

# Technics 1500 - 1700

Chris: "The RS-1700 was an update of the iconic RS-1500."

Comment: Just to nitpick, the 1700 was actually kind of an enhancement to the 1506. The RS-1500 and 1502 were near-pro-grade 2-track machines that had a quarter-track play head over on the left side before the erase head. There was a switch on the headblock to control which play head hit the electronics. The machine only recorded in 2-track. The play-head switch was semi-reliable over time but can be cleaned and if it's treated gently, the contacts just get dirty rather than fail like some 1960's slide-switches.

The RS-1520 was the 1500 with balanced inputs and outputs and bias and equalization trimmers. It was a professional grade 2-track tape recorder, certainly usable for broadcast production and lower-budget music production.

The RS-1506 was a quarter-track version of the RS-1500, with a 2-track playback head over on the left above the quarter-track erase head.

So then you get to the RS-1700. This was a consumer deck through and through, although a high end one. It was quarter-track (a consumer format) and bi-directions (in other words it would record both forward and reverse, no need to flip reels). It had the same motors and isolated-loop capstan system as the older machines. The heads were smaller and play and record heads were fit in one assembly (not one head like a typical cassette deck, separate heads in one can) so there was room for 6 heads in the same space as the 4 heads on the other decks. I don't think this was a major compromise as far as performance, I think the 1700 spec'd out close or identical to the 1506. They are really nice decks, just understand they are high-end consumer decks, mainly because of the quarter-track format.

Technics reel decks hold their own to this day. They are very gentle on old tapes, but the tension against the heads is low so they are non-ideal for edge-warped old tapes. They are dead-on speed accurate if the motor is working properly. There are electronic tweaks, but making sure all the capacitors are good would be my first repair.

By the way, check out this website, showing the OTHER isolated-loop decks Panasonic sold in Japan: <http://reeltoreelworld.blogspot.com/2009/02/doc-technics-adds.html> The RS-1800 was sold outside of Japan. I've heard of some in the U.S. but never seen one. The little 7" reel deck was only sold in Japan. Note the silver-faced 1700 in one ad.

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