

A while ago, Siamac sent me a couple of CDs containing catalogs and photos of Pioneer components which he has collected. Amongst them was a photo of a CT-F1250, with an interesting cassette in the drive. I had not seen this cassette before, and decided to do some research. I found that it was the TEAC Open Cassette (Ocasse). This rare item features a brushed aluminum shell which is a perfect match for silver Pioneer components. However, more interesting are the two tape reels, made to resemble actual reel-to-reel tapes.



The aluminum shell allowed spools of tape to be inserted and removed, and threaded to a fixed empty reel, like a reel-to-reel tape. In the above photo, the green reel was inserted into the shell from the left side, and threaded to the red take-up reel on the right. Notice the slot cut on the right side of the shell, where the tape would be threaded to the red take-up reel. One could actually purchase spools of blank tape that could be used, labeled, and stored like their full-size counterpart. It is difficult to imagine how this would have been desirable, given the ease and convenience (and price) of regular cassette tapes, but it was available. And, there were even accessories to manage your miniature reels, like this holder:



A little more research on TEAC and their tapes revealed that, back in the early to mid 1980s, TEAC made a number of these tapes with real metal reels:







All of these tapes, except the Open Cassette Tape, had fixed reels and did not require the threading of the Open Reel tape.

So, TEAC made some interesting tapes. I have no idea what the quality of these tapes might have been. I simply thought they were “cool” and possessed that “wow, I have to have one” appeal.

I began thinking – did Pioneer make any tapes similar to the TEAC tapes? I had never seen any. I searched again, which revealed a whole world out there, dedicated to cassette tapes and their memory. One site, in particular, had photos of nearly every cassette ever made by a manufacturer. All of us collect something, and this site owner has an amazing cassette tape collection. I discovered other tapes that used these “reels” were Hanshin, Ilford, Nice, Revox, Rotorchrome, and so on.

So, not only TEAC had these metal reels, but others as well. Perhaps several companies manufactured them. Perhaps TEAC manufactured and supplied them to other companies.

And, while I did not find any Pioneer tapes, I did find another tape, the Omega Studio 60 Cassette:

Now, what is nice about this tape, of course, is the OMEGA symbol on the reels. Not quite the Pioneer Omega and Tuning fork, but an OMEGA nonetheless. And, it has an interesting **sixteenth note** symbol within the Omega. And, the reels bear a *slight* resemblance to the Pioneer PR-100 and PR-80 reels:



If I could not have a brushed aluminum TEAC Open Cassette, this had to be the next best thing.

After additional searching, I found an Omega Studio cassette, which I purchased. A bit more difficult to find was the TEAC Open Cassette. Again, I was successful, and purchased that as well.

I now have what I think are two interesting, and collectable items, which serve no practical purpose nor will they ever be used for recording. All that exists is the “wow” factor.

But, the unanswered question is – “Did Pioneer make any cassette tapes, similar to the TEAC cassette tapes with metal reels?” They did offer cassette tapes as an accessory item, noted in several of their catalogs, in Normal, Chrome, and Metal formats:



## Cassette Tapes



### PIONEER CASSETTE TAPES (sold in 10 packs only)

<b>M1-60</b>	(60 min./both sides) Metal Position Tape	\$91.50 /ctn
<b>C1-90</b>	(90 min./both sides) Chrome Position Tape	\$81.00 /ctn
<b>N2-90</b>	(90 min./both sides) Normal Position Tape	\$61.50 /ctn
<b>N1-90</b>	(90 min./both sides) Normal Position Tape	\$47.50 /ctn

These Pioneer tapes are not very interesting, or remarkable. Actually, boring would be a better word. Probably nice as a collector's item, but these, compared with the TEAC tapes, are just *cassette tapes*.

It is difficult to imagine that Pioneer would not have made some tapes with metal reels, as they made a number of trinkets, including key-chains, letter openers, etc. If a company makes or provides these items to their customers, why not provide the tapes? Siamac has some unusual items in his collection. Did he have any Pioneer tapes with the miniature reels? If not, they probably did not exist.

Periodically, I go through my catalogs to look for things, or to edit any bad spots I happen to see that I might have missed previously, or to look for detail that I find interesting. I started reviewing each catalog, more than seventy at the time of this writing, looking for any photos of cassette decks that had a cassette tape in the drive, or in the photo. Lots of cassette decks, some with cassette tapes, most without, and I could find nothing like the miniature reel cassette tapes. I was about finished with the catalogs when I stumbled on this:





This is part of a photo from an April 1983 catalog featuring the Pioneer Progression IV family of components. Notice the tape on the bottom right-hand corner? More difficult to see is the tape in the CT-X9 cassette deck. Below is a close up of just the tape:





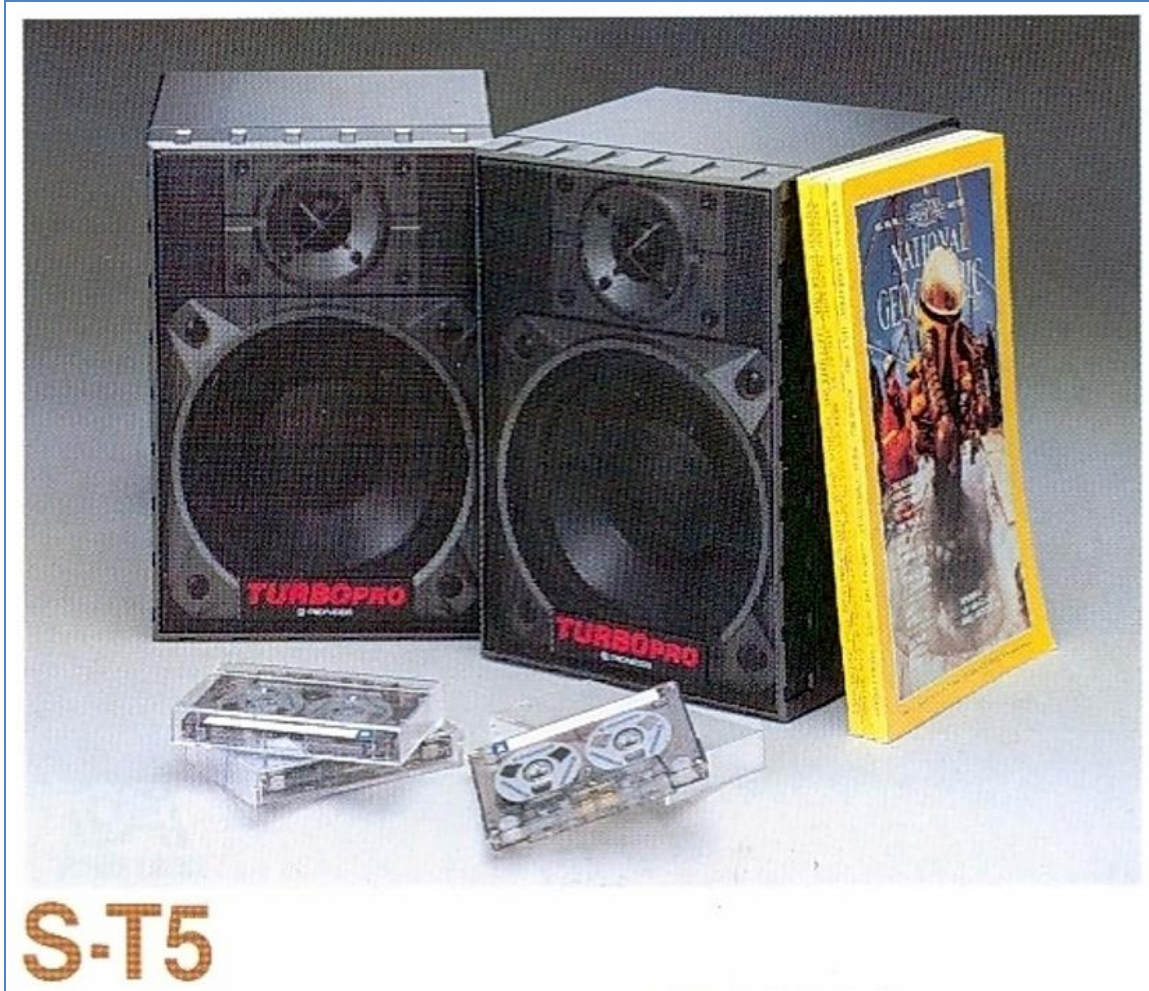
Now, this is what I had been hoping to find. Were any of these tapes ever sold, or distributed as promotional items? Surely, some must have been provided as tchotchke at some event. Pioneer cannot have made just one (or two per the photo). Someone must know the answer. I checked for other brochures and catalogs that had the CT-X9. Only one other had this component - the 1983 Private catalog (in Japanese), which had the CT-X9 as part of the Private S90 and S110 component systems. None of the photos in the Private catalog showed this tape. The Private catalog did, however, have photos of the M1a, C1a, N3a, N2a, and N1 cassette tapes.

I had been fortunate to find the Omega Studio tape, which had the  inside the  symbol. Then, I was equally fortunate to find the TEAC Open Cassette with the brushed aluminum shell. Against all reasonable odds, I searched for the Pioneer Reel-to-Reel cassette I had seen in the photo from the Progression IV series catalog. I found one:



Sworn to secrecy, I am not able to reveal my source for this gem. The miniature reels, tape, shell, and holder are all in excellent condition.

Near the end of September 2006, I had doubled my catalog collection. I was reviewing the December 1984 Hi-Fi-Lineup catalog, specifically the S-T5 speakers, and noticed a cassette tape in the photo. It was the same Pioneer miniature reel cassette tape. Previously, I only looked at cassette decks to see if a tape happened to be in the photo. Now, I needed to look at some speaker photos as well. So, I searched for other occurrences of the S-T5 only, just to determine if the tape was present in other photos, in my other catalogs. In the August 1984 Stereo Components/Composants Stéréo catalog, there was the exact same photo of the S-T5, with three of the miniature reel cassette tapes:



S-T5

Now we know that the tape existed from at least as early as April 1983 to as late as December 1984, and that there were at least three tapes made (per the S-T5 photo). No, all we really know is that the photos were published between April 1983 and December 1984. The photos could have been taken earlier. I suppose I could try to locate a copy of that National Geographic in the photo. But, that could have been just a copy that had been lying around for months before being used in the photo. When were the tapes made?

So, here is a photo of this trio of rare tapes, which are absolutely useless and serve no purpose for anything, other than bragging rights:



Now, should I consider installing the PIONEER reels in the TEAC brushed aluminum Open Cassette shell, and have the ultimate – a brushed aluminum cassette shell, with metal reels featuring the Pioneer logo? Or, should I leave these three gems as they are? Any comments and/or feedback welcome. No offers to purchase, however, as these are in the vault.

Now, with that out of the way, stay tuned for my next equally uninteresting story - the "Pioneer 45 rpm adaptor".

Cheers,  
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