

Fake/Counterfeit Lamps

It is illegal and unethical to buy and sell counterfeit product, yet many well-known and respected distributors are doing just that and in so doing are also compromising the reputation of resellers with their customers.

The sale of fake projector lamps is on a rapid increase and has infiltrated legitimate markets in every country of the world. Many resellers are unwittingly buying and selling fakes without realising it because their reputable supplier has been similarly duped by their supply chain.

Which lamp is phony?



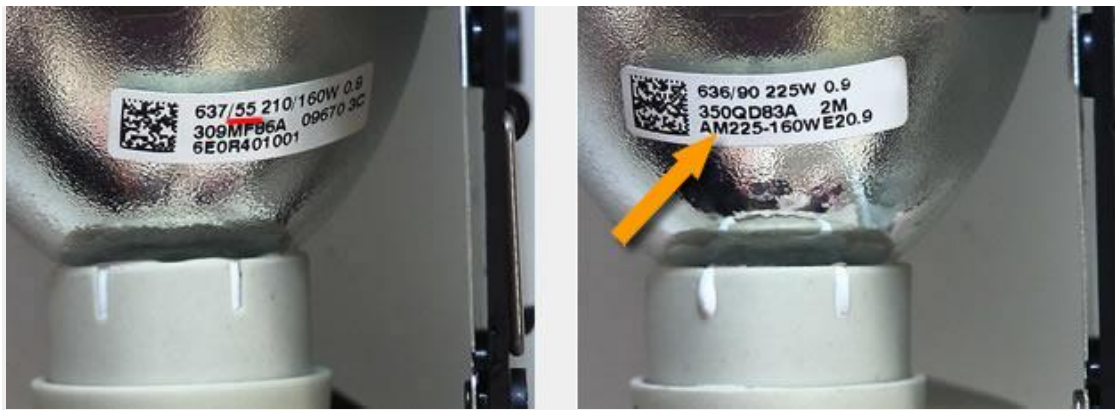
The lamp on the left is a genuine lamp made by NEC. The lamp on the right is a lamp branded as NEC but wasn't produced by them. It is a very convincing copy, similar to buying a fake Rolex watch or Gucci handbag, but whereas the latter are sold at a fraction of their true market prices, projector lamps are sold at the full price, because there are elements of the supply chain that have been duped.

Are you buying counterfeit? - Spotting a fake

Spotting a Fake

Counterfeit lamps aren't always easy to spot and often you need to have an original lamp in its box together with the fake to start to see the anomalies in cage design and manufacture, box construction, labels and general printing. When replacing a lamp you don't have the old packaging and often a reseller will ship a lamp for the customer to install and therefore never have the chance to compare old and new.

However, the majority of counterfeit lamps can be identified.



Philips bulb made for Benq
Philips bulb made for After Market

The left hand bulb was made by Philips for Benq, we know this because the 55 **underlined in red** is the marking Philips put on the bulb for Benq. If you buy a manufacturer's original replacement lamp it will also have a Philips bulb with the number 55 on it.

The right hand bulb was made by Philips for the aftermarket with the 'AM' code and you would expect to see this on a Diamond Lamp or other 'Genuine Inside' lamp but not on a manufacturer's original lamp.

If you bought a manufacturer's original lamp for this model and don't see a Philips bulb, got a Philips bulb with a different two digit number then you have probably been sold a counterfeit lamp.

From 3M to Zenith there are approximately 200 different projector brands known as Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) and nearly all of them buy their bulbs from a 3rd party. Even huge manufacturers like Sony, NEC, Samsung and Dell.

The bulbs are supplied by a select group of specialist lighting manufacturers that include household names such as Philips, Osram and Ushio. However, as well as making for the projector brands they also make bulbs for aftermarket customers such as Diamond Lamps. These latter customers buy bulbs that are identical in performance to the OEM bulbs but are intended to be packaged in their own branded boxes using cages they have developed for themselves as an alternative lamp to the OEM at a similar performance but at a lower price.

Issue #1 Some aftermarket competitors to Diamond Lamps are producing their alternative lamps and then making replica boxes identical to those from Sony or NEC for example then selling it as a Sony or NEC lamp. Not only are they defrauding the original projector brand and breaking the law, but they are duping the resellers and their customers out of money by charging a much higher price than they would for their correctly boxed lamp.

Issue #2 Other manufacturers of counterfeit lamps go for the cheapest solution possible and will fit any old bulb into a lamp they think will work, including second hand. Examples encompass counterfeit bulbs and compatible bulbs that give lower brightness and have a shorter lifetime. They can even be a fire risk.

Bulb Markings Fortunately, most bulb manufacturers clearly mark their bulbs accordingly, so it is relatively easy to see if you have the correct lamp you purchased by checking the bulb marking.

Pricing If you are being offered a lamp that is substantially cheaper than any of their competitors then you are in all probability not being offered a genuine replacement lamp.



There are seven companies that manufacture bulbs for the dozens of projector brands, each has a way of marking their bulbs and those that sell to the aftermarket mark them differently.

Manufacturers for OEM and After-Market

(OEM – original equipment manufacturer)

Philips are the largest bulb manufacturer and pioneered the technology.

Supply to OEMs

Yes - Nearly all brands such as Sony, NEC, Hitachi.

Supply to After-Market

Yes – such as Diamond Lamps

PHILIPS



Osram are a top three, established bulb manufacturer.

Supply to OEMs

Yes – Nearly all

Supply to After-Market

Yes – Such as Diamond Lamps

OSRAM



Ushio are also a major bulb manufacturer.

Supply to OEMs

Yes – Nearly all

Supply to After-Market

Yes – Such as Diamond Lamps

USHIO





Epson make many of their own bulbs, but also buy from other manufacturers on this list.

Supply to OEMs

No – They only manufacture for themselves

Supply to After-Market

No



Panasonic own the bulb brand name Matsushita and bought the projector brand Sanyo.

Supply to OEMs

They mostly manufacture for their own brands but do make for others

Supply to After-Market

No



Phoenix are a specialist manufacturer.

Supply to OEMs

Yes – They have made lamps most OEM brands at some time

Supply to After-Market

Yes – Such as Diamond



They are a small manufacturer now.

Supply to OEMs

Yes – Most brands, but now rarely seen

Supply to After-Market

No



Reflector marking



OEM Markings

Iwasaki identify their bulbs with a code such as the one **underlined in red** above. The code will start with the letters HSCR, MSCR or MSFR and the replacement lamp should have the identical marking.

Can't see the bulb markings?

In roughly 50% of lamps the bulb markings are clearly visible, but some lamps either have the bulb orientated so you couldn't read the markings without a dentist's mirror. If the bulb orientation differs we would be suspicious as this is a rare practice and has been used to hide the markings from casual inspection.

Beyond the bulb markings there are other ways to either identify a counterfeit lamp that are either conclusive or by the weight of evidence make you feel that you have a fake.

Disclaimer

Tremendous effort has been invested in these pages and the information is based on years of projector lamp experience talking to many manufacturers. Our belief is that all statements made on this page are accurate.

If you represent a projector brand or bulb manufacturer and wish to clarify an item, error or omission on the page we would be very grateful for feedback.