

# The 45rpm Phono Gazette

## The War of the Speeds commences in 1949



**Lady poses with new 45 Record player and records.**  
**Courtesy of Camden County Historical Society**

This article was found on the internet with no indication what publication it appeared in.

Monday, Aug. 01, 1949

Like a dervish whirling at three different speeds at once, the U.S. record industry has begun to come apart at the seams. Its head, RCA Victor, has gone flying off at 45 r.p.m.; its right arm, Columbia Records, has spun away at 33½-r.p.m. The body of the industry, including a good part of the Victor and Columbia product, has continued to turn at 78 r.p.m. But one by one,

other record companies have been dragged after the two big innovators. Last week Capitol Records, which had already begun to press at the 45 speed on Victortype, seven-inch discs, decided to pattern its classical catalogue after Columbia's LP (Long Playing) records.

For the record-buying public, this schizoid spectacle has been confusing, to say the least. Why go on buying the old 78s, when 45s or 33-½s are obviously the coming thing? But which of the two new types to buy? Columbia's Long Playing 33½, s whose microgrooves can hold a whole symphony on two sides, have an advantage in convenience over Victor's small 453 for long classical selections. Also, Columbia's seven-inchers are quite as good for popular music as RCA's seven-inchers, though there are as yet few automatic record changers on the market which will take the Columbia product.

So why not buy a Columbia 33½-r.p.m. turntable, plug it into the old 78 r.p.m. machine, and call it a solution? Nearly a million record buyers have done just that. But millions of others have hesitated. RCA Victor has by far the world's largest recording roster of fine artists. Would the rest of the industry be pulled into RCA's strong orbit? Until they had the answer, many record collectors stopped buying altogether.

To exorcise the speed demon, top executives of RCA Victor, Columbia and Decca have been huddling in quiet meetings. Last week there was still no agreement. Until the industry pulled itself together, record fans had two sensible alternatives : postpone buying or buy a turntable that plays all three speeds. There are about ten on the market, ranging in price from \$15 to more than \$50.

The entertainment trade magazine Variety, a little dizzy from watching the industry spin, saw still another possibility: the public might say "aw-nuts to the whole thing and [go] back to just playing the radio."

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**"HIS MASTER'S VOICE"**

The nineteenth century was drawing to a close. In London, England, a virtually unknown artist named Francis Barraud was busy at work in his studio when he accidentally caught sight of his little dog "Nipper" sitting attentively in front of the talking machine. So impressed was Barraud with this scene that he decided to put it on canvas, little knowing that his alert black and white fox terrier would become the best known dog in the world.

The painting, which Barraud called "His Master's Voice," brought the artist great fame; demands for painted copies put him to work for the rest of his life.

In 1901, this painting became the trademark of the Victor Talking Machine Company, and later of RCA Victor. "Nipper" has become one of the most famous trademarks in the world—a symbol of the very finest in recorded music.

**IMPORTANT  
DATES  
IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT  
OF PHONOGRAPHS  
AND  
RECORDS**

- 1857** Leon Scott, a Frenchman, developed the "Phonautograph." It traced sound waves in lampblack but could not reproduce the sound.
- 1877** Thomas A. Edison invented the basic principle of the phonograph. His "Record" was a cylinder wrapped in a sheet of tin foil. Sound vibrations caused a stylus, or point, to indent the tin foil, the indentations corresponding to the sound vibrations. For reproduction, or "playing," the procedure was reversed, with another stylus carrying the sound to a horn. At Edison's first demonstration, he recited "Mary Had a Little Lamb." This machine had to be hand-cranked while operating. The sound was weak and of poor quality.
- 1886** Alexander Graham Bell, Chichester Bell and Charles Sumner Tainter improved Edison's system by using a wax coating instead of tin foil on a cylinder. They called their machine a "Graphophone." Reproduction was improved but the sound was very weak.
- 1887** Emile Berliner, a self-taught German scientist who had made an important contribution to the telephone, applied for a patent on an instrument which he called the "Gramophone." In place of a cylinder, Berliner used a flat disc. He coated a zinc plate with an acid resisting material and then cut a recording in this material. When the disc was immersed in an acid bath, the acid ate away only the zinc left exposed by the recording needle, thus leaving a "groove" which contained the recording. For the first time a practical recording was made on a flat disc, which also became a "master" record from which duplicates could be made.
- 1890** Improvements in the cylinder and disc type players were slow. A spring-wound motor was added. During this period, Eldridge R. Johnson, a machinist in Camden, N. J., entered the picture when Berliner brought his machine to him for improvements. Johnson developed the first spring motor for a disc type talking machine which would operate at uniform speed and could be regulated; that was quiet in operation, inexpensive to make and easy to use. He greatly improved the sound box also. In 1897, Johnson quietly began to experiment in improving the record itself, which resulted, three years later, in a new record much superior to any on the market.
- 1901** Eldridge R. Johnson founded the Victor Talking Machine Company to make phonographs and records. This was the real beginning of the record and phonograph industry.
- 1902** Caruso made the first of his recordings to be issued by Victor, in Europe. His first U.S. recordings were made for Victor in 1904.
- 1906** First "Victrola" console phonograph with horn enclosed in body of phonograph.
- 1921** Toscanini's first recording for Victor.
- 1925** Victor's improved "Orthophonic" Victrola Phonograph and electrically recorded discs brought dramatic advance in music fidelity.
- 1929** RCA purchased the Victor Talking Machine Company.
- 1931** First 33 1/2 rpm records issued by RCA Victor.
- 1949** 45 rpm system introduced—first record and changer basically designed for each other.
- 1952** RCA Victor introduces "Extended Play" 45's which doubled playing time of a record.
- 1953** Era of High Fidelity recording and reproduction in 33 1/2 and 45 rpm records. High Fidelity means, simply, high faithfulness in recording and reproducing the original sound.
- 1958** Introduction of Stereo. For the first time, one hears "two new" dimensions in music—depth and direction. The ears are able to distinguish where every instrument and voice comes from—left, right or center.
- 1959** Development of "Miracle Surface" by RCA Victor. "Miracle Surface" records contain the new revolutionary anti-static ingredient, 317X, which helps keep the record dust free, helps prevent surface noise, and helps insure faithful sound reproduction on your RCA Victor LIVING STEREO records.



Johnson's improved "Gramophone" (1890). Victor "Trademark" Model



Victor Model 11 (1900-1904) with "moming gory" horn



Victrola 11 (1902-1924) ... a "household institution"



Orthophonic Victrola (1925) created musical versalite.



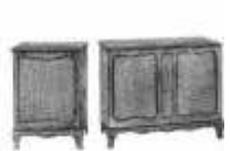
Victrola Model 10-50 (1927) first automatic changer



Modern 45 rpm player introduced in 1949



New Orthophonic High Fidelity player introduced in 1953



Introduction of Stereo Orthophonic High Fidelity player in 1958

**RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA • CAMDEN, N. J.**

Form 3E 2076-1

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