

THE GAS
STATION



IBANEZ RG550 £899

The godfather of shred guitars wants its crown back

Players of a certain age will remember the double-page adverts in mags like TG, crammed full of tiny images of the guitars that made up our imaginary wish lists. For many, Ibanez was the aspirational brand of choice. Fender and Gibson were very grown-up, a bit too much like what your dad would play. Ibanez, on the other hand, projected a vision of futuristic precision and technicality that pressed all the right adolescent buttons. Consequently, the Ibanez RG550 became the default aspirational guitar of choice for an entire generation of player. Expensive enough to make it lust-worthy, but not so expensive that we'd

was so popular about the original RG550 and piece it back together in a way that enhances its legacy.

The Japanese-made 2018 vintage is, essentially, a masterclass in everything that is good about shred and metal guitars. The neck feels lithe – your hand glides, rather than simply moving – while the Edge vibrato is rock solid and the overall craftsmanship is exemplary. It's actually better than our 15-year-old selves could have expected when we stared at those adverts.

Tonally, the RG550 covers a lot of bases. It always did, despite its pointy appearance, meaning you could comfortably stray into all kinds of genres without too much fuss. The US-designed V7 bridge

“ IT'S A MASTERCLASS IN ALL THAT IS GOOD ABOUT SHRED... ”

never get to own one, the RG550 hit that rare sweet spot of quality and other-worldly attraction.

Introduced in 1987 and discontinued in 1994, the Ibanez RG550 remains the childhood sweetheart of many players. Designed as a mass-appeal version of Steve Vai's famous JEM777 model, it had character in abundance. We loved its pointy horns and headstock. We marvelled at the thought of the ultra-thin Wizard necks and their promises of unrivalled speed. And we were unreserved in our love for the garish, frankly bonkers colour options. But tastes change as we grow up – or do they? Apparently not, if you're Ibanez. Which explains why, after so many years, it's brought the old stallion out of retirement. Wise decision? You bet. Ibanez has skillfully managed to extract the very essence of what

humbucker delivers the razor-sharp riff platform you'd hope it would, while the V8 neck 'pup offers a hint of compression at higher gain settings, which levels lead lines nicely. It is, in the best way possible, everything you remembered from the original.

Competition is strong – Schecter, ESP and Jackson all produce superb-quality shredders. But the RG's pedigree is powerful. The entire SuperStrat niche of guitars owes the RG550 a huge debt of gratitude. With this reissue, Ibanez is casually reminding everyone who's boss.

Chris Corfield

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

1 HEADSTOCK
Colour-matching the headstock to the body is a nice nod to the original RG550 and contrasts perfectly with the black hardware

2 NECK
Five pieces of maple and walnut combine to make up the Super Wizard neck, which is reinforced with two titanium bars for extra rigidity

3 PICKUPS
Two humbuckers and a single coil (American designed) offer plenty of tonal variation. This is no mere metal guitar

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood
NECK: Super Wizard 5pc maple/walnut neck
SCALE: 647.7mm (25.5")
FINGERBOARD: Maple
FRETS: 24 jumbo
PICKUPS: V7/S1/V8 (H/S/H)
CONTROLS: Tone, volume, five-way selector
HARDWARE: Edge tremolo
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Desert Sun Yellow (pictured), Road Flare Red, Purple Neon
CONTACT: Headstock Distribution
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