

The Pioneer Black Face receivers... We have admired and coveted them. And, many of us have wondered about them. How did they come to be? Why does it seem there are no sales catalogs or brochures that depict them? Were they only available in Europe? Why are the model numbers *different* in format?

Long on questions, but short on answers.

And, I have previously taken a position that these are not "Euro Versions", asking the question "What are they Euro versions of?" While it appears that they were only available in Europe and to the US Military, all we really know is that they are black face versions of their silver face counterparts.

With all of the brochures and price lists I have collected, these receivers are **almost** non-existent. Why are there no catalogs that show these handsome receivers?

All of these receivers have some connection to Europe, and particularly West Germany (as it was then). And, the importer/distributor for West Germany was "C. Melchers & Company", located in Bremen.

A brief history of Melchers: Melchers was a traditional trading company, established in 1806. They were an importer and distributor of Pioneer components from 1962 to 1978. In 1978, Pioneer-Melchers GmbH was founded as a joint venture between Melchers and Pioneer. In the late 1980s, Pioneer bought out all shares of the partnership from Melchers. From that time, the company was named Pioneer Deutschland GmbH and is owned by Pioneer. Melchers still exists, but was no longer involved as a Pioneer importer and distributor. This explains why my calls and email to Melchers produced no real results, and why I was told that no one from back in the mid-1970s who was associated with Pioneer distribution was still with Melchers.

Why is Melchers an important piece of this puzzle? My initial theory was that all of these receivers had a common point of origin, which was Melchers. I had noticed that Melchers seemed the most aggressive in marketing. They printed several brochures on their own, and multiple price lists, as well as another item which I am saving for a future article.

The following components all have something in common:

Intr	Disc	Model	Origin
1972	1972	CS-E200S	CS-E200
1972	1972	CS-E300S	CS-E300
1975	1975	SX-434SW	
1975	1975	SX-535SW	
1975	1975	SX-636SW	
1975	1975	SX-737SW	
1975	1975	SX-838SW	
1975	1975	SX-939SW	
1975	1975	SX-5530	SX-535
1975	1975	SX-7730	SX-737
1975	1975	SX-9930	SX-939
1976	1976	SX-5560	SX-750
1976	1976	SX-5570	SX-950
1976	1976	SX-5580	SX-1050

What is common is that these models ALL show up in only one place: Melchers price lists. Well, not entirely true. The SX-5530/7730/9930 each share one additional commonality: an advertisement for the US Military. There was the odd product sheet on some of these components, but no sales catalog that I have found thus far. There may be other literature out there. One thing for certain: any sales literature on these receivers is scarce.

You will notice, in the table of models above, that the suffix "S" or "SW" appears on some models. The color "black", in German, is "Schwarzes". Many Pioneer components contain a letter or letters in the model code to designate a color, or type of wood, or covering. The "S" and "SW" for these models appear only in Melchers' price lists. For the SX-434/535/636/737/838/939, these were normally available with the walnut cases. However, through Melchers, these units were also available in black cases (SW). Also notice, in the table above, that the black face receivers appear to have had a single year of production, as opposed to several years for their silver-face counterparts. This information developed from those who have supplied serial numbers.

My theory extended to the point that I thought Melchers may have arranged with Pioneer to produce a limited "custom" run of the black face receivers. Just a theory...

With all of the purchases made at base and post exchanges in West Germany, it is very likely that some of these receivers made it to the local market and civilians. They are rare, so we can assume not many were made.

So, were the black face receivers made by Pioneer specifically for Europe and the US Military, seemingly without catalogs and brochures to promote them? Or, were they made by Pioneer as a "special production run" for Melchers?

I always like to have data to reinforce any claim or theory. Over the past several years, I have been fortunate to develop contacts with Pioneer in Japan. Finding executives who were intimately involved during the 1970s was key to finding an answer to these receivers (and other Pioneer-specific questions I had).

So, what is the real answer behind these receivers, and Melchers? From my contacts at Pioneer, these black face components were made exclusively for the US Military exchanges in West Germany, in a style (and price) that would differentiate them from their silver face counterparts. And, with West Germany being the largest US Military market, Melchers was appointed as the Pioneer agent for the US Military Post Exchange market, since they were already the Pioneer importer/distributor in West Germany.

My sources inform me that it is also possible that US Pioneer may have been a provider/distributor to Hawaii/Pacific and Norfolk base exchanges via Dallas. And, as I previously stated, some may have made it into the local channels (by less than official means).

So, there is the best information we have thus far. The black face models were made exclusively for the US Military in West Germany, and distributed via Melchers to post exchanges [in Europe].

Special thanks to all who helped provide the model number information and contributed to this discussion, and to Steve for his additional information, and to Dave for tolerating my

theories and ideas about these receivers. Also, my very personal thanks to my contacts in Japan, without whom I would not have enough information and data to solve the mystery of these receivers.

Cheers,

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