

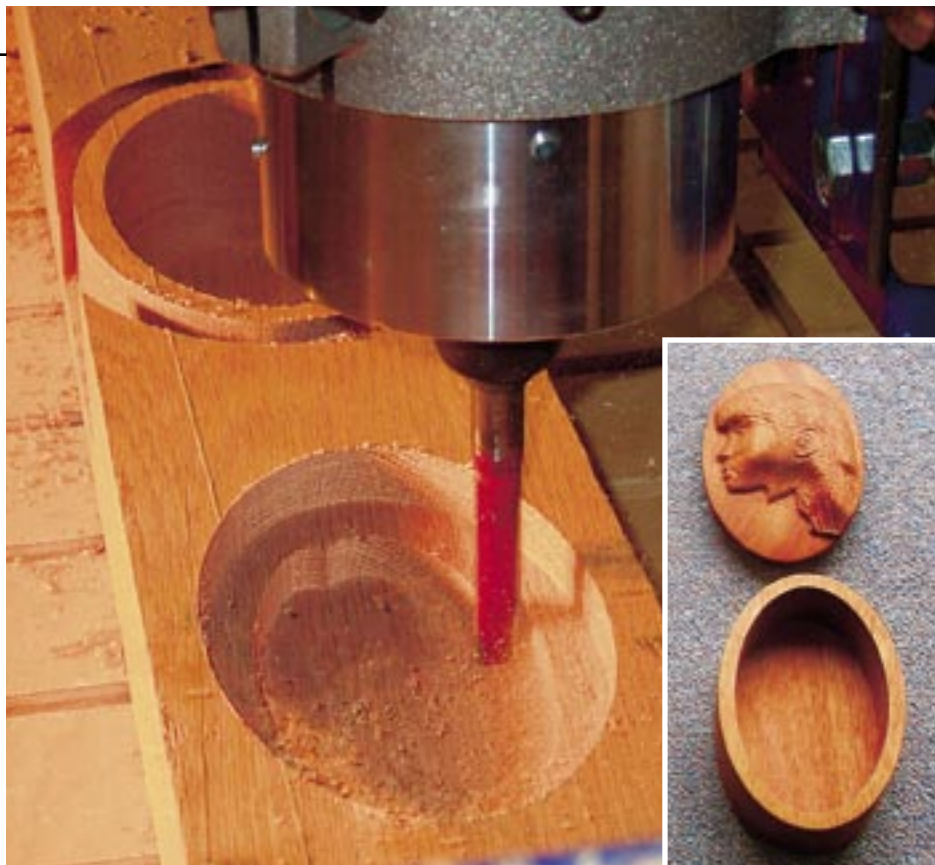
# Tomorrow's woodworking today with CNC routers

**H**ow many times have we seen a high-tech product start out high-priced, and then watch it inch down in cost, becoming affordable for a broader audience? Computers, DVD players, and digital cameras have all traveled that highway. And now, in woodworking, CNC (computer numerically controlled) cutting machines have joined the parade. ShopBot Tools, Inc, located in Durham, North Carolina, has figured a way to produce quality, production-oriented CNCs from \$6,995 to \$10,995. That's about one-fifth the cost of industrial models found in factories that mass-produce plastic and wood parts.

The bare-bones ShopBot CNC consists of a motorized tool, typically a router and bit, that's suspended over the workpiece from a moving framework. Following software instructions created by the woodworker on a home computer, the motorized tool zips over and around the workpiece, performing any number of tasks—dadoing, mortising, carving, drilling, and so on. There's even a lathe operation available. End products include replicas of antique furniture parts, precisely cut pattern pieces, cabinet components, and signs carved in relief. (See the photos at *bottom*.) More sophisticated software and ShopBot models let you take a 2-D photo of a dog, for example, and create an impressive 3-D relief suitable for display.

All that's fine, but how can a CNC help you? Equipped with the right task-specific software and accessories, a CNC router can shape and mill material safer, more precisely, and much faster than anything in your workshop. For the aspiring production-oriented woodworker, this can translate into flawless workmanship, time savings, and money in the bank.

To find out more, Executive Editor Jim Harrold attended a ShopBot Jamboree in April of 2005. This is where tool owners network and share experiences. There, company owner and founder Ted Hall expressed a strong desire to improve the affordability of his line, in spite of already having sold 3,000 machines. Says Ted,



At the heart of a CNC system are a programmed router and a bit capable of executing a wide range of tasks, such as this carved lidded box (inset).

"We'd like to make our tools so affordable and easy to use that they'll be right for every shop." Should he succeed, expect machines like the PRTAlphaBenchtop model and accessories to replace the tablesaw as the go-to tool in the workshop of tomorrow. Of course, if you have the cash and want that experience today, pick up the phone and call 888/680-4466 or click [shopbottools.com](http://shopbottools.com) to learn more. 🌲



The bare-bones ShopBot set-up includes the PRTAlphaBenchtop model, a shop vacuum, and a home computer.

## SOME OF THE MANY POSSIBILITIES



Signs, plaques, models, relief carvings, keepsake boxes, and easy-to-assemble furniture parts are just a smidgen of the projects originating from a ShopBot CNC tool.

Photographs: ShopBot Tools, Inc.