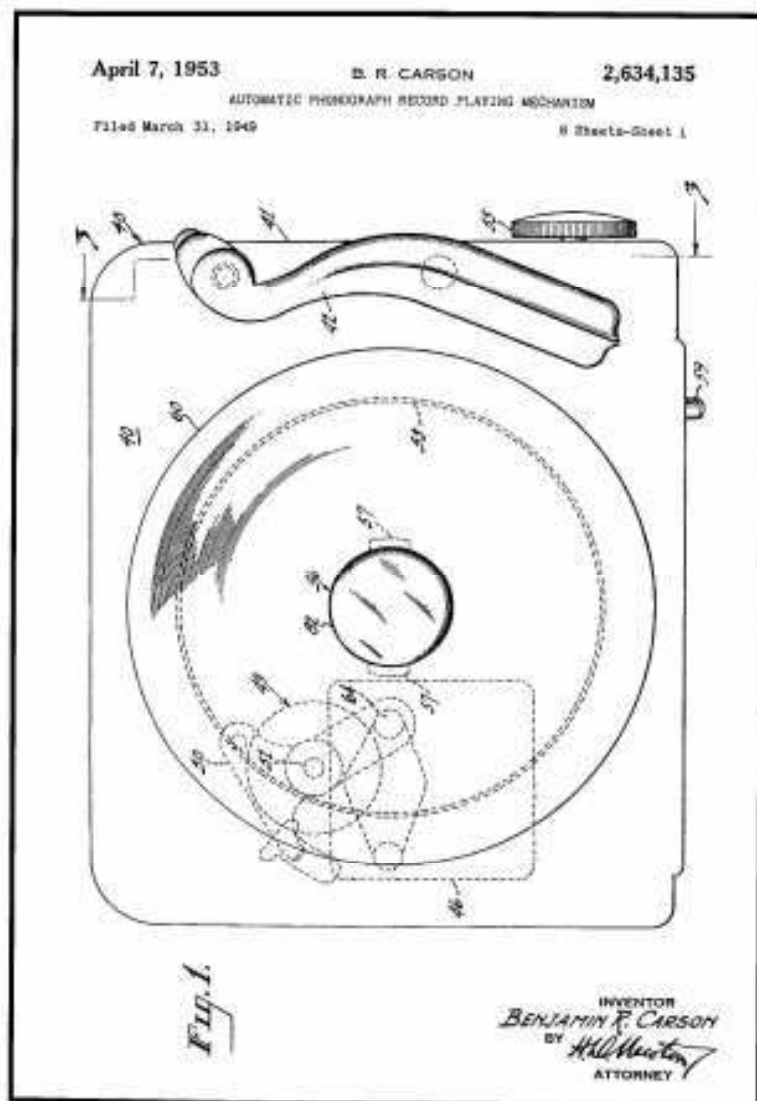


# The 45rpm Phono Gazette

## Part II Design and introduction of the 45 rpm system of recorded music



Top view of 45 rpm record changer in patent application. Notice the tonearm which was definitely early forties style. The tonearm was updated before production started in late 1948. Patent was not filed until March 31, 1949 because of secret project status (project x). Picture courtesy of Camden County Historical Society.

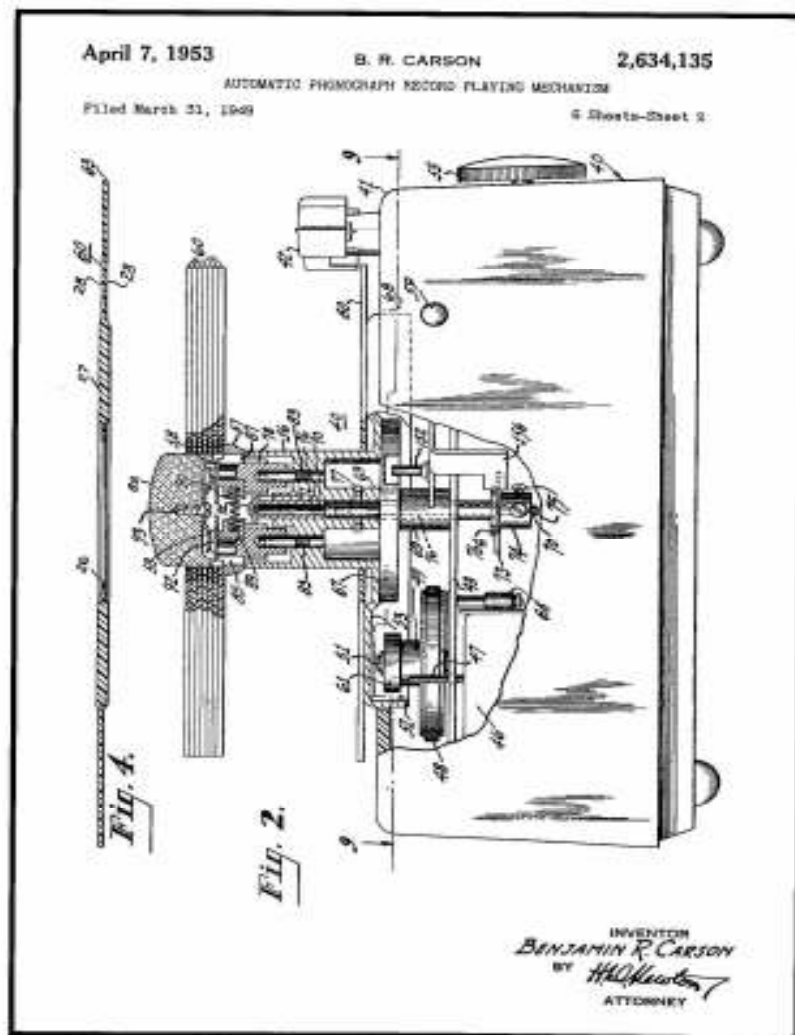
Part of this article contains text taken from "The Fabulous Victrola 45", of which Chapter 2 was written by Alex Magoun.

Last issue we discussed how the challenge to make a better record and player was made in 1939 and the prototype was demonstrated in 1942 to RCA Victor management. A lot had changed during the years from 1939 to 1942. The country was committed to World War II. This meant that the only consumer product that RCA Victor was allowed to produce was records. No radios, no phonographs, etc. It made perfect sense to shelve the system until the war was concluded.

The corporate staff and structure changed at RCA Victor from 1942 to 1945. Frank M. Folsom was hired in 1943 to run the RCA Victor division. He decentralized the division in 1945 changing it from a functional to a product-based organization. Each product line would have their own separate engineering, production, and sales groups. In the past, with no one directly responsible for the outcome of an innovation, RCA Victor engineering, manufacturing, and marketing groups had to cooperate to develop new systems like the 45 system. With Folsom's change to a product orientation, developing new products became less important than selling the ones RCA already had. Thus RCA Victor Records' advertising agency, J Walter Thompson did not find out about the 45 system until 1948! In addition, Folsom brought in his own people or new managers who had no allegiances to the RCA culture.

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**Front view of the first 45 rpm record changer in patent application.**  
**Courtesy Camden County Historical Society.**

More importantly for the 45, Folsom's changes eliminated its support within management. The new manager, James W. Murray, had no incentive to coordinate marketing with the phonograph group because of his affiliation with the new regime. He was uninterested in risking his position by backing his predecessor's innovation. Add to this mix the new technology magnetic tape, which could take market share away from record sales and you can see why the 45 system was still not introduced. In the mean time RCA Victor was selling record amounts of 78 rpm records after the war.

RCA Victor would be sorry they waited because in the Summer of 1948, Columbia introduced the Long Playing record (LP). Now it would be much more difficult to sell the public on the 45 system because there was genuine competition. Before the LP there was no doubt that the 45 system was a vast improvement over the standard 78 rpm record and player. But now there were three speeds and three different players to buy. Classical music fans obviously preferred the LP. But the popular music fans and jukebox manufacturers preferred the 45. Ultimately both records were accepted by the public and this created a needed for a record changer that could handle all speeds and records. Multispeed changers were introduced in the early 1950s and this made it harder to sell the 45 only changers. The biggest market segment that would still buy the 45 changer was the teenager who was only interested in pop music. This would last until 1958, when RCA Victor stopped production of the 45 changer. A fire destroying the main factory making the changers in Chicago was an added incentive to end production. So there you have it. The record changers were manufactured from 1949 to 1958, but the 45 records are still produced today in limited quantities for the Jukebox trade and the 'oldies' market.

*The 45-RPM Phono Gazette is a quarterly publication.*  
*Subscriptions are available for \$5.00 annually. For more information call Phil Vourtsis at 732.446.2427 or email to [pvourtsis@att.com](mailto:pvourtsis@att.com)*

## Workbench

*Most bizarre problem I've come across.*

Adjusting an early rp-168 with the rotating spindle knives can be a challenge to begin with. The lever that contacts the star wheel must be adjusted carefully otherwise the next record will not fall at the right time. One of the units I was to repair could not be adjusted properly. The record would

always fall on the tonearm after the tonearm had returned to the lead-in groove. It turned out that the lever was bent, although it did not appear to be bent. Replacing the lever fixed the problem and that brings up another tip. Try to avoid bending parts to make adjustments. Although this does work, you can't make a fine adjustment this way and you risk bending the part in more than one place. Just about all

adjustments can be done with the provided screws and cams. The only exception is the lever that operates the muting switch. You would think that the switch should be operated when the tonearm is descending to the record and then disconnect. But the only way to achieve that is to bend the lever that contacts the muting switch. There is no other adjustment.



Children enjoying a 9EY3 phonograph (1949). Courtesy Camden County Historical Society.