

THE *REVELL MATCHBOX* STORY



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PREFACE

It's now ten years since Revell had to stop the production of Matchbox kits. This report is written for all collectors and friends of Matchbox model kits. Especially in the Internet there are many incorrect references about this period of Matchbox model kits. So I hope this short story would bring more clearness about the ten years of producing Revell Matchbox kits.

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CHAPTER ONE

How it came to Revell Matchbox Kits ...

In the year 1990 several model producers were asked by Mattel about their interest in producing Matchbox kits under license of Revell International. Revell made the deal and got the license to produce Matchbox kits for 10 years. The period for the license lasted from August 1990 to August 2000. The license includes the producing kits under the Matchbox label for the whole world, except China.

There are several reasons why Revell should not deliver to China, but this is another story. Only for the collectors of Matchbox kits, the producing of the kits was in Shanghai by Shanghai Global Plastic Toy Company, Shanghai Chenjiazhai Road 20, Postal Code 200070.

The reasons why Revell wanted the Matchbox deal are several. One reason was to get the tools of other kits for less money. Another reason is founded in the structure of Revell's marketing strategy. Revell does not sell kits through wholesale dealers. In the past Revell was several times spoken to about selling through wholesale dealers, but they always denied doing that. Matchbox kits were exclusively sold through wholesale dealers. So Revell got with the Matchbox deal a chance, to widen their distribution channels and get a bigger position in the plastic model kit market all over the world.

Revell received from Mattel only one tool for each Matchbox kit, except the Hawker Hunter. The tools of this kit were incomplete. So Revell had no chance to bring out the Hunter based on the Matchbox tools. Mattel delivered Revell also a lot of kits of the Matchbox International era as producing examples.

CHAPTER TWO

Everything about the kit design

Until 1992 Revell used the kit designs from Matchbox International. This means, Revell took the latest design of each kit. The Revell designs were identical with the boxes design they got from Mattel, with exception of the number of each kit.

The numbers had to be changed, because of the handling in the Revell's computer data systems. To handle PK-Numbers in Revell's running data systems at that time was nearly impossible, so Revell had to introduce a new code.

Revell numbers have 4 digits. So Matchbox kits got 5 digits. Every PK-Number started with 40. For example Revell renamed a kit from Matchbox International with the Number PK-101 into 40 101.

Also important to know is, that with the beginning of the recycling system Grüner Punkt 1989 in Germany all boxes had to be market with this green point. So all boxes, if they were not already marked, had to be market additional with this green point.

Revell wanted a change of the box design more in the way of Revell boxes without losing the Matchbox identity. It was necessary because of Revell could not transfer the Matchbox International design for new kits! So Revell gave an order to a German design office for some examples of box design. Revell paid very much money, but the results were not in fact what Revell wanted.

The first examples looked in no way of a Matchbox or a Revell kit. The box was overall blue or pink and on the left side was written on a black stripe the name Matchbox. So Revell finally found the design we today call the Black box design. The boxes were overall black with the classical rainbow stripe from the Matchbox international era. The change into the black box design started step by step in the middle of the year 1992.

With the beginning of a change in box design always a change of the kit was combined. Mostly the decals were changed. So then the kit gets automatically a new Matchbox number!

The pictures of the boxes were changed with the beginning of the black box design. The following persons worked for Revell in this case:

Jaroslav Velc (Airplanes)

Eckbert Friedl (Airplanes)

Thijs Postma (Airplanes)

Holger Koppelman (Marine)

Enzo Mario (Military)

Manuel De Naharro (Cars)

The colour of the sprues inside the boxes with the Matchbox international design were mostly the same like before. This changed with the beginning of the "black box" design.

The reasons for Revell's changes were very often the costs. The costs for different colour sprues were higher than only for one.

In the seventies there were no airbrush or really quite good colours for model kits. This was maybe one reason for Lesney to bring out kits with different colours. Another reason was the intend audience of the kits, Multi colour kits being more suitable for children. But in the middle of the nineties the concept of Multi colour kits was regarded out of date.

The sprues inside the black boxes were all sealed like in the classical Revell kit ones.

The layout of the building instructions of the Matchbox kits was changed with the producing of the black box design. The building instructions look more like those of a classical Revell kit. The production followed in Germany by several contractors.

For the kits in the black boxes Revell (Matchbox) needed new decals. For the research of decals Revell worked together with a known person in case of Matchbox model kits: Richard L. Ward. In former times Richard L. Ward worked also for Lesney.

With the beginning of the year 1993 Richard L. Ward started his work for Revell until they had to stop the production in 2000.

The decals of the Revell time were more professional as in the Lesney or Matchbox International era. They were accurately printed and more detailed.

The production of the decals follows by several contractors in Germany until the year 1993. From 1993 until 1997 the production of the decals was transferred to Italy step by step, because of the better print quality. Two contractors worked for Revell during this time: Cartograf and Zanchetti.

With the beginning of the year 1998 the production of the decals was completely transferred to Italy.

CHAPTER THREE

Production and marketing of the kits

The production of Revell Matchbox kits started as soon as possible after the deal. Until Revell changed the kit number on the boxes, the kit boxes were sold with PK-Number and a sticker on it with the production address of Revell. Internally Revell marked the boxes with PK number all the new Revell Matchbox number!

The production of Revell Matchbox kits started in 1990 and was terminated in 1993 in Bünde/Westfahlen, Germany. With the beginning of the year 1993 the production of the sprues moved to Poland. The sprues were transported with Container or by trailer to Bünde and combined with the other components of a Matchbox Revell kit.

Matchbox Revell kits which were produced in other countries are not from Revell or Matchbox tools. The kits from other companies had to refresh the Matchbox table, like the Otaki ones during the Matchbox International era in 1990.

Revell started also some trials to produce sprues of Matchbox kits in Russia by ICM. But ICM went bankrupt and all Revell owned tools went into the mass of insolvency. The company Alanger bought the tools and didn't want to give them back to Revell, because they had paid for it. So some Matchbox kits were never released because of this mistake.

During the decade of Revell Matchbox no new released kits joined the line. It's difficult to foresee what would have happened, if Mattel in 1999 had agreed to lengthen the Matchbox license for another ten years. Maybe Revell would have released their own new Matchbox model kits!

Product manager at Revell for Matchbox model kits was Claudia Zernhoff. Her work was to organize and control the work with the subcontractors.

About the production of the building instructions and decals there is enough written in chapter two, so I will report more details of the accessories of Revell Matchbox kits. During this decade of Revell Matchbox kits Revell had also colours and glues produced under the Matchbox brand.

The colour palette of Matchbox was the same as the classical Revell one. They had the same numbers, but the Revell Matchbox design.

In the case of the glue it was the same as with the colour pallet. It was the same content as Revell, but using another design and other names. For example the glue in the tube had the Matchbox name Fix, in the Revell line the name was "Contacta".

At the end of the nineties they also released some kit paks of Revell Matchbox kits. The kit pak got one kit of the pink line, two colours, one tube of glue and one brush for the colours.

The kit paks were really successful. So in the last two years Revell had to export the kit paks by Binney & Smith with Revell colours and glue on the British market.

Especially the British market was, because of the history of Matchbox, an important market for Revell. Revell sold a lot of kits in this market. Now nearly ten years after the Matchbox kit license stopped and still kits can be bought in some British shops.

For the selling of the kits in Europe Revell worked together with 2-3 wholesale dealers. For the oversea market these dealers preferred in-foil sealed boxes. Revell was glad to change the production to foil sealed kits, to save the costs for calandering (a system to gloss boxes because of weathering). But the German dual system Grüner Punkt wants more money for in foil sealed boxes. So Revell returned to the old system with sticker sealed boxes. Revell said, that all boxes of one kit which ran in one production batch were sealed within foil. In the next run they maybe could be sealed by sticker! But after all these years we can't say which kits were sealed or not. At the beginning of the nineties this depended on the wholesale dealers for the oversees market.

In the period of Revell Matchbox there were released some catalogues and prospects of the model kits. The first catalogue released with the appearance of the "Black box" kits in 1992. The last catalogue was released in 1998. Mattel then decided not to lengthen the Matchbox license for model kits and all remaining kits had to be sold until August 2000.

AFTERMATH

In 1999 Revell stopped the production and sold step by step all Matchbox model kits until August 2000. After these ten years Revell had the possibility, to hold all the Matchbox tools. From time to time Revell releases old known Matchbox kits under the Revell label.

In the year 2001 Revell released under its own label the "Flower Class Corvette" in the scale 1/72, an old Matchbox kit (PK-901). The demand for this release was so big that Revell had no chance to rework their own box design.

With the success of the "Flower Class Corvette" Revell's engineers thought about to bring out the enemy of this ship in the same scale: the German submarine "U-Boot VII" ! From the thoughts of the German submarine it leads automatically to the US Gato Class. Both submarines were released under very big success by Revell.

Maybe the time for Matchbox model kits is over, but until now some of them are still trendsetters ...

FOR THE COLLECTORS

During the 10 years of Revell Matchbox model kits we have to classify the different box designs.

Until now there are the following production box variants and designs known:

Variant 1 - The first design (*Oversees market*)

The Box looks like a one from Matchbox International. A Revell sticker is put on the box. The Year on the box is the same like the copyright of Matchbox International. The box is sealed with foil.

Variant 2 - The first design (*European Market*)

The Box looks like a one from Matchbox International. A Revell sticker and one sticker of the system "Grüner Punkt" are put on the box. The Year on the box is the same like the copyright of Matchbox International. The kit is sealed with two stickers.

Variant 3 - The second design (*Oversees market*)

The Box looks like a one from Matchbox International. The Name of the distributor Revell was printed on the backside of the box. The Year on the box is the same like the copyright of Matchbox International. The box is sealed with foil.

Variant 4 - The second design (*European Market*)

The Box looks like a one from Matchbox International. The Name of the distributor Revell was printed on the backside of the box and one sticker of the system "Grüner Punkt" is put on the box. The Year on the box is the same like the copyright of Matchbox International. The kit is sealed with two stickers.

Variant 5 - The third design (*Oversees market*)

The Box looks also like a one from Matchbox International. The number of the kit was changed into a five-digit number (40xxx). The Name of the distributor Revell was printed on the backside of the box. The Year on the box is the same like the copyright of Matchbox International. The box is sealed with foil.

Variant 6 - The third design (*European Market*)

The same like variant five, except the marking of "Grüner Punkt" is put with a sticker on the box. The kit is sealed with two stickers.

Variant 7 - The fourth design (*Oversees & European Market*)

The same like variant five, except the marking of “Grüner Punkt” is printed on the box! The box is sealed with foil.

Variant 8 - The fourth design (*European Market*)

The same like variant five, except the marking of “Grüner Punkt” is printed on the box! The kit is sealed with two stickers.

Variant 9 - The Black box design (*Oversees market*)

First released in 1992. The box is overall black with the small rainbow stripe from the Matchbox International era. The name of the distributor and the year of manufacturing are on the side of the box. The kit has a five-digit number (40xxx). Box is still sealed with foil. The design was used only for new releases of kits. Mostly changing of decals.

Variant 10 - The Black box design (*Oversees & European Market*)

Same like design nine, except the marking of “Grüner Punkt” is printed on the box. Box is still sealed with foil.

Variant 11 - The Black box design (*European Market*)

Same like design nine, except the marking of “Grüner Punkt” is printed on the box. The kit is sealed with two stickers.

Also important to know is that from 1990 until 2000 Revell used two different variants of stickers for the kits:

- The first variant is two round stickers on the side of the box.
- The second is nearly the same as variant one. The kit is sealed with two round stickers, but on the stickers is written in black: “Originalverschluss – Revell”.

In 1998 Revell released some **Kit Paks** on the market. There do exist two variants of Kit Paks. The difference of these two variants is written in Chapter Three. One Kit Pack is completely Matchbox.

The other Kit Pak is for the British market. The kit is Matchbox and the assessors are from the Revell label. On the backside is written the distributor for the British market: Binney & Smith.