

# 45rpm Phono Gazette

## RCA Victor's Fab 45 Players Pt. 2

By Gerry Whitehead

My name is Gerry Whitehead from Bakersfield, California, I previously wrote an article for the gazette some years ago (Oct. 2011) about the 45 players I have owned over the years. Since then I have remembered more encounters I have had with the players, both mine and ones that belong to others. So I call this article RCA Victor's Fab 45 players part 2.

After I received my first 45 player from neighbor Pat Jones (a 45EY2), shortly thereafter I was in a local record store, Rudi Pock Records, a small independent Mom and Pop type record store in Ontario, CA. In addition to selling a small selection of the latest current hit 45s and LPs, there was also Hi-Fi component stereophonic furniture by various manufacturers along with RCA Victor record changers. This was 1958. I also saw sitting next to them a Crescent Model F637 with chrome legs as shown on page 85 of Phil's book. I then noticed the 7EY1JF RCA 45 changer with the gray plastic cabinet and said to my Mom, "I want that record player". Mom had just bought me the current 45 hit of "Witch Doctor/Don't Whistle At Me Baby" by David Seville on Liberty Records. (This was pre-Chipmunks). The sales lady put my 45 of "Witch Doctor" on the 7EY1JF player. After letting it warm up for a minute, she hit the reject switch, the tonearm came down on the lead-in groove of the record and the intro began. After a minute of the three of us listening to a very weak and distorted sounding version of the song, my Mom proclaimed to me: "This thing sounds terrible! What do you want it for anyway? You already have the record player that Pat Jones gave you". So of course I didn't get the record player (that day). But, thinking back now all these years later, what attracted me most to that particular 45 player was the color of the phonograph, a gray plastic cabinet with coral green colors (surely not the fuzzy sound!) It was not until 1999 or so that my friend John Lee found me a 7EY1JF out of his own collection that he repaired for me. After finding a replacement volume knob and adding a rebuilt original 'ski' cartridge, did I finally get that particular 45 player.

Rudi Pock Records, by the way, to the very day that they closed their doors for good in early 1967, also had two turntables for the public to 'sample' the records they listened to before buying. One of them was a standard three-speed model turntable and the other a 45 player. I don't recall what model or make of either turntable, but I do recall that both turntables had headphone attachments for private listening. Later in the mid-60s, I went back to Rudi's and found in their 45 section an Elvis Presley extended play 45 with picture cover called 'Strictly Elvis'. I opened the sealed EP, placed it in a 'baggie' when no one was looking. Opening a sealed record without buying it first was considered a 'no-no' back then. I put the EP on the 45 player and listened to the four cuts which included 'Long Tall Sally', 'First In Line', 'How Do You Think I Feel', and 'How's The World Treating You'.

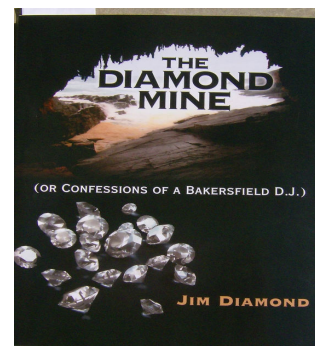
In 1959, the year I joined the Cub Scouts, I volunteered to bring my 45EY2 to a Cub Scout meeting so that we could have some music playing in the background. I remember putting the player

up on the stage of the 'rec. hall' of our church and turning it up full blast. It did OK too! Everyone seemed to enjoy the music and also watching the machine function, dropping the 45s one at a time. Also in 1959, after singer Bobby Darin came out with his #1 hit, 'Mack The Knife', which was based on 'The Three Penny Opera'. Another neighbor of ours at the West El Morado Court address, a little girl named Dawn Krugle came over to our house with a copy of the song to play on my 45 player. Then around Christmas time 1961, our other neighbors, the Davis family, had us over for a visit. The teenage girl in their family had a 45EY3 player with the closing lid. Guess what song was playing when I walked in their house. 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight' by the Tokens which had gone to #1 on the Billboard charts by then.

I even saw a 45 player being used by a County Fair in Canada during a 1958 visit to my grandparents. My friend Patrick O'Sullivan whom I've known since 3<sup>rd</sup> grade had an RCA 45 attachment hooked to a radio. It was rigged up by my Dad, Maurice.

In the years since, the one 45 player I run into the most is my first player, the 45EY2. Victor must have manufactured millions of them, as they are as of this writing still very common to find today. In the late 90s I did find a Magnovox 45 player with AM radio still functioning. I traded it to John Lee for some vintage transistor radios. I found the Magnovox at the Woolworth five and dime antique store here in downtown Bakersfield.

So to restate what I have said previously, these players still retain a certain charm and a link to a fondly remembered past for so many of us baby-boomers. Incredibly the 45 players were still in use in many homes as late as the early Beatle era (1964-1965). But then stereo sound and much louder, highly modulated sounds of music, came in the early 60s and stereo LPs took over the music scene. So the monaural 45 players got the 'brush' for a few years, But then, in the early 70s good old-fashioned nostalgia for the 1950s kicked in. Many people including myself were even playing 78s again, as well as 45s. Who says you can't go home again? Every time the needle hits the groove, you're back in time. Until time-travel is perfected, this is the next best thing!



Gerry Whitehead has written a book about the trials and tribulations of being a DJ. His DJ name is Jim Diamond. If you would like more information, here is Gerry email. [Jimdiamond61@gmail.com](mailto:Jimdiamond61@gmail.com)

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Pop Science article from 1949



Here's the old and the new, with the different sizes of records available for each. Note big center hole on the RCA record in the middle.

## What's What in the Platter Battle

The old disks have been re-engineered, and two entirely new recording systems are fighting for your approval.

By Robert Gorman

WHEN RCA uncorked a new idea in phonograph records this spring—the industry's second big change since last summer—millions of U. S. phonograph owners found themselves with a tough question to answer. Shall I switch over to the new long-playing, 12-inch records, or to the even newer, small records put out by RCA?

It's a hard question, because either record requires also the purchase of a special attachment for the home phonograph. The devices are different—and not cheap.

The confusion facing the purchaser of records springs from attacks made on standard grooving by both Columbia and RCA. A conventional record is played on a turntable going at 78 r.p.m. The groove is wide. It has to be: the record must play on both the old acoustic phonographs and the newer electronic machines. The acoustic machine's arm may have a needle pressure of half a pound or more. The electronic pick-

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Pop Science article continued

up may put only  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an ounce on the stylus. Groove characteristics have had to accommodate this variation.

Last summer Columbia popped on the market something brand new—a 12-inch platter that played not the standard five minutes, but a full 23 minutes. Big chunks of symphonic music could be reproduced without breaks. Columbia achieved this with tiny grooves—made possible by eliminating acoustic requirements—and by low speed. Instead of revolving at 78 r.p.m., the record turns at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ .

Now RCA has made its attack. It's different. Its special turntable spins at 45 r.p.m. Instead of a long-playing record, RCA has produced the equivalent of a 12-inch platter on a disk only 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. The company's low-speed records will be in this uniform size. Another innovation is a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch center hole to suit the records to a special high-speed changer.

Many reasons have been advanced for RCA's failure to follow Columbia's lead. One is that no one wants to listen to a solid 23 minutes of a single popular jingle. (Columbia has lately announced a 7-inch disk as well as the 10- and 12-inchers.) RCA engineers assert that 45 r.p.m. is the ideal speed, while their opposite numbers at Columbia say that 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  is the best for getting the most good music in the least space. Both claim big advantages in record storage, though in different ways. Columbia points out that a single 12-inch disk takes the place of a whole album of 78-r.p.m. records. RCA counters by pointing out that its little records fit nicely in a bookshelf.

Both of the slow-play records offer a bonus advantage. They are pressed in unbreakable plastic and have much less surface noise than conventional shellac records. The plastic, which has been available at a premium price for some 78-r.p.m. records, is especially suited to the increased frequency range of the new systems.

The new records will sell for less. A single 12-inch long-playing classical record retails for about \$4.85. It contains the musical equivalent of a four- or five-record album selling for \$6 or more. The same amount of music (on four or five disks) on RCA records will cost \$4.30 to \$5.25.

Since there are an estimated 16 million old-style turntables in the country, and billions of records that can be played only on them, the change-over period will obviously be troublesome. Both Columbia and



Same music recorded three ways. At left is a conventional 78-r.p.m. album; at top right, a single Columbia Microgroove® disk of the same piece. Lower right shows the RCA disks needed.

RCA plan to continue to make 78-r.p.m. disks. Record players that will handle the old disks and one or both of the new ones are coming on the market.

From a technical viewpoint, the change-over is long past due. Experts say that 78-r.p.m. recording has been obsolete for years. Established in the day of acoustic recording, this speed was needed to get even a minimum of fidelity scratched into and out of the shellac. The development of electronic recording and playback heads made possible fine recording, and reproduction at much lower speeds. A 78-r.p.m. disk delivers about three-quarters of a second of music on each spin. At 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  r.p.m., a turn gives almost two seconds of music.

As important as speed is groove size. Industry standards established 25 years ago called for 85 to 98 lines per inch (depending on the amount of music to be squeezed on a side), and modern 78-r.p.m. records still range between 80 and 140 lines. In contrast, the new RCA records get up to 275 grooves to the inch, and Columbia's go as high as 300. Stylus pressure has been cut to a sixth of an ounce and tip diameter to .001 of an inch. This combination of light pressure and low speed promises greatly improved record life.

One thing a prospective buyer should ask himself is whether the rest of his equipment is up to the new records. Chances are it isn't, unless the amplifier and speaker are among the very best. In fact, many players now being sold especially for the new records don't really do justice to them.

So you pay your money and you take your choice—and if you're smart you keep your fingers crossed.

END

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