



PRICE: £649

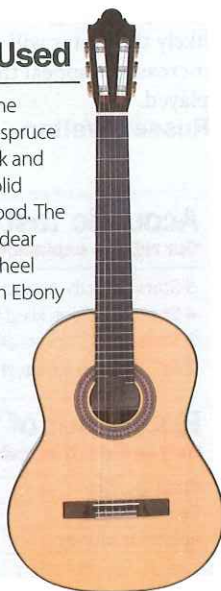
Santos Martinez Raymond Burley SM2000RB

The first ever signature Santos Martinez guitar surely requires a player of great ability and skill. Introducing the SM2000RB.

“...and best of all, it sounds good and holds its tuning very well indeed.”

Woods Used

The top is a fine piece of solid spruce while the back and sides are of solid Indian rosewood. The neck is red cedar with Spanish heel paired with an Ebony fingerboard offering 19 frets.



Inspired by the classical design elements originally incorporated by Martin Fleeson from as far back as 1985, Raymond decided to retire this long-standing workhorse guitar and take up the torch with Santos Martinez, keeping that classical acoustic flame burning. This new instrument borrows heavily from the Fleeson model and is now offered by JHS at a very compelling price point for a traditional and signature model instrument.

Build and Features

Subsequent to the passing away of Martin Fleeson and the decision to retire his instrument, our very own columnist Raymond eventually decided to develop a replacement instrument – one which honoured the Fleeson ancestor. In collaboration with John Hornby Skewes and Dennis Drumm, a new project was undertaken which came to fruition

in the summer of 2012. The guitar itself is now being made in China and is essentially a clone of the Fleeson. It is supplied with a plush textured olive/brown hard case with gold stitching, fasteners, and oval nameplate bearing Ray's name. The lining is of a maroon

reddish hue and adds a great touch of class to this package.

The guitar is made from solid Indian rosewood for the back and sides with an interestingly named malapoka neck which is actually a red cedar which has a runny, honey-like colour. The neck is made of three pieces and terminates in a Spanish heel traditional body joint for maximal vibration transfer, thus honouring a time-tested approach since the 15th century. This guitar is based on the second of the prototypes that were produced from the JHS factory, and at Ray's request featured a reduced neck thickness so that the feel would be much less chunky than the first prototype, along with a thinner use of lacquer for the top. A UV varnish has been used for this natural sheen to the spruce top, and overall the instrument looks just like its parent.

It has a 648mm scale length



**Santos Martinez
Raymond Burley
SM2000RB**

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Technical Specification

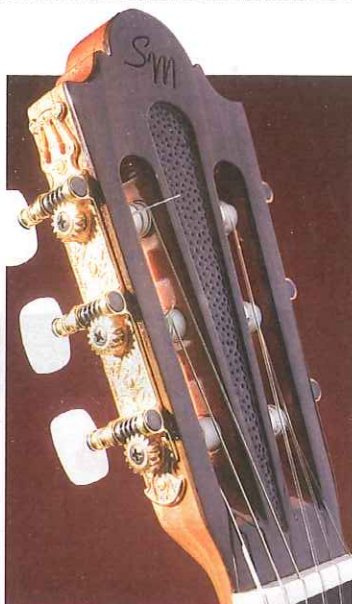
- Manufacturer:** Santos Martinez
- Model:** SM2000RB
- Retail Price:** £649
- Top:** Solid spruce
- Back and sides:** Solid Indonesian rosewood
- Neck:** Red cedar with Spanish heel
- Fingerboard:** Ebony
- Frets:** 19
- Tuners:** Ping
- Nut width:** 52mm
- Scale length:** 648mm
- On-board electronics:** None
- Left-handers:** No
- Gig bag/case included:** Santos Martinez hard case with Ray Burley signature plate supplied

Contact Details

John Hornby Skewes
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www.jhs.co.uk

and bone nut and saddle appointments. Although the machine heads are not the same as the Rodgers tuners originally used on the Fleeson, the fitted Ping tuners are silky smooth in operation without any hateful binding in the nut slot or grabbing as the barrels rotate. They are the best I have seen from the Ping brand to date. You are also furnished with an ebony fingerboard and rosewood lacquered bridge which has a flush-mounted plastic plate to protect the bridge from string wear as you would expect.

Raymond had once commented to Fleeson that many classical guitars had been designed with very plain headstock designs, and so Martin then took the initiative



Elegant head stock bearing SM



PING tuners



Solid spruce top with a UV varnish

“The first thing that grabbed me about this guitar is how mature it sounds for something so new.”

to create a more art-deco look on the headplate with a simple and yet stylistic stippled tapered lozenge carving. This little personal touch has also been carried forward in this Santos signature model.

Sounds

The first thing that grabbed me about this guitar is how open and mature it sounds for something so new. The guitar submitted for review had not been extensively played beforehand, and given that the top is made of spruce (a tonewood which usually takes some substantial time to fully develop) produced a very open, wide and airy presence. It actually sounds quite old, or at least reasonably well ‘broken in’, straight out of the case. You can tell there is more to develop but there is a mellowness and warmth

from the spruce which feels as though it has been well filtered by the Indian rosewood back and sides, well tempered and smooth.

The string volume balance from one to another is very good, particularly in the evenness of the fundamental tones from E to E. You may care to have the action slightly adjusted to enhance the purity of your intonation, but that is not to say that this is a problem area. The sustain is rewarding and my favourite characteristic about this guitar is its warmth in the harmonic detail which is not at all thinned out or ‘pingy’ but rather well rounded.

Another consideration is the extended fingerboard on the treble side which is fretted right up to your high-C octave, should your compositions require

this facility. It is surprisingly accessible given that there is no cutaway. At the time of writing this review there is talk of an electro-acoustic version being made available in the future with an undersaddle transducer strip, and this will be offered at a reasonable premium.

Conclusion

If you find it a little irksome parting with the best part of £700 for a Chinese-made guitar, then take stock of the following. This is a signature model classical instrument. It is supplied with a high-quality matching hard case. It is well constructed based on meticulously considered details with many years of player experience invested in it, and best of all it sounds good and holds its tuning very well indeed. These attributes come to the fore. So if you appreciate these elements and are inspired by Raymond’s performances, likely the guitar will continue to increase its appeal the more it is played.

Russell Welton

What We Think

What did our test results reveal?

Pros: A complete package which leaves you no excuses not to progress.

Cons: You may have to bury unjustified prejudice about being Chinese made.

Overall: A professional package at less than professional prices.



Rosewood lacquered bridge with flush-mounted plastic plate

Acoustic Test Results

Our ratings explained

- 5 Stars:** Superb, Almost faultless.
- 4 Stars:** Excellent, Hard to beat.
- 3 Stars:** Good, covers all bases well.
- 2 or 1 Stars:** Below average, poor.

Rating out of five

How well did this guitar fare?

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★★
Value for Money	★★★★★