

The Pianocorder Tape Deck Spring Fix

As Marantz Pianocorder systems age, it is common for the tape deck to develop mechanical problems. Among the most common of these is the symptom of the PLAY button not staying depressed, resulting in the playback head not fully engaging the tape. Tapes will play intermittently or not at all at this point.

The problem is easy to fix. First, unplug the Pianocorder and wait 60 seconds. Then remove the cassette deck from its swing-out tray, remove the four screws on the bottom, and remove the top cover.

With the deck opened up, try pressing PLAY and you'll notice a spring behind the playback head that serves to push the entire head assembly gently against the tape. On the left side, the spring contacts a metal part within the actuator mechanism. That one will last forever. But on the right side, the spring originally presses against a plastic post on the moving head assembly. After a while, that post breaks off and then the spring then floats without making good contact with the head assembly. When PLAY is depressed, the head assembly does not move forward enough to latch in place and engage the tape and capstan.

To fix this problem, disassemble the head assembly enough to remove the spring (hint: take a digital photo first to guide you when you have to put it back together!). Once you have the spring out, note which side is the left side and which is the right side. Unwind ONE revolution of the coil to extend the right side by another few millimeters. Using needle nose pliers, shape the spring as shown below:

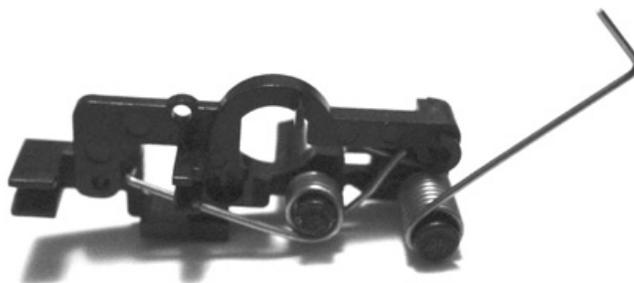
Before:



After:



Then reassemble the head assembly such that the left side of the spring is placed in its usual spot but the right side of the spring contacts the vertical post to the right of the playback head, at the upper-right corner of the assembly, as shown here:



With all pieces back in place, test the operation of the PLAY key and modify the spring if necessary. Once things are working OK, put the tape deck back together and enjoy your Pianocorder for a few more decades!