

45rpm Phono Gazette

Colored Vinyl

By Gerry Whitehead

In Phil Vourtsis' book, "The Fabulous Victrola 45", Phil talks about RCA Victor's first three years of manufacturing the 45 rpm in various colored vinyl from 1949 to 1951 to attract customers, and to make filing the records by color coding a snap for record stores. He also mentions that by the early 1950s RCA Victor discontinued the colored vinyl as a cost cutting move. But there were exceptions. In 1954 the Crows enormous hit "Gee!! Love You So" was issued on red vinyl as well as black. RCA Victor issued a special gold vinyl 45 of Elvis Presley's "Jailhouse Rock/Treat Me Nice" in 1957. In the early 60s promo copies sent to radio stations were sometimes colored vinyl like "Don't You Believe It" by Andy Williams on Columbia in red vinyl and "Green Green" by the Christy Minstrels on green vinyl! I first saw them when I was breaking into the business as a radio d.j. "Blue On Blue" by Bobby Vinton was on light blue vinyl. In 1965, a banner year for rock and roll, Columbia issued Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" part 1 and 2 on red vinyl. The song was 6 minutes long and top 40 radio would not play such a long song. The Byrds "Mister Tambourine Man" was on red vinyl and Donovan's "Sunshine Superman" was available on multi-colored vinyl (early psychedelic) for 1966. In 1967 Epic records brought out "Carrie-Ann" on purple vinyl and in 1968 Neil Diamond's "Two Bit Manchild" was on red vinyl. Another couple of early ones were "Earth Angel" by the Penguins on red vinyl and "Blackland Farmer" by well known Memphis radio d.j. and later TV game show host Wink Martindale on DOT records. Rick Nelson's 1963 "If You Can't Rock Me/Old Enough To Love" was issued by Imperial records on a promo red 45. 1973's "We're an American Band" by Grand Funk Railroad on Capitol records was issued originally on gold vinyl for 45s and LPs first run. United Artists released "Telephone Line" by ELO on green vinyl in 1977. You may have surmised by now that red was the most popular color used by record companies for promo vinyl 45s and some retail issued 45s as well. Record companies frequently issued promo 45s with the same song on both sides to keep adventurous d.j.s from flipping over the record and playing the non-hit side the company was trying to plug. Sometimes one side would be in mono while the other side was in stereo.

Record companies continued the practice of occasionally issuing colored vinyl in the 80s and 90s. Here are some examples;

- Blues Bros., "Gimme Some Lovin", Atlantic records, blue vinyl.
- The Fixx, "Sunshine In The Shade", MCA records, yellow vinyl.
- Aretha Franklin, "Jumpin' Jack Flash", Arista records, silver vinyl.
- Jeff Foxworthy, "The Redneck 12 Days of Christmas", Warner Bros., Green vinyl.

Also starting in the 1980s, some record companies started providing special boxed sets of certain artists. Phil Spector's early 60s hits are available in red or yellow vinyl in two box sets from Collectibles records. Elvis and Beatles collections are also available on green vinyl. There is even a rumor that in early 1964, Capital records released the Beatles "Can't Buy Me Love/You Can't Do That" on a very limited yellow vinyl 45.

I've come across many other oddball colored vinyl 45s over the years, both in radio and also retail, where I spent 3 years as an assistant manager at a used record store. So, if you think you've seen it all, as far as colored vinyl is concerned, think again!

Response to vinyl vs. styrene article

Just got the Oct. issue of the Gazette. Man, did you hit a sore topic with me. Polystyrene records are absolute CRAP!!! They have been a thorn in my side since I first started spinning records as a 2 year old. Yes, break VERY easy. Yes, They wear out VERY fast. To tell you the truth, I always felt very strongly that Columbia used polystyrene on 45's just to discredit them in the record industry. They always wanted to be #1 with their vinyl 12 inch records. They wanted RCA's 45 records to fail. What better way to try to do this than make the SUPERIOR disc look bad. 45 RPM is the ULTIMATE speed for vinyl. That's why most classical LP's were 12 inch 45 RPM discs. I also have some Direct To Disc 12 records at 45 RPM. The 33 speed is too slow & needed modification for many years to come. I have many 33 LP's that start to distort on the high end as the grooves get closer to the label. OK, I'll get off my soap box now & inform you of what I know about RCA using polystyrene. I was very close friends to the owner of "Jerry's Records" in the Willingboro plaza where I grew up. He called himself Ziggy. RCA never used polystyrene until they were forced to. Right up to 1977, they never used it. When Elvis passed away, they could not keep up with the orders for the Elvis records. Polystyrene was cheaper & easier to get so they started using it for the Elvis 45's & saved the vinyl supply they had on hand for the LP's. They saw how much cheaper it was to use polystyrene so they stuck with it. The people in charge by then were not worried about the reputation of the 45 disc. I feel Ziggy was 100% right about this as all the things he told me logically fell into place. Polystyrene. Always HATED it, always will.

Best Regards,
Jim Romano

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Making Your Own Stereo Mute Switch



RP-190 with what appears to be a custom cabinet

By Jim Romano

I wrote an article for Gazette number 17.1 about an RP-190 changer that I made a custom cabinet for. I also wrote about how I wired it for 2 channel stereo using a Pfanstiehl P-190 stereo ceramic cartridge. I soon grew tired of the poor sound quality that was limited by the type of amp I could play it through. I decided to mount a magnetic cartridge wired for stereo. It was a cartridge that would track perfect at 4 grams. I was now able to play it in stereo through a high powered Pioneer VSX-502 that I have in the dining room with Aiwa 3 way bass reflex speakers. I use this amp for 3 VM changers that I installed magnetic cartridges on.

I ordered 3 stereo mute switches from Gary at VM-Audio Enthusiasts to install on the 3 VM changers as I really don't like to hear the stylus of a magnetic cartridge pound down on the record, then the thud sound it makes when the stylus pulls off of the record. I then got to thinking about this RP-190 changer with the magnetic cartridge. There is no stereo mute switch to buy & install. I could no longer stand the noise of a changer without a mute switch, so I decided to make a stereo mute switch for my RP-190 changer. I used 3 mono mute switches to make just one stereo mute switch. It really turned out great & the changer now drops records without all the noise I used to have to put up with. The picture on the right shows my stereo mute switch on the left & the standard mono mute switch on the right. I ran a ground wire from the motor board to the ground terminal on the amp. This doesn't have a 4 pole motor, but I get no hum

from it. The picture on the left is of the RP-190 changer as it looks now. I removed the plastic turntable & installed a metal turntable. This reduced turntable rumble & there's an inertia effect that the heavy turntable has on the pitch. The black paint was flaking off of the turntable so I used paint stripper to remove all the black paint. I liked the way it looked at that point so I decided not to paint it.

First, I had to drill out the rivet heads on 3 mono mute switches. You have to be careful not to destroy the rivet

Stereo mute switch is on the left, mono switch on right



shaft because you need it to re-assemble the stereo mute switch. You keep the long metal band that touches the mute switch bar on the cycle slide. You then use the other 2 longer metal bands, but cut them down just below the rubber dot on the end so they won't be touched by the mute switch bar on the cycle slide. You use the fiber board that was there to separate the 3 metal bands. Then, you slide the rivets back through the 3 metal bands separated by the fiber board. You won't need the solid copper bar that was on the end for ground any more. I used a clamp to hold the assembly together & bonded it with Gorilla glue. I let it dry over night. The longest metal band is where you solder the 2 ground wires from the stereo cartridge. You solder the left wire to one of the short metal bands, then solder the right wire to the other short metal band. If you are using a magnetic cartridge, you will need to run a ground wire connected from the RP-190 motor board to the ground terminal of your amp. You then adjust the mute switch bar on the cycle slide so that the cartridge won't go live until after the stylus touches the record.



Courtesy of Phil Vourtsis Collection. Notice the bottom of the louvers on the bakelite cabinet. Only the earliest of these cabinets were made with the louvers going all the way down as shown.

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Send to Phil Vourtsis, 13 Cornell Place, Manalapan, NJ, 07726 or you can use Paypal (Account is pvourtsis@optonline.net, no credit cards please)

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