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Shine RK2000NT Bass guitar

Reviews : Guitar: Bass

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The long-awaited Ricky bass copy from Shine has at last hit these shores. So how does the reality match up to the advance speculation?

by David Etheridge

The appearance on Shine's home web site towards the end of 2007 of a Rickenbacker bass copy startled and delighted budget bass fans and set the bass forums on the Net talking. How good would it be? Does it match up to the illustrious original, or will it only be for players who want the look but have no knowledge of the nuances of design and will put up with a turkey just for the image? (Mind you, I've known some players with 'name' instruments that were complete disasters to play, but let that pass...) More importantly, given Rickenbacker's rather litigious nature when it comes to copies, would they actually get away with it?

Shine are known for their budget makes, although not everyone is convinced. Indeed, when I pointed them out to the editor of a rather well-known recording magazine (yes, Paul), he dismissed them, suggesting the 'n' should be substituted with a 't' in the name. But actually, Shine are not a cheapo, knock-off, fly-by-night outfit. In fact, they started out in stringed instruments producing guitars for the likes of Ibanez, Epiphone and (reputedly) Washburn until only a couple of years ago, so you may well have played one of their products without even being aware of it. Suffice to say that Shine have taken the knowledge gleaned from that production into their own guitar and bass range. You'll find many similarities to the more famous brand names, but also a few nuances of design that will be familiar to Shine players.



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Shine RK2000NT £499

This is a classy and well-built copy from Shine of the classic Ricky 4001 bass. It delivers the goods to any fan, plays excellently and gives the sounds you want at a fraction of the price of an original. Affordable quality for all.

information

Intermusic
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www.intermusic.uk.com
www.saein.co.kr

Tech Spec

RK2000NT

Maple neck and body.
 Through-neck construction.
 22-fret rosewood fingerboard with shark-fin inlays.
 34-inch scale.
 Die-cast tuners.
 Two volume, two tone and three-way pickup controls.
 Two 2/D SRB1 pickups.
 RKTH-4 bridge.
 Chrome hardware.

The Ricky factor

Shine's new RK2000NT is based quite obviously on the classic Ricky 4001, one of the most iconic basses in history, as well as having one of the most playable necks in the business. While other manufacturers have made Ricky copies in the past (Tokai and Ibanez immediately come to mind), Rickenbacker have been quick to try and limit any large-scale copying through the courts. However, it appears that the design copyright only applies within US and possibly Canadian borders, so for the rest of the world the coast is clear. And after all, anyone who buys a copy of a classic make and then claims they thought they were buying the original might need a bit more than their eyesight checking.

Construction follows the sound principles of the original brand, with a through-neck design using maple for both the neck and body, a 22-fret rosewood neck with shark-fin motif fret markers, Shine's own die-cast tuners, twin 2/D SRB1 pickups with pickup cover on the bridge pickup, twin volume and tone controls and a three-way pickup selector, a chunky cast bridge and chrome hardware. Finished in black with a white scratchplate, it certainly looks the part, although the headstock shape and tuners are pure Shine in design.

Let's compare the RK2000NT to an original 4001, as I'm still the proud owner of one. The body shape is right on the money, although closer comparison shows that the Shine bass is marginally bigger and thicker overall, but here we're talking fractions of an inch, so you probably won't notice any difference unless you're really picky. The weight is about the same and the balance as right as you would expect, which makes for a very comfortable playing style whether standing or sitting. There's no front-edge cream binding on the RK2000NT, and the upper and lower horns are slightly more rounded at the transition edges. That apart, the body shapes between the two are more or less identical.

More subtle differences are in the neck. Compared to my mid-'70s 4001, the RK2000NT has a slightly flatter section neck, but is still eminently playable, making it easy to whizz around the fingerboard and practise all your Chris Squire, Geddy Lee and, for that matter, Bruce Foxton licks. The fingerboard has the same cream binding along the edges and shark-fin fret markers, although the Shine version is slightly narrower in section than the original. Where the RK2000NT shows a slightly more modern approach is in the range, with two more frets than the Ricky, allowing you to get a high F on the G-string, rather than an E-flat. I've lost count of the number of times that I've tried to go for a high E natural and had to bend the note up to pitch!

The controls are the same in both cases — volume and tone pots for each pickup, with a three-way selector switch — although the pots aren't labelled on the Shine. The pickups are Shine's own brand, with rear pickup cover à la later Ricky basses that replaced the horseshoe magnet of the original 4001. If you desire, you can simply remove the cover, or use it as a handy place to park your picking hand when playing with a plectrum. The cast bridge certainly looks the part, but the bridge saddles for each string are brought forward here, as on my Ricky the bridge is fitted with a muting bar, which I'm guessing was only used by players way back in the '60s for the muffled tones of early beat groups. The Shine variant also has subtle differences in shape to the bridge casting.

How does it play?

This is a very comfortable bass to play and just as comfortable as my original 4001, which is one of the reasons I bought it decades ago — some basses can feel like cricket bats! I've always been pleased to find with Shine instruments that they're set up beautifully right out of the box, and that's certainly the case here. The RK2000NT is a delight to play, and even playing acoustically you can feel the neck and body

resonating nicely. Once played in, the sounds from this bass should be formidable.

Plugging in and switching on show that the RK2000NT can produce most, if not all, of the tones of a 4001, although I would suggest some Rotosound round-wounds for the full Ricky-style 'clank'. That said, the supplied strings — presumably Shine's own brand — aren't bad at all. What is clear is that the electrics work extremely well, as on both the 4001 and the RK2000NT the neck pickup is capable of some fearsome amounts of warmth and bass end, while the bridge pickup gives the definition and high-end cut. It's the combination of both tones together that make the Ricky concept so flexible and timeless, and Shine have absolutely captured the authentic sound here. Of course, on the Shine bass you only have a single mono jack socket, but I'm sure that an enterprising owner with knowledge of electrics could wire a stereo jack socket in

Conclusion

I like the Shine range a lot and use their six-string bass regularly on gigs. The RK2000NT represents the higher end of their always-affordable range, and overall it succeeds just about every way in recreating the vibe and playing experience of a classic Rickenbacker 4001 bass.

It looks (headstock apart, but who's carping?) authentic in the main and is a delight to play, being light, perfectly balanced, with a resonant neck and body and an excellent set of electrics that give the sounds you know and love. Yes, it's a copy, but it does the job with the customary Shine aplomb. And in these cash-strapped times, who could ask for more? ■ **PM**

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