

# Revox PR99 history

The PR 99 is basically the "hot rod" version of the B 77. It's basically the same machine built for semipro applications. XLR connectors and the 19" rack capability as a standard offerings are the most significant differences. Of course, the addition of the auto-locator on the MK ii was a valuable asset for the pro user. It came in 61 versions and were sold for 13 years. A damper pin was added on the right side (the B 77 has only one) and the frame was modified to accommodate the protruding head block. It's widely known that the electronics were fully revised and improved with some features built specifically for pro applications. Marino and his staff were still developing the cassette deck project under constant cost pressure in order to start developing the new project "PR 99". This machine was never designed to be domestic or to be in a living room. It was exclusively called "Revox" and it was highly successful!

The PR 99 is the affordable "Studer". It was the bridge between the domestic B 77 and the professional Studer machine. The sales of the PR 99 among the professional circles were really amazing! Three versions were made: MK i, MK ii and MK iii. The MK i and the MK ii, besides the auto locator, are almost the same machine. The MK iii looks different because the bottom panel is gray color and the buttons are plastic. They wanted to give this last version a more "pro console" look, hence the new buttons (they were cheaper, too!). That's all. There's not a significant difference between the ii and iii and built wise has the same frame and construction. People don't understand that many of the so called revisions are in fact looking for improvements and mainly for lowering the production cost as well. That's the case of the MK iii.

The 99' came with a metal 19" rack capability, on a cart or in a flight case with speakers for live recording applications. This last version is rare and I have only seen one. It's not of my personal liking as it's bulky, heavy and I wouldn't listen to my recordings through those shitty speakers anyway. The only value I see is from the collector's point of view and nothing else. On the other hand, those with the butterfly heads are more valuable and scarce. From the sonic point of view, it's not better sounding than its 77' cousins and some people insists that the addition of the balanced transformers for the XLR connectors made it worst than better. I don't care as I find both very pleasant and neutral sounding. There's not a significant difference, if any, in sound. That's for sure. Most of the time it just need somebody, from somewhere to say something, and others start repeating the same \*\*\*\* over and over again until soon enough a urban myth is created! 90% of the time people keep saying the same gossip without even hear or confirm it by themselves. That's the usual case in Audio. The other is when Mr. John Doe look at the design and says: "Oh!, there're balanced transformers on the output,so it has to sound bad!", without hearing the machine first. By that time, a prejudice is created and in no time the rest of the world keeps repeating the same \*\*\*\* as well. Period.

The latest B 77's were built in Regensdorf at a rate of 175 units daily when the production was in full blast and were branded as "Studer". Many features from the A 77 were still in function in the B 77 and PR 99 as well. The A 77 replaced the now legendary 36 series and came in response to the Japanese market penetration. The A 77 is cataloged as one of the most important reel to reel decks

in audio history and no discussion about tape recording in the 70's could be complete without the venerable A 77. Guido Besimo was in charge of the project. Hans Foletti and Herbert Romagna were in charge of the mechanics, Ernst Mathys designed the function control board, the capstan motor was from the genius of Artur Stosberg and the group's leader himself, Besimo, designed the audio circuit. The thing is that this A 77 audio circuit became the ReVox trademark for years to come and it was later used, without significant revisions, on the B 77 and PR 99 ! That's what I call a genuine cornerstone!

The real genius of Studer has been to implement professional quality products in domestic models. As a matter of fact: many A 77 and B 77 were constantly used in professional studios and radio stations. Here in Puerto Rico, Radio Oro, kept using their A 77's array for over 30 years when they were finally retired to receive the new digital era. This same story has been repeated over and over again around the globe. I'm sorry but I don't think any model from Japanese brands could ever make the same allegation. I'm not saying those are bad machines. No. That's not what I mean, but there's an imminent truth in all this and that's the fact that ReVox were ahead of its time by far, as the actual longevity and parts availability testifies. You can still order brand new parts for your Revoxes. They were on another league. Revox products were aimed at domestic markets, but most of their machines were used in professional applications. That's how good they are and how much appreciation and acceptance were given by the professionals around the world.

Another subject to consider is that, if we take into consideration that perhaps just one model from any Japanese brands were sold in bigger numbers than all the B 77's combined, how many of those still survives today against the Swiss gem? The A-77 and A 700 are still getting refurbished to this date by audiophiles around the world, even after 40 years! Perhaps that's why Studer-Revox products are among the most restored audio components in this hobby and fetching the highest prices in the second hand market. As a matter of fact: many of these machines has been sold for more of what their original prices were 30 years ago!

The last B 77 MK ii and PR 99 MK iii left the manufacturing plant in 1997.

source: [tapeheads.net](http://tapeheads.net)

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