

The 45rpm Phono Gazette

All the news that fits, we print



THE WORK BENCH

1998*****1998

HAPPY

NEW

YEAR!



I call this my **player for all seasons**. By changing the removable cling type decals designed for window decorating, I can change the motif easily. This was taken at our office holiday party in December.



Idler Wheels!

There was a time when you could get a replacement wheel for 80 cents. Now it is the most frustrating part of rebuilding these machines. Here are some of the tricks of the trade when attempting to save the idler wheel you find inside any of the RCA 45 players. If the wheel has no flat spots, you can bring it back by lightly sanding the rubber with emery cloth (300 or 400) and then cleaning it with alcohol. An increase in spring tension may also be necessary if the wheel is not as soft as it once was.

If there is a noticeable flat spot on the wheel, you may be able to remove most or all of it by sanding the wheel. I do this by spinning the wheel on a variable speed drill. My success rate is about 50% with this technique because if you take too much rubber off, then the speed of the record changer will be too slow.

A novel way of softening the wheel is to soak it in brake fluid for an hour or so. Ray Tyner uses this technique with a twist. He puts the brake fluid and wheel in an ultrasonic cleaner for dentures and runs it for a half hour. When you remove the wheel from the brake fluid you must clean it thoroughly with denatured alcohol. There is no question that this softens the wheel. What is open for debate is whether it stays soft after a few months.

Once the wheel is reconditioned, some wheels will still cause "flutter". Some people are more sensitive to this than others. I am very sensitive to it. The best way to test for flutter is to play a record containing piano music. Keep in mind that a wheel that has objectionable flutter when playing one or two records, will sound fine with a

stack of 12 or more records because of the flywheel effect.

One last method that helps provide traction to the wheel is the use of rosin. This is usually marketed as "Phono no slip" compound and is available in any good electronics parts store. It works very well when initially applied but 6 months down the line it may not. Since I do a fair amount of repair, I try to avoid using anything that is only a temporary fix. Another product that gives similar results is "Rubber Revitalizer".

When you can't bring back the existing wheel to useful condition, you can have it resurfaced partially by West Tech Services in Sebring, FL or completely resurfaced by Premium Parts in Whitewater, Wisconsin. These services range in price from \$8 to \$30 plus a substantial shipping charge. The quality of the work is not always acceptable requiring sending the wheels back for a second go round.

If only we could get a company to make a limited run of these wheels at a reasonable price. Well I can dream can't I?



In 1949 Motorola used RCA's rp-168 record changer. Courtesy of **Bob Havalack Collection**. See page 3 for Bob's profile.

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RCA Victor Car Phono model AP-1

By Doug. Houston

The idea of offering a record playing attachment for use in a passenger car got its start in 1956. Chrysler Corporation introduced a 16 2/3 RPM phonograph unit, suitable for resisting road shock and jounces, while playing a record. The records used on this "Highway Hi-Fi" record player were special in that the speed was unconventional, and the center hole was similar to the 1 1/2 inch diameter of the 45 RPM discs.

Here was a nice novelty to have in your new car. Play the music you want instead of whatever might be on the air. This handsomely designed box mounted beneath the dash, and played through the radio. Chrysler's sets that year, and for a couple succeeding years were equipped with a connector for the Highway Hi-Fi. You removed a jumper link from the receptacle on the radio, plugged in the phonograph, and away you went.

It was a good idea, to be sure, but the menu of records was limited, and the discs were more expensive than those you bought for your home record player...certainly a 45 RPM player of some sort. The 45 RPM system was already the system of the day by 1956. By about 1958 or 1959, any enthusiasm for the MoPar phonograph that there had been had pretty much fizzled out. The unique 16 2/3 RPM platters attracted few buyers. They were not sold in many record shops. Now, it was 1960, and another car mounted phonograph appeared. Offered by Chrysler, with receptacles on its radios, was the 45 RPM underdash record changer, shown here. RCA Victor made the units, and they were sold by Chrysler. This innovative player featured an upside-down changer, with the pickup playing the underside of the bottom record. When the changer tripped, the pickup arm swung aside, and the bottom record dropped to the bottom of the player case. The next record played. Changer trip was by means of contacts which tripped a solenoid, setting the changer into cycle.



model AP-1 car unit



unit upside down with cover removed

This unit played directly into the radio's audio amplifier. The pickup cartridge was an Electro-Voice "Power Point" stylus. Understandably, the changer was mounted with soft, resilient rubber mounts, for shock isolation. Additionally, the stylus pressure was a bit excessive to further protect tracking. After only a few plays, a record showed its use on this player! The motor had permanent magnet fields. If the player were to be connected with positive ground, the motor would run in reverse. The two slide switch controls on this unit are: (spring return) Start-reject. This switch is moved to the left position to start the player. For reject, the switch slides to the right to trip the changer. Spring loading returns it to center. The right hand switch turns on the 12 Volt supply to the player, and also breaks into the radio's audio amplifier.

At the time this player became available, I was a Chrysler employee. Parts could be ordered from the MoPar warehouse, in the town of Centerline, Michigan, just a couple of miles south of the facility where I was working. The list price of the player was \$39.95. I received a 25% employee discount. I picked it up at the MoPar warehouse. Oddly, no mounting hardware was supplied with the player, so I had to

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fabricate some mounting brackets for my car, a '56 Cadillac Convertible. Also, modifications to the radio were necessary to connect the player. With all of the necessary preliminaries, the player was in the car and playing. The radio in that car has excellent audio: Push-pull 12V6's into a 6"X9" oval speaker in the dash. On more than one occasion, going to work in areas where there were wide open spaces, I could crank up the gain on the radio, top down, of course, and be like a sound truck passing through! Those spaces are still there, but not wide open any more!

When the '56 was sold, the player was not sold with it. From about 1966, this player has been tucked away, awaiting use once again. My collection of cars consists chiefly of models with 6 Volt systems, and where such a record player would be inappropriate. Two of them however, have 12 Volt systems: a 1970 Cadillac Convertible, and '56 Cadillac Convertible number two. . Plans are to install the player in the current '56 as soon as it's back in shape. I plan to re-live the fun of this player once again as 37 years ago!

Unfortunately, this player didn't make the hit that it should have. It appears that it was a one year only item with Chrysler. But almost immediately, the same player re-appeared in the accessory shops, this time completely Chromium plated, with the Brand name: ARC. The ARC players had a battery polarity switch, and a little oscillator built in, to translate the player's output to 800 Kilocycles on the AM band. This did really facilitate installation. The ARC units stayed around for several years.

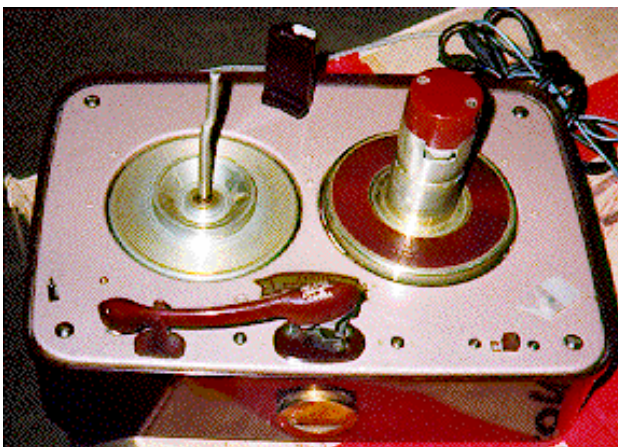
As we know, record players gave way to tape players in the forms of 8 track, which died a quick death, and now, cassettes. Today, the car collectors are in quest of the 45 RPM record players, and the Chrysler product owners are looking for the Highway Hi-Fi units. The players turn up occasionally, but the records????

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Bob decided to take some of his phonos out of their boxes for picture taking and this was the unbelievable result



Bob's mint condition Zenith Twin Seven

PROFILE

Bob Havalack from Rochester, New York
Rochester, NY 14608

In 1964 a friend of Bob's was teaching him to play the guitar. At some point the friend let Bob use a pink and white 7EY1 phono to help him practice. He still has that original machine.

In 1982 Bob's uncle was cleaning out his house and gave him a 45J2 attachment. A week later Bob found his first "Slide-O-Matic" at a garage sale. He was able to find phonos under every rock and brick. Everyone had one and was looking to get rid of it. Things are much different now. Bob wonders if there are any left at all in Rochester. "I think I own everyone up here" Bob said during our visit.

Bob approached RCA in 1982 to uncover any ads and information regarding these machines. At first he was told "Your crazy collecting those things", but he finally found a secretary that was willing to gather as much information as possible. Because of this, Bob has a nice collection of RCA ads and service data.

Bob enjoys rebuilding the machines and has repaired or sold approximately 125 of them to people across the country since 1986. Being a perfectionist, he tries to keep as many of the original parts. For instance, if a unit contains a motor which is lethargic, Bob will try his best to revitalize it with lubrication or cleaning, but if the speed isn't just right after these measures are taken, he puts that phono aside and rebuilds the next one.

Some of Bob's favorite phonos are;
Roy Rogers Model
Working Demonstrator
Blonde 7HF45 wooden hifi model
Zenith Twin Seven

While in Rochester, I got to hear the Demonstrator and was amazed at how good it sounded. The idler wheel needed replacing, but the fidelity was impressive. Bob indicated that RCA purposely did not equalize the LP changer properly so that the 45 changer would sound better than the LP changer.

Because room is at a premium in Bob's apartment, he uses the available attic to its fullest advantage. Neatly stacked boxes with the contents methodically labeled form a straight line along two walls of the attic. The room is high enough to stand in and has a wooden floor. Bob estimates he has less than 100 left!

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