voice than the vintage-like Cort CR250. The shift in tones between the three positions on the pickup toggle switch is more pronounced than that of the Cort. The bright bridge pickup works great for heavy riffing, while the neck pickup is the bee's knees for blues soloing. Engaging both pickups offers the sweetest clean tone; it softens the brightness of the bridge pickup while still offering plenty of weight. String bends are made easy thanks to the SC-2's 14-inch radius fingerboard and its 22 jumbo frets.

The Peavey SC-2 plays well and offers some great rock tones along with bags of sustain. It even looks good. You can't fault this rock beast's value for money score either. The Peavey SC-2 is a hell of a lot of guitar for the asking price and well worth checking out. It's so good that it *nearly* won this Head To Head...

AT A GLANCE
BODY: Basswood
NECK: Maple, set-in
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, with dot inlays
FRETS: 22 jumbo
SCALE: 24 3/4"
PICKUPS: 2x Peavey USA Design Alnico humbuckers
CONTROLS: 2x volume, 2x tone, 3-way pickup selector toggle switch
HARDWARE: Chrome
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Vintage Tobacco Sunburst (pictured), Black, Cherry Burst
CONTACT: Peavey Electronics 01536 461234 peavey-eu.com

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



The Peavey offers a stripped-back vibe...

CORT CR250 £349

No prizes for originality; just a big gold star for tone

IT'S pretty obvious just by looking at it that the folk at Cort didn't spend too much time hanging around the drawing board when they were designing the CR250. This guitar is basically a 'tribute' to a '59 Les Paul Standard, so we're not handing out any stars for originality. That said, the CR250 is a handsome beast, with its flame maple veneer top, well-applied vintage sunburst finish and good-quality hardware. This guitar looks more expensive than it actually is.

The Cort is a bit lighter in weight than the Peavey, although the latter is no back breaker. The CR250 has a slimmer neck profile than its competitor, too.

The guitar's 12-inch fingerboard radius is the same as the classic guitar it pays tribute to. Add 22 frets beefed up to jumbo status and you're in for some smooth string bending above the 12th fret. Unlike the SC-2, the CR250 has a normal LP-derived control layout. The twin humbucking pickups have nickel-plated covers. Many players love nickel hardware because it tarnishes over time, giving a guitar a vintage vibe. That said, some players prefer chrome hardware that keeps its shine. It's your classic personal preference type scenario.

While the Peavey has a stonking modern rock sound, the CR250 is all about the old-school tones. Played clean, the bridge humbucker pumps out a bright tone that's not quite as cutting as the Peavey's pickup. As with the SC-2, switching between the pickups on the CR250 reveals

subtle differences. For instance, combining both humbuckers gently rounds off the brightness of the bridge unit for a sound that works well for rhythm playing. Switching to the neck unit adds more warmth to your tone, but there's still plenty of clarity on offer here.

Stomping on some dirt unleashes the CR250's classic rock voice – pretty much any great overdriven humbucker tone you can think of, from sixties Clapton white boy blues to Slash's *Sweet Child O' Mine* tone can be pulled out of the CR250.

Both guitars in this head to head

represent a major leap in build quality, tone and playability from your typical entry-level model; and we encourage you to test both for yourself. We love the Peavey SC-2's stripped-down vibe, roaring rock voice and those cool touches of individuality (such as the reversed control layout), that make it more than just another Gibson Les Paul copy. In contrast, the Cort CR250 wears its influences proudly on its sleeve. There's no question that it looks the part but, more importantly,

it offers a range of usable vintage tones combined with first-class playability. Few LP-inspired guitars in the Cort's price range can match it. That's why the CR250 won this Head To Head by a nose.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany, with flame maple veneer top

NECK: Mahogany, set-in

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, with block inlays

FRETS: 22 jumbo

SCALE: 24 3/4"

PICKUPS: 2x ClassicRocker-II humbuckers

CONTROLS: 2x volume, 2x tone, 3-way pickup selector

HARDWARE: Nickel

LEFT-HANDED: No

FINISH: Vintage Burst (pictured), Trans Black, Cherry Red Sunburst

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

★★★★★

...While the Cort boasts more high-end fittings