



Ibanez SR300 & SR705

£229 & £599

New looks and sounds from both ends of Ibanez's long-standing SR range *by Roger Newell*

It seems that Ibanez is never short on ideas when it comes to its bass guitar ranges, but how do you go about improving on an already tried and tested design? Altering the electronics is certainly an option but here the new slimline shaping employed throughout the SR models is something very special indeed. The body is delightfully arched to both the top and back to give something of a 'lozenge' look that is sublimely curvaceous and extremely elegant. Better still the headstock employs the favoured downsized Ibanez shape with the face finished to match the colour of the body, so visually it all pulls together rather well.

As a direct result of all this body contouring both the four- and five-string examples we examine here feel lightweight and exceptionally comfortable against the body, although rest assured there is still significant body mass to give you something to play and react with. Each possesses an angled and rounded heel to aid further in comfort when reaching for those uppermost frets.

The sealed gear tuners are appropriately trim, whilst the raised tail bridge units feature substantial adjustable saddles with a meaty string anchor that fully accepts the string ends for that extra touch of neatness. The control knobs are domed and all the metalwork has a 'burnished' black chrome plating.

Although both models are endowed with similar visuals it's the woods and the selective active electronics that determine their retail prices. However, both are set to provide modern looks and sounds befitting such a sleek vision. Even the relatively insignificant aspects like the upward angled, recessed jack socket – something that ensures an easy path to the strap button – illustrate a quality and very well, thought-through design.

SR300

Although the current trend still seems to be one of limited colour choices for bass players, the SR300 model is offered in this succulent candy apple metallic red alongside the usual black or white finishes. A good start. A quick examination at the back reveals that the four neck bolts are deeply recessed and even the battery compartment and cavity plate do nothing to distract from the pleasingly sleek lines of the overall design.

Strapped on this bass feels light in weight and easy to handle. The front and rear arching really does make it very comfortable to play and it's all beautifully balanced too. The ultra-shallow neck just seems to melt away in the hand and that shaped and angled aspect of the heel means that all 24-frets are reached effortlessly.

The bridge is very substantial and offers excellent string

spacing, and the tilted under-surface output jack does indeed present the lead perfectly for 'under strap' security – from a purely practical point of view this design certainly ticks all of the important boxes.

The Rivals

SR300

The **Vintage V900** (£239) offers another modern design with a 24-fret neck, the versatile P/J pickup pairing and an active preamp. **Yamaha's RBX374** (£249) has a two-octave neck, extended upper horn and hum-cancelling pickups with active circuitry. **Schecter's Stiletto Deluxe 4** (£249) uses a six-bolt rock maple neck, a pair of Diamond Bass humbuckers and an active two-band EQ.



Metalwork is fashionably burnished black chrome plated



Sounds

Electronically the key ingredient here has to be the Style Sweep control. As the name suggests it has the ability to change the 'attitude' of the tone – think of it as a mid-range sweep that is less for slappier tones and more for older fingerstyle. In fact, getting exceptional sounds from the SR300 is as easy as pie. Set the balance control at centre then dial in your preferred basic sound with the Sweep control, then accentuate the tone by using the treble and bass cut/boost controls on the stacked knob. Finally, alter the balance control for a fuller or more defined character and you're off. Combining all these elements, allows you to add significant and highly individual variety to the available sounds.

There's also a very pleasing degree of warmth and fullness here but the notes never become woolly or poorly defined. This bass is all about note separation and dynamics, no matter what your general sound expectation

The Rivals

SR705

The **Rockbass Corvette Basic** (£442) presents the unique Warwick sound and feel with MEC Gold active J-style pickups connected to an active two-band EQ. **Aria's IGB-68/5** (£529) is the five-string version of one of its most popular models with one humbucking pickup, an active three-band EQ and coil-split switch. Slightly higher in price is **Yamaha's TRB1005** active bass (£700) with quality woods and versatile sounds from a pair of Alnico humbuckers and an active three-band EQ.



The SR range employs the downsized Ibanez headstock

may be. At this price, that makes it a very tempting proposition.

SR705

With such sleek proportions you need to do a double take to affirm that this is indeed a five-string model. Although not so light in weight as its four-string counterpart, it is equally well balanced and exceptionally comfortable to use. String access is again spot on and we found this to be one of the most evenly tensioned five-stringers we've ever tried. So if you're a regular four-string player who's thinking of adding a good quality five to your arsenal, this could be the bass to tempt you.

Of course, for any five-string bass the most important factor has to be the neck and here the dimensions are again slim, although obviously more substantial than on the four-string. In fact the fretboard is rather spacious and we love the oval abalone inlays that give this added eye candy. Sadly, in the UK,

These passive Bartolini MK1-5 humbuckers suit [the SR705] extremely well, drawing out the full potential

the SR705 is only available in transparent black, but it is a very classy looking finish that neatly reveals the maple striping of both the body and the headstock surfaces. Beneath the maple faced wings is mahogany, the centre block is maple and the neck is constructed of five-piece jatoba and bubinga laminate that adds the necessary stiffness and strength to what is quite a thin deepth 'fast' neck. Again the heel shaping plays an important part and the rear cavities are similarly positioned to the SR300's.

This version of the Accu-Cast bridge has slightly smaller saddles while the sealed gear tuners are standard size and fit snugly on the back angled headstock. Bartolini pickups and EQ are used, while the control layout offers a more

conventional approach than the SR300 with the three-band MK1 EQ cut/boost rotaries being separate not stacked. All but the volume have a centre detent.

Sounds

These passive Bartolini MK1-5 humbuckers suit this bass extremely well, drawing out the full potential from all five strings plus providing plenty of warmth and robustness to the tones. As with any twin pickup layout this bass has two distinct sounds and the circuitry offers plenty of variety whichever you favour. Again the tonal qualities are rich and full and pleasing when blending the two pickups allowing some honky sounds into play.

Overall this bass has a very powerful and punchy edge,



IBANEZ SR300 & SR705 £229 & £599
BASS

particularly when using the treble and bass on full boost, the mid slightly cut and the balance control slightly favouring the bridge pickup. The bass control is particularly meaty, and once you've piled it on at full boost it's so satisfying that you'll find it hard to take away. What qualifies as a great sound is entirely up to the individual, but with the benefit of this Bartolini circuitry you will not find this bass lacking in any department.


Verdict

The effective body shaping and resultant loss of mass gives both of these models a huge boost in playing comfort yet, thanks to the abilities provided by the modern active circuit, there's no discernible lack of power or performance qualities – in fact we reckon either model can easily hold its own against the rest of the field. Headstocks are a very important factor in any design and we feel that Ibanez has got a great shape and a very keen size for this range. Having them colour co-ordinated also plays an important part in giving this bass a very fresh persona.

The popular control layout of the SR705 works superbly, but we heartily applaud the quirky Style Sweep control as used on the more keenly priced SR300. It really does offer a significant variety to the overall sound and will have you playing about with it for hours.

Although both basses offer good value for money, the SR300 seems incredibly well priced. With its pleasing weight, thumping delivery and shallow necked playing sophistication it offers a great deal for any potential user.

We love the classic but distinctive finish here – a real eye-catcher.

The name Ibanez has been linked with hard rock and heavy metal for some time and deservedly so, but you need to think outside that particular box with these two machines. Yes, they'll do all that high-energy stuff with ease, but there's an undercurrent of sophistication here that allows them to serve just as well in pretty much any other bass environment. Warm and clean tones with lots of viable variations, and a feel that will suit just about any player. 

The Bottom Line

Ibanez SR300

We like: Ultra slim shape; light weight; Style Sweep control – everything!

We dislike: For the price, nothing

Guitarist says: This is a surprisingly versatile, fast playing sleek bass machine that'd not only make a great start-up bass, but an ideal spare/recording instrument for the more seasoned player

Ibanez SR705

We like: Again the overall thought-through sleek design; Bartolini electrics; sounds

We dislike: No additional colour options

Guitarist says: A real pro-feeling modern bass with oh-so-classic EQ layout providing versatility, punch and superb playability



Ibanez SR300

PRICE: £229
ORIGIN: Indonesia
TYPE: Twin cutaway, active four-string
BODY: Agathis
NECK: Five-piece maple/rosewood, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 864mm (34-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Fibre/38mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with pearl dot inlays
FRETS: 24, medium
HARDWARE: B100 Raised-tail bridge, sealed gear tuners – black chrome plating
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 19.25mm average (centres)
ELECTRICS: Two EXF4 high-output humbucking pickups, master volume, pickup balancer, stacked treble/bass boost/cut control, style sweep control
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3/6.6
RANGE OPTIONS: The SR500 is £479, the SR700 is £549; and the SR1000EFM Prestige costs £999
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Candy apple (as here), iron pewter, pearl white
Headstock 0121 508 6666
www.headstockdistribution.com

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Playability ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Ibanez SR705

PRICE: £599
ORIGIN: Korea
TYPE: Twin cutaway, active five-string
BODY: Figured maple/mahogany wings with maple centre block
NECK: Five-piece jatoba/bubinga, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 864mm (34-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Fibre/45mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with abalone oval inlays
FRETS: 24, medium
HARDWARE: Accu-Cast B25 bridge, sealed gear tuners – black chrome plating
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 16.75mm average (centres)
ELECTRICS: Two Bartolini MK1-5 humbucking pickups, Bartolini MK1 EQ (treble, middle and bass cut/boost) volume, pickup balance
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.8/8.4
RANGE OPTIONS: The five-string options include the SR305 (£249), SR505 (£499) and the SR1005 (£1,049)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Transparent black (as reviewed)
EXTRAS: Gig bag available but not included in price

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Playability ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



A solid, simple, adjustable bridge anchors the SR705's strings