

The 45rpm Phono Gazette

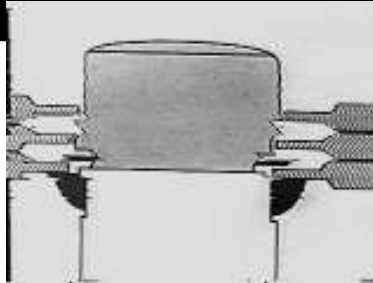
Forty-Five at Fifty (continued)

Sarnoff said that he would think about it and left. Once back at RCA, Sarnoff lambasted his engineers, asking how one man (Peter Goldmark) could develop such an incredible record in less than a year with assistance from just a handful of colleagues. RCA had hundreds of engineers in a "state of the art" laboratory working on record improvements since the early thirties. Sarnoff declined Paley's offer and ordered the 45 RPM system to be introduced as soon as possible.

Late in 1948, there were rumors that RCA would be announcing their new system almost momentarily. "Teaser" information told that the records would be small, and that a changer would be part of the new system. On January 10, the announcement came. Hardware was to be in the stores by the beginning of April.

Slyly, Columbia introduced a single play 7 inch 33 1/3 RPM disc on January 9, in an attempt to offset RCA's announcement. The 7 inch "LP" was a flop however, as there were no automatic changers to play the discs.

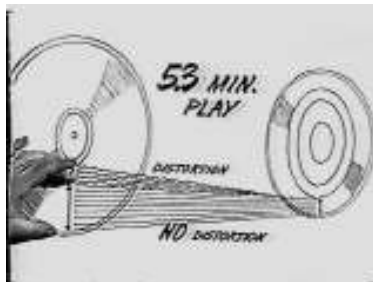
The 45 RPM system introduced a special changer and records "Made for each other". It would offer microgroove recording, with all selections recorded on the 7 inch diameter vinyl discs. The changer had a very rapid change cycle, which could match (or closely approach) the transition from track to track on the Columbia platters. RCA's original changer changed the record in one revolution of the turntable. The spindle hole was 1 1/2 inches in diameter, and the changer indexing operated on this part of the record. The large spindle hole also made possible the handling of a record with no need to touch the playing surface. It was always difficult to handle a 10 or 12 inch disc without getting fingerprints on the playing surfaces. The mechanics of the disc provided that playing surfaces would never contact each other, because the label area was designed thicker than



The New RCA Victor Spindle with all the mechanics inside. Notice how the thickness of the label keeps the records from touching

the playing surfaces, protecting them from scratches.

While 45 RPM permitted a longer playing time than a 78 RPM disc, RCA's claim was that the faster (or maybe less slow?) groove speed would aid fidelity, and truly did so. The other half of the RCA promotion was that the recording was all confined to the outer area of the disc, and this became known as the "Quality zone".



The "Quality Zone" from "Your Surest Selling Job" Video.

These were the foundations of the new record system. It was certainly an improvement over previous recording techniques in almost every way. While you could have a full album set on 45 RPM, the small discs allowed the customer to purchase a single record for slightly more than a 78, without having to buy an assemblage of selections that he didn't want, or care to pay for. RCA pointed out in their promotions that storage space was greatly reduced over the 78 RPM records and album sets, along with an appreciable reduction in weight.

provided in different color codes, which would denote what kind of music was carried on the recording. The discs were pressed in transparent vinyl, tinted with the color. The colors were:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Black: | Popular |
| Green: | Country & Western |
| Yellow: | Children's |
| Light Blue: | Pop Classics |
| Cerise: | Blues & Rhythm |
| Deep blue: | International |
| Red: | Classical |

It was easy to speculate that as time progressed, the colors would disappear, partially or completely. Many, such as myself, made a point of securing at least one disc of each color in our collection. Within two years, all colors except red disappeared! The labels remained "color coded" (not very different than all of Victor's previous years!).

Album sets were packaged in neat little boxes, which made handling easy when removing and stacking on a changer. Sets with two discs were supplied in an envelope carrying the discs.

Initially, for the buyer of this new system, a player attachment was offered for \$24.95, along with a self-contained unit with amplifier and speaker for \$49.95. Several radio-phonograph combinations (some with television) appeared in the RCA line with 45 RPM changers, and a separate 78-only RPM changer....! It was not difficult to deduce that RCA was not supporting the Columbia system!

While the 45 RPM system was well received by the public, it failed to get off the ground quickly, and remedial measures had to be taken in mid-1949. A huge advertising blitz was initiated in September of the year covering hundreds of newspapers and magazines. The player attachment was reduced to \$12.95, with volume control and pickup rest eliminated. The self-contained unit was also reduced in (continued on page 4)

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THE WORK BENCH

RP-168 Record Changer Disassembly

For those who don't know, the first generation of 45 rpm record changers was the rp-168. It is easily identifiable by its gold metal tonearm and most have a push button on the front of the cabinet. One of the difficulties associated with this record changer, is the need to remove the tonearm in order to take the unit apart. The best way to remove the arm is to loosen the clamp mechanism underneath the chassis by loosening the quarter inch drive bolt, lesson the clamp's grip by inserting a thin blade screwdriver in the slot of the clamp and twisting. Now remove the cartridge wires from the muting switch and slide the clamp out from the wires. The tonearm can now be removed by pulling straight up from the back end of the tonearm until the cartridge wires have come out along with the tonearm.

There is no need to remove the tonearm from its rear pivot points. Anyone who has done this knows what a pain it is to reassemble the arm on the pivots. In order to remove the turntable, the star wheel must be removed. If the holding screws are the large slot type which stick out from the star wheel, you can easily remove them. However, if the recessed 'Philips' type screws were used, it is easy to strip them. You must use a screwdriver that fits snugly into the screw head. Once the screws are loosened, the star wheel may be frozen to the shaft. Don't force it! It will break easily. Use liquid wrench to free it up. The safest way to remove a stubborn wheel is by using a small gear puller. Once the star wheel is removed and the two 'c' clips are removed, you can pull the turntable up and out. You now have access to all the parts and assemblies.

Next issue we will go through the cleaning, adjusting and re- assembly sequence.



This young lady and her Siamese cats were thrilled with their new RCA Victor Phonograph! They had no way of knowing at the time that this was the rare model 6EY3C in two tone blue. It is the only 6EY3 with the front part of the case lighter in color.

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**Forty-Five at Fifty
(continued)**

price. The public began to buy. More and more 45 records appeared in homes, and the system turned out to be extremely popular in the college dorms, and to such an extent that 78 RPM discs were virtually absent in the students' quarters.

Late in 1949, other companies began to offer the new records, Capitol being the first. Other labels on 45 RPM sprang up rapidly, and the 45 system had full coverage. Columbia followed quickly with 45 RPM discs, and that was pretty much...that! And of course, RCA announced their 33 1/3 RPM Microgroove records, and the 33 1/3 speed finally appeared in RCA Victrola players and combinations.

The Juke box manufacturers were quick to design new changers for the 45 RPM system. Less cabinet space was needed for a grouping of records. The lower stylus pressure and the quiet vinyl surface made the sound quality of coin operated machines far better than ever before, and for many more plays than were ever before possible.

It was fifty years ago this year that this chapter in history began. For those of us who saw it happen, it all happened so fast. The compact disc has now replaced the LP vinyl records, as well as the 45 RPM. In recent years, companies attempted to discontinue production of the 45 RPM records, but were met with a strong protest from the Juke box operators. Their equipment would be trashed! With that, 45 RPM record production was resumed, for how long, it is not known.

Even the 33 1/3 RPM LP vinyl records are being manufactured again. They are available in stereophile catalogues for about \$33.00, and are selling quite well!

When the 45 RPM system was first released, RCA produced a 20 minute film for dealer viewing, showing how to sell the new system. It is a bit amusing in this day of highly sophisticated advertising, but a very enjoyable look at history. There are a limited number of videos of this film. To inquire about availability, send e-mail to pvourtsis@ems.att.com, or call 1-888-225-5048.

Want List

Charles G. ...
1817-732-4333
1812 Calhoun Ave
East North, ...
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Mark ...
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