



CORT KX500MS



£699

Seven strings, totally brutal tone, multi-scale... This is gonna be poplar

Occasionally you pick up a guitar and you'll be a little unsure as to what you are going to get when you switch on the amplifier. But usually there are some subtle (and not-so-subtle) tells. Take the KX500MS. You might call Cort's flagship seven-string a multi-scale extended-range exercise in not-so-subtle tells. It has fanned frets for enhanced intonation and feel, and, complementing those, you'll also find an angled nut and an ingenious hardtail of six independent saddles arranged in similar fashion to Ibanez's Mono-rail bridge design – adding yet another angle into a souped-up S-style that is all angles. With two active EMG-707 humbuckers

one of the coolest – definitely easier on the eye than, say, the similarly 4+3 profile offered on Jackson's fleet of seven-strings. And, again, it's all angles, sharp, kinda dangerous. On that headstock you'll find a set of Cort locking tuners in black nickel, matching the bridge and volume and tone controls.

The KX500MS feels a little neck-heavy at first, but that could be said of many extended-range electrics. Its five-piece maple and purple heart (aka amaranth) neck is certainly packing no extra flab; it is flat and slim, topped with a macassar ebony 400mm-radius fretboard with Raindrop inlay. Speedsters will love it. The satin-smooth finish won't gum up on you. The sculpting around the

“AND, AGAIN, IT'S ALL ANGLES, SHARP, KINDA DANGEROUS...”

in the neck and bridge, there's probably a little too much fire for the open-mic folk night. Indeed, the KX500MS might have too much firepower for all but the most extreme styles – chug-heavy contemporary metal, death metal, djent, that kind of thing – but, hey, that's what Cort built it for. That they built this and put it on the market for 700 bucks is really the big story here.

The KX500MS has a genuinely premium look and feel. It has a lightweight swamp ash body with a poplar burl top that lends a three-dimensional quality to the finish, and a matching headstock that might have one of the less-celebrated names in guitar manufacturing, but is nonetheless

bolt-on heel-joint offers safe passage to the upper registers. The multi-scale fretboard is certainly a boon when it comes to intonation and keeping the solidity in that low-end, and if it takes a little getting used to, with the KX500MS's scale running 27-25.5" from seventh-string to first, the greater leap for anyone visiting the KX500MS from a regular six-string is adjusting your style so you can make full use of the low B string.

The KX500MS is certainly voiced for low-end shenanigans. There have been a number of active humbucker sets wound for seven-string players who need plenty of gain, but the EMG 707 remains a firm favourite, not least for its clarity. Featuring an

1 LOCKING TUNERS

If the KX500MS's multi-scale design ensure's intonation is bang-on, locking tuners are a welcome appointment to help keep things solid

2 TRUSS ROD

Making adjustments to the neck is a cinch with this heel-mounted spoke-nut. No more lost truss-rod covers!

3 FRETBOARD

The fanned fret design will feel intuitive in time, while the jumbo fretwire rewards a light touch – ideal for shredders

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Swamp ash with poplar burl top

NECK: 5-piece maple and purple heart, bolt-on

SCALE: 27-25.5" multi-scale

FINGERBOARD: Macassar ebony with Raindrop inlay

FRETS: 24

PICKUPS: 2x EMG 707 humbuckers (neck and bridge)

CONTROLS: 3-way pickup selector, 1x volume, 1x tone

HARDWARE: Individual hardtail string-through body bridge unit, locking Cort tuners, black nickel

LEFT-HANDED: No

FINISH: Star Dust Green (as reviewed), Star Burst Black

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A question of scale

What's a fanned fretboard and do I need one?

Cort's KX500MS has a lot of clever features but the most eye-catching is the multi-scale fretboard. This novel approach in guitar design is credited to luthier Ralph Novak who developed his designs in the 70s. It's only recently, with the growing popularity of extended-range guitars, that we're seeing such designs in mass production. The benefit of a multi-scale is it helps keep tension in the longer-scaled lower registers, so the low B string stays tight, while the high E has a Fender-esque 25.5" scale, so you can bend high-notes as normal. It's a way of splitting the difference and getting the best of both, and if it's not needed for a standard six-string, it can be crucial for an extended-range guitar's performance.

alnico V magnet with wide aperture coils, the EMG 707 brings plenty of crunch and definition for open chords, and is good and tight when playing busy, high-gain leads, ever ready for pinch harmonic squeals – especially on the bridge humbucker.

The controls are fuss-free; you've got master volume and tone and a three-way selector, while the 9V battery for the pickups onboard preamp is easily accessed via a compartment on the rear of the body. Clean tones are excellent, so long as you enjoy the precise piano-esque attack when using EMGs. However, such are the EMG



The independent saddles are arranged in a similar way to Ibanez's Mono-rail bridge design



707s' output you'll want plenty of headroom on your clean channel or your tone will start to break up pretty early. This is by design; these active high-output humbuckers hit your amp hard. If there's a weakness in the KX500MS's tone it's in that breakup. The cleans are fine, pare excellently with a little modulation and would take a pedal such as a Boss CH-1 Super Chorus like mother's milk. The high-gain tones are total nuclear sustain and crunch – riff with abandon. But milder overdriven crunch tones don't quite have the dynamics as

you might find on a passive humbucker. But that's the point, right? Ultimately, that compressed quality will serve you well when it gets down to playing modern metal, splitting the atom with shred and weaponising your rhythm tone so it could saw through concrete.

Jonathan Horsley

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

ALSO TRY...

IBANEZ RGMS7 IRON LABEL MULTI-SCALE

£449

Boasting a similar Mono-rail six-saddle bridge to the Cort for easy intonation adjustment and greater resonance, this Ibanez is a steal.



SCHecter REAPER-7

£999

It's a little more expensive, but the Reaper-7 is one of the best seven-strings we have played with excellent pickups and hardware, and poplar burl top.



JACKSON X SERIES SLAT7

£869

With a quilt maple veneer top, Jackson blade humbuckers, a 12" to 16" compound radius laurel fingerboard, the stylish SLAT7 is truly a modern shred machine.

