Prophet-5 Revision 1 – impressions of THE Prophet

The Sequential Prophet-5. Not Revision 2 or Revision 3, no – THE Prophet. The original edition, Revision 1. Only few of the 182 built units are still in existence. Way back in 1979 and 1980, some of the original Prophets have been traded (and cannibalized) for newer versions (Rev. 2 / Rev. 3). And some of the original Prophets were (and still are) most of the time dead. But when they work, they sound glorious …

GREATSYNTHESIZERS.com

Dominic Milano (author of the US magazine “Keyboard”) owns Ser. No. 0004. He got it new and still has it – up and running properly. The Prophet shown here works perfectly as well. It has Ser. No. 0167 – one of the last Revision 1 models.

Trademarks of the early version: power switch on the top panel, a giant freestanding Prophet-5 logo and a strange “Memory Protect” flip-switch (RECORD).

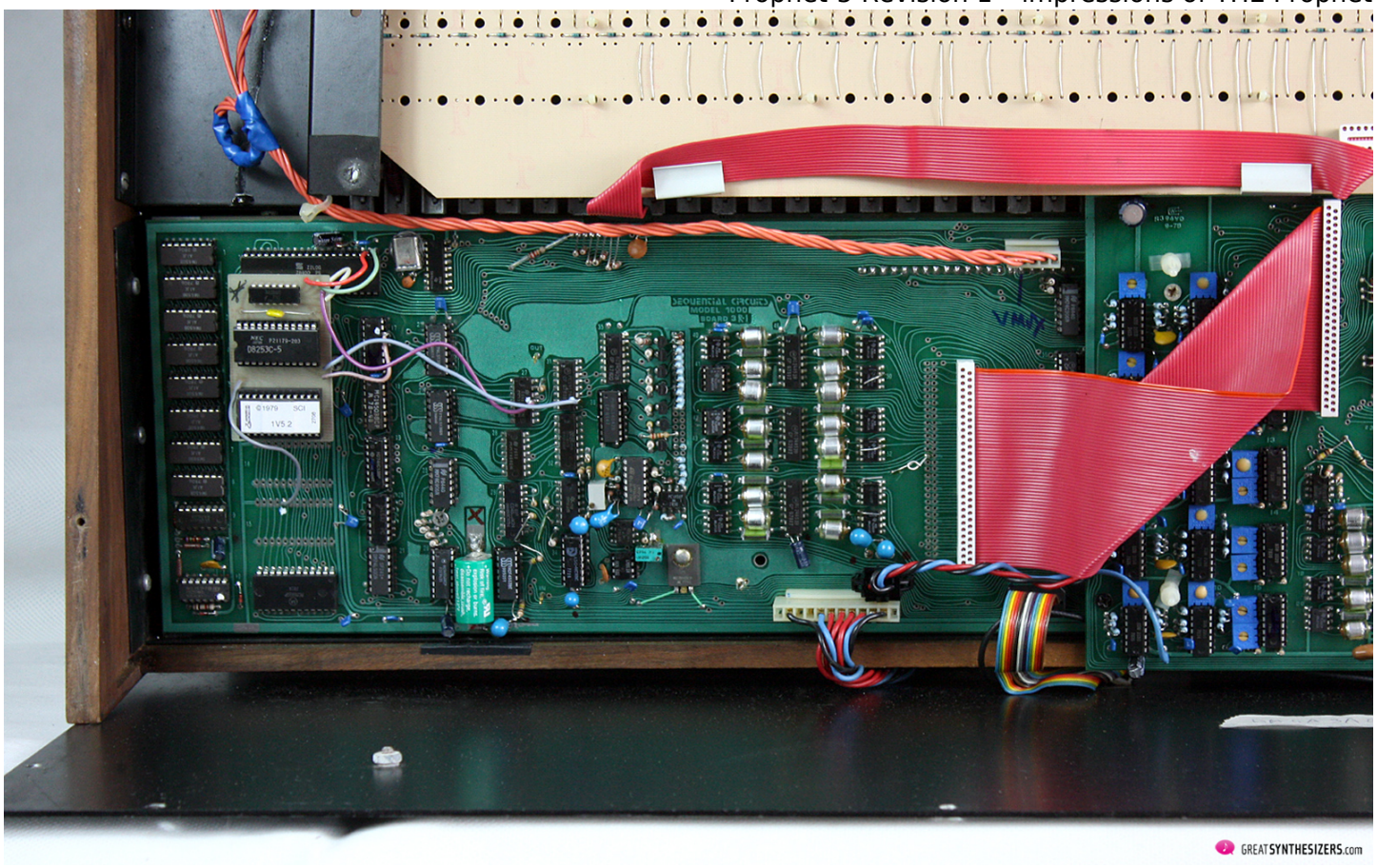
There’s no autotune-button (although the software could be retrofitted). Adjusting sounds requires

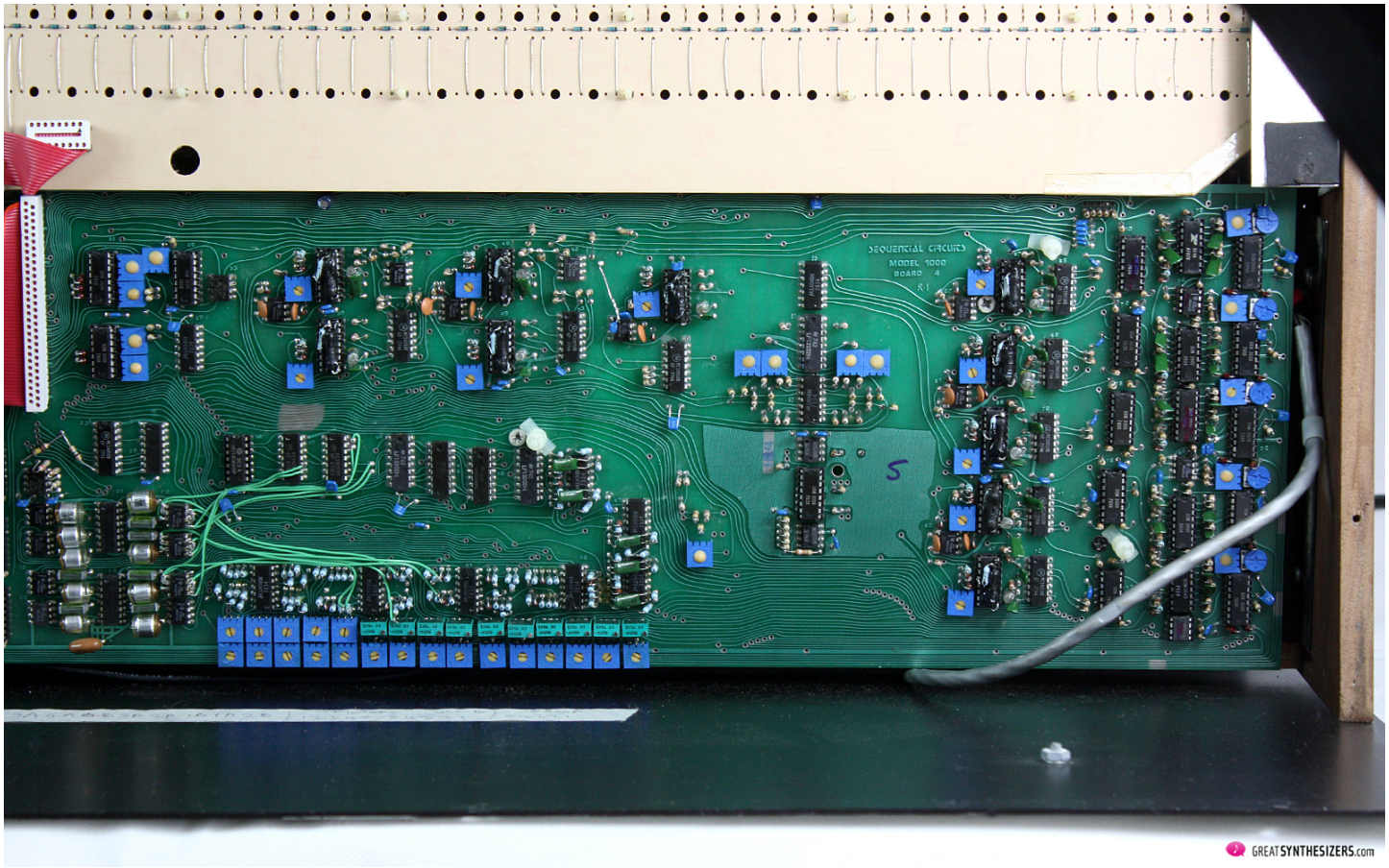
activation of two separate “Edit” buttons …

The wood – usually Koa, this is Walnut, though* – is of particular elegance and has been glued exclusively. Later, the Prophet-5 housing is made out of Walnut, with extra screws for better stability.

[* Thanks to reader *Roland* for the hint.]

Revision 1 / Revision 2 contain a lot of blue (later white) trim / tune adjustments. Particularly eye-catching is the SSM2030 VCO which its piggyback Tempco resistor. And the extra row of ribbon connector points for an optional second voice board (which in fact proved impossible due to massive heat problems).




Compared to later models, Revision 1 and Revision 2 offer a larger sound spectrum due to their SSM components. The SSM2040 filter is notable with its great variety in sound, as well as the SSM2050 ADSR generator with its tight (and also – if desired – very long!) envelope times …

Susanne Ciani: *"[…] the Prophet was incredible because it didn't haug the space; it had a transparency, translucence and a shimmering quality. You know, the Moog was a big beefy sound that a lot of the rock people loved. The Buchla was not about sound really, it was about movement of sound. The Prophet had this exquisite translucent quality and it could be on a track without masking anything else."*

(From: "The Prophet from Silicon Valley", David Abernethy, page 32)

Nevertheless, "all" Prophet-5 models are outstanding musical instruments. Revision 1 / 2 sound different and possibly richer, whereas Revision 3 is the most solid Prophet-5 version, characterized by its reliable CEM chips, better heat regulation (heat sink, vent holes) and its optimized circuit layout / tuning system.

First introduced in January 1978, production began in May 1978, being continued until early 1985.

| Prophet-5 Rev. | Date | Special features | Ser. No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Revision 1** | May 1978 | SSM Chips, power switch on top panel, digital board features second connector points for additional voice board (10-Voice option), separate Edit-Mode, no Auto-Tune function / button, lots of tuning / trim adjustments inside, 40 memories, metal surface: smooth satin black finish, wooden frame: Koa. | **0001 – 0182** |
| **Revision 2** | May 1979 | SSM Chips, power switch on rear side, separate Edit-Mode, early Auto-Tune function / button, circuits board layout optimized, lots of tuning / trim adjustments inside, 40 memories, metal surface: smooth satin black finish – changing to matt black with a slight dimpled effect, wooden frame: Koa or Walnut. | **0183 – 1300** |
| **Revision 3** | May 1980 (until end of 1984) | CEM Chips, instant Edit-Mode, Cassette-interface, A-440 reference tone, circuits board layout and auto-tune further optimized, reduced amount of tuning / trim adjustments inside, heat-sink and vent-holes on the back, metal surface: matt black with a slight dimpled effect, wooden frame: Walnut.<br>Later models have Analog / Digital interface (for optional Remote Keyboard und Sequencer), 120 memories, MIDI-retrofitting (very last units). | **1301 – 6427** |

Link Test Report:
Sequential Prophet-5 – Milestone and Musical Legend