

IBANEZ PREMIUM RG870QMZ

£875

This business-class speed machine is calling at all destinations en route to Shredsville

IT'S little wonder wizened old shred-goats glaze over with misty-eyed, open-mouthed ardour when regarding the Ibanez RG series. Launched in 1987 and rocked by individualists who felt that the Japanese company's flagship JEM series (which debuted that same year) was, well, just a little too Steve Vai, the Roadster Guitar was the go-to Superstrat for the shred-me-quick everyman. The RGs looked mean with sharktooth inlays and super-cool paint jobs, like Lazer Blue and Road Flare Red. Similarly, Ibanez's new Indonesian-built RG Premium line courts today's brisk-fingered guitarists with promises of an affordable yet high-spec pro guitar, steeped in the RG series' thoroughbred DNA.

The guitar genetics are reassuringly RG. There's the much-loved Wizard neck; with a skeletal 1st fret radius of 18mm, it was always the RG's pre-eminent performance-enhancing feature. On the Premium, the Wizard is a five-piece maple/walnut bolt-on with titanium. A five-way pickup selector offers great tonal versatility, just the thing for those gigs when all the audience's desires oscillate between thrash metal and George Benson jazz-funk disco. While the sharktooth inlays are retired on the Premium, the jumbo frets stay and are immaculately hand-finished too, plus a quilted maple top offers a bit of PRS-esque glam. Then there's the suped-up vibrato: here, Ibanez has really nailed it.

You see, the old floating Edge vibrato of the 80s/early-90s models is a great piece of kit, but the Edge-Zero II unit's stability and ease of use will please those who go big on whammy bar gymnastics but are not-so-hot on guitar maintenance. Adjustments are easy. The Zero Point System (ZPS) ensures that breaking strings

doesn't cause a performance/nervous breakdown. The Edge-Zero II really is a superlative piece of engineering, which even allows those who prefer a floating vibrato to remove the spring and stop rod, deactivating the ZPS. Hey, it's nice to have the option.

Weighing it all up – as in: is this the guitar for you? – the Edge-Zero II is a real sweetener when pitching the Premium against shred-sticks made by Jackson and LTD. The latter might have more exciting pickup options (Seymour Duncan/EMG vs Ibanez's CAP-VM series) for those toneheads itching for high-gain. That said, the Premium sounds fantastic in its own right. The bridge humbucker (CAP-VM2) has plenty of harmonic resonance and punch, certainly at home for rock and metal, while the neck humbucker (CAP-VM1) is that bit tamer, perfect for intricate sweeps and all your arpeggiated witchcraft. Selecting the singlecoil – or split with neck or bridge humbuckers – unearths your inner Eddie Hazel, perfect for spanky funk and blues playing.

With a street price of around 700 quid, the Premium is poking its pointy headstock into a crowded market. But just think about it. If you consider the quilted maple finish a high-class turn-on rather than cock rock folly, and you value unrivalled playability from an emaciated neck, making little fingers feel like Mr Tickle's arms, plus a super-stable vibrato unit that can pull the most alien sounds from a guitar: choosing the Premium should be a no-brainer.

Jonathan Horsley

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

AT A GLANCE

- BODY:** American basswood with quilted maple top
- NECK:** Maple and walnut, bolt-on 5-piece Wizard with KTS titanium reinforcement
- FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood
- FRETS:** 24
- SCALE:** 25 1/2"
- PICKUPS:** CAP-VM2 humbucker (bridge)/ CAP-VM1 singlecoil (middle), CAP-VM1 humbucker (neck)
- CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone, 5-way pickup selector
- HARDWARE:** Cosmo black chrome, Edge-Zero II locking vibrato
- LEFT-HANDED:** Yes
- FINISH:** High Voltage Violet (pictured), Red Desert, Black Ice
- CONTACT:** Headstock Distribution 01215 086666 www.ibanez.com



1 NECK

THE five-piece Wizard neck is ridiculously thin and satin-smooth; it won't gum up during those all-night practice sessions trying to nail *Perpetual Burn*

2 HEEL

FOR A bolt-on neck, the RG Premium has superb upper-fret access. It's just as you would expect from a top-end Ibanez electric

3 MANUALLY ADJUSTABLE VIBRATO

ANY players used to hauling out screwdrivers and Allen wrenches to balance their vibrato unit will appreciate an easy-to-use thumb screw instead