

# SUPERNATURAL THING

PRS SE Santana solidbody guitar

\* BY CHRIS GILL

**C**ARLOS SANTANA PLAYED a significant role in the development of the PRS SE series when the line was introduced back in 2001. In fact, the very first SE model was the Santana SE (which is different than the new SE Santana model). Since then PRS has also offered the Santana SE II, the limited-edition Santana Shaman SE in 2003, and the limited-edition Carlos Santana SE One Abraxas in 2009. With the introduction of the new SE Santana model, Carlos is the only artist to have five SE models (and that doesn't even count the various high-end PRS Santana models).

While the SE series was originally conceived to offer "student-edition" or "standard-edition" models similar to the "junior" and "special" guitars of yesteryear, recently they've become more like "special-edition" instruments. The various PRS SE signature models—like the SE Mike Mushok Baritone, the three-humbucker SE Zack Myers, and the red sparkle finished SE Orianthi—may be very affordable, but they're anything but stripped-down, no-frills instruments. The new PRS SE Santana continues this trend, offering much of the same vibe as the high-end PRS Santana model, from its old-school double-cutaway body shape to its extremely playable neck.

## FEATURES

**UNLIKE THE FIRST** Santana SE models, the new PRS SE Santana looks almost identical to the PRS Santana models. The biggest difference is that the top is not as exquisitely carved (although the SE does have an arched top) and the abalone strip inlays are missing from the body. The SE Santana is the first SE model to offer a 24 1/2-inch scale, but the SE has 22 frets while the upscale PRS Santana model has 24. The neck has a similar wide and fat profile, and the rosewood fingerboard is decorated with bird inlays.

Instead of a solid flame maple cap, the SE Santana's mahogany body is topped with a maple cap with a thin flame maple veneer and a black, orange or Santana yellow finish. The body and neck are not stained and are sprayed with a smooth, clear poly finish that proudly displays the wood's

high quality in all its raw glory. The body on my test example was made from three pieces of mahogany, but you really had to look closely to notice the seams, and upon casual inspection it looked a lot like a single solid slab.

All of the hardware is several notches in quality above that of other guitars in this model's price range. The PRS-designed tremolo feels very solid, and the individual string saddles fit tight and are smoothly polished to avoid string breakage. The tuners have a smooth action, and the pickups, master tone and master volume knobs, and three-position pickup selector

are firmly installed with perfect alignment. The PRS-designed Santana humbuckers have classic-looking zebra bobbins and perfectly complement the guitar's vintage styling and timeless appeal.

## PERFORMANCE

**FROM ITS STYLISH** looks and flawless construction to its incredible feel and outstanding tone, everything about the PRS SE Santana screams quality. Even though the guitar is made overseas, it still maintains the vibe of U.S.-made PRS guitars. The main differences are that the materials and hardware aren't as exquisite, and the overall design does not feature as many detailed touches such as the U.S. model's more elaborate contours.

The SE Santana already sounds loud and lively when unplugged, with the tremolo springs providing a slight amount of reverb-like resonance. Those tones improve when the guitar is plugged in. While the SE Santana almost perfectly nails Carlos Santana's signature lead tone, it also produces addictive hard rock crunch rhythm tones and fat, punchy funk chords. The humbuckers' output level is just slightly hotter than a classic PAF, providing a good balance of clarity, definition and aggression. You can hear each individual note in a chord, but when you start to solo, it seems like single notes magically become fatter.

The wide and fat neck profile feels just a little thinner and flatter than PRS's own wide-fat neck profile, but the 24 1/2-inch scale is easier to play and results in lower string tension. The frets are so smooth that if you close your eyes, you'll think you're playing a regular PRS model.



OVERALL VALUE

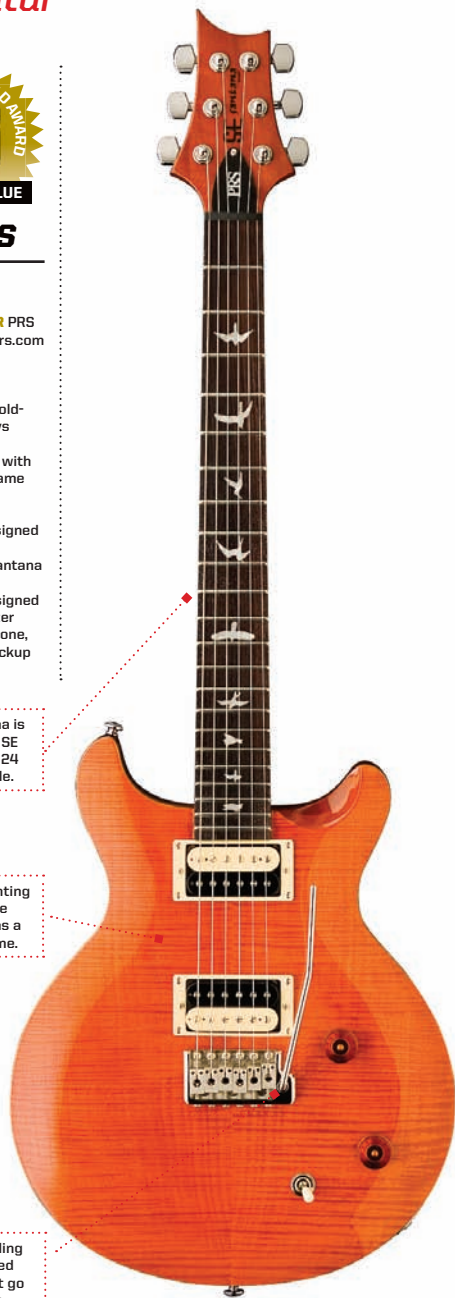
## SPECS

**STREET PRICE** \$754.00  
**MANUFACTURER** PRS Guitars, prsguitars.com  
**SCALE LENGTH** 24 1/2 inches  
**FINGERBOARD** Rosewood with "old-school" bird inlays  
**FRETS** 22  
**BODY** Mahogany with maple top and flame maple veneer  
**NECK** Mahogany  
**BRIDGE** PRS-designed tremolo  
**PICKUPS** PRS Santana humbuckers  
**TUNERS** PRS designed  
**CONTROLS** Master volume, master tone, three-position pickup selector

The SE Santana is the first PRS SE model with a 24 1/2-inch scale.

The inner mounting of the maple veneer top has a beautiful flame.

The solid-feeling PRS-designed tremolo won't go out of tune.



## THE BOTTOM LINE

WITH A STREET price well under a thousand dollars, the PRS SE Santana offers a high level of quality, from craftsmanship to tone, making it an unbeatable value. **SC**

+PRO	-CON
EXPRESSIVE TONE • FAST-PLAYING NECK • IMPECCABLE ATTENTION TO DETAIL	NONE