

Buffet S1 thoughts:

Author: MartyM

Date: 2001-07-31 08:28

I own four different Buffet clarinets and am a Buffet clinician, and yes, I do have an S-1. There is so much mis-information on this board sometimes it seems people just make stuff up. About 1974 Buffet came out with the S-1 and the RC to offer three different bores and clarinet models along with the R-13.

The true difference is the speed of the taper in the bore of the left hand of each of the different models. They are all poly. The S-1 like the RC sold more elsewhere besides the U.S. And due to poor sales was dropped.

I have worked in a retail music store for twenty five years and have played some great S-1 clarinets. Mitchel Lurie played one for about 10 years.

Author: Bob Bernardo

Date: 2017-07-14 09:26

The S1 was Really Underrated. So few people got to play on these gems. They were special because they came with a reverse tapered upper joint bore, a takeoff or a continuation of what Hans Moennig started with the barrels then Buffet added this to the S1 in the 1970's. WOW! Wish they'd bring it back. Tuned well, sounded better than an R13 in general. Of course we all have our opinions. Don't jump all over me!!! The A clarinet was my favorite compared to the Bb.

Author: Bob Bernardo

Date: 2018-01-03 04:10

Facts about the S1. Yes as others said it was a pro model. It was kind of based on what Hans Moennig was doing with his reverse taper barrel so the S1 had a reverse taper at the upper joint. It also had a very sweet sound and played well in tune. Actually better than the R13 models that were now new with larger bores. I think the S1 had the smaller bore, because of the reverse taper. Hard to really say because of the taper. The upper notes played well in tune. Hans did say with the A clarinet you didn't need to use the pinky finger on the upper register with his barrels. Interesting. Sadly though, I never played one.

I was lucky to see Hans work on a few and he did use a 67mm barrel. So the horn tuned slightly sharp, just like the old 1950's and 1960's R13 horns.

If you can find one, buy it.

It's that good of a horn. It may need some adjustments, such as tuning since it is 40 plus years old, but it may be well worth it. Too bad Buffet didn't continue making them. I've been looking for one for years. They are hard to find in decent condition. But buy it for the sound quality.

Author: John Peacock

Date: 2018-01-04 14:36

The comments above assert that the S1 had a larger bore and a smaller bore, so what's the truth? I've just been restoring a 1977 S1, so here are some measurements of the top and bottom of the upper joint, compared to some other Buffets to which I have access:

S1 (1977): 14.90 14.62

RC (1979): 14.97 14.67

BC20 (1974): 15.07 14.67

R13 (1982): 14.96 14.72

R13 (1959): 14.90 14.69

So with the usual caveat that it's only one example, yes the S1 seems to be on the narrow side - although hardly any different from an early R13. And the early R13 and S1 feel quite similar to me - with a more covered sound than the overly bright tone of the 1982 R13 (although I certainly wouldn't describe either as "stuffy").

Regarding "bum notes" on the S1, there was one: the LH E4 (one octave above the very lowest note). This was very airy, although the overblown B5 was fine. This wasn't due to poor venting, and I was only able to cure it by undercutting the hole between 1st & 2nd fingers.

Author: MRSax

Date: 2018-01-03 18:50

Hi Donald, I am interested to know which note you found bum on your S1, it's quite obvious to me, as with all instruments there are goods ones and some bad ones. I have found the LH C#/G# very pure quality on my 1010 and I am having it altered this

month, the same note and the RH G/D are very stuffy on my R13 A clarinet with a very similar issue on the Bb which I have now sold. Every R13 I have blown seems to have the same problem. Both my S1 sing all the way up to altissimo top C. The later one is F 204XXX, The 'F' denoted 442 pitch for France or Europe, and they did flatten the pitch of the throat notes for some strange reason, but I have had them undercut slightly to sharpen them up, and the result is an even better instrument than my other S1.

Author: MRSax

Date: 2022-03-19 16:58

The Buffets S1 truly are hidden Gems, widely recognized by many users as one of the best clarinets Buffet's has ever made. Much bigger rounder sound than the R13.

I have a pair and I have used S1 for 40 years, I also have three spare Bb's in mint condition.

I have used them on TV, radio, Jazz gig and tours and would never part with them.

They were very popular with orchestral players when they switch from B&H 1010, similar sound but much easier to play and ideal for woodwind doublers.

The great American clarinetist Mitchell Lurie played on S1's and his grandson now uses them.

Production continued quite later in Europe because they were very popular in Switzerland where quite late s/n can be found well into the 300xxx period.

My first one was S/n 159000, my current Bb is 204000 and I have one 315000.

The latest s/n I've seen was 345000 in Switzerland

I have recently paired mine up with a Backun Fatboy barrel and the sound is enormous now. Great combination.

Author: Jack Kissinger

Date: 2001-07-31 01:06

According to the information I have picked up over the years, (mostly from an old time player who had retired and had one for sale in the paper) the S1 was not a prototype to the RC, nor was it an attempt to improve on the R13. I believe the true story is that, when Buffet introduced the Robert Caree (re)designed R13 (i.e., polycylindrical bore with undercut tone holes, etc.) around 1955, they were surprised to meet with resistance from some long-time Buffet players who preferred the pre-Caree bore design. Not wanting to alienate some good established customers, Buffet restored the older design to their product line and (since they were already now using the designation R13), they designated the instrument the S1. In effect, the S1 has the design of the R13 before Caree's radical design changes (and BTW, while it tends to add to the confusion, it is technically not incorrect (the double negative is a subtle editorial comment ;^)) to refer to (certain) Buffet professional clarinets prior to the polycylindrical model as R13's. Buffet officially adopted this designation first when it introduced the polycylindrical models. However, prior to that (and as early as the 1930's according to a message in the Klarinet archives from someone who had an old catalog), Buffet's importer (Carl Fischer) designated the 17-key, 6-ring professional model as -- you guessed it -- the R13. Eventually (as I recall, the early 80's) demand for the S1 shriveled up (maybe by then all the older players who didn't like the R13 had retired or died) and Buffet dropped it.

Thus, the S1 was an alternate professional model to the R13 and later RC. A "brevete" bore would simply be a "patent" bore and probably merely referred to Buffet's "original" patent bore design. My recollection is that the S1 had a cylindrical bore slightly larger than the R13 (probably not enough to be considered a "big bore" clarinet). As a result, it undoubtedly had a different set of tuning peculiarities. Since the bore of the R13 A is smaller than the bore of the R13 Bb (to reduce the finger stretch), the A's tend to be more resistant. The S1 A probably has a larger bore than the R13 A making it easier to blow. This may be why the person mentioned above preferred it.

I seriously doubt that Buffet would have "trashed" the R13 model when they introduced the S1. After all, the R13 was their flagship and they were hardly looking to replace it at the time. It would be like trashing the current model R13 when they introduced the "Vintage" model.

There is probably some information on this model in the Klarinet archives but I can't find it quickly. For some reason searching on "Buffet S1" (without the quotes) yields thousands of hits.

Best regards,

jnk