

The Leavers Rich E200 Tape recorder



Back in the swinging sixties, I used to visit a very good record shop in London's Soho, called The Gramophone Exchange. While browsing there one day, I got talking to another customer who turned out to be a film music mixer/sound recordist at the studios of Leavers Rich in the same building.

Peter invited me to visit their facilities. The row of magnetic film recorders and analogue tape machines made a lasting impression. At that time (circa 1965) a studio stereo master recorder cost about UKP1500 which was more than many people earned in a year. I dreamed one day that I might own such a machine.

There were only two manufacturers of professional tape machines in the UK. Leavers Rich was one, and EMI the other. Despite the fact that there were more than 1500 Leavers Rich E200 stereo tape machines in use in London alone during the early 70's they are now collectors' items, and very hard to find.

Forty years have passed! About a year ago, a pal of mine in the UK made contact to say that he knew of a BBC model Leavers Rich E200 stereo console tape recorder for sale. The owner was moving to a smaller house, and had no option but to let it go. The machine was apparently in pristine condition and needed only a little work to return it to its former glory.



After a web search, I was able to find an operations/maintenance manual for a machine with a serial number very close to the one I was intending to buy. However, the manual proved to be machine specific, and had no details of the BBC model. I also learned later that following a policy of "continuing improvement" the amplifier boards of machines with adjacent serial numbers had small differences.

However, this did not put me off, as a very good friend of mine Timo Ulkuniemi (aka "Nuuska") had worked for many years for [Studer](#) and was an expert on analogue tape machines. The Leever Rich had few similarities with the Studer, but my pal is a very skilled technician, adept at tape machine alignment, both mechanical and electrical.

After discussing this machine with him, I decided to buy it. It was duly delivered a few days before Christmas last year. Since that time, it has been in his workshop, and we work on it together whenever we have the time. The machine replays and records now on both tracks, and the deck functions are now working perfectly, with the exception of the mechanical tape counter (which is calibrated in minutes and tenths of a minute!)

I was concerned about the availability of spares for repair, but on inspection the recorder proved to be build like the proverbial tank, to a very high standard. (It weighs >80 kg) The heads and mechanical parts show negligible signs of wear.

The performance of a machine of this type is very good indeed. At 15 ips a frequency response exceeding 20Hz to 20kHz is typical. With Dolby SR noise reduction the signal to noise is about 95dB, just 1dB short of 16bit digital, but with an analogue sound. Who could ask for anything more?

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