



A Victorious History through RCA (Victor) Label Styles



Emile Berliner, the inventor of the Gramophone, began issuing records in November, 1894. With Eldridge R. Johnson having agreed to manufacture his machines, Berliner's company was on the vanguard of recording technology. Then in 1899, employee Frank Seaman left Berliner to start a rival company using Berliner's process. Even Seaman's record players appeared to be knock-offs of the ones being marketed by Johnson. Seaman's Zon-o-Phone company allied with Columbia Records in his personal effort to put Berliner out of business and take over the

market.

Johnson formed the Consolidated Talking Machine Company and began releasing records in Spring, 1900. In 1900, a court granted an injunction against Berliner and Johnson – for not being quick enough to patent their process before Seaman did. As a result, these records were labeled as “improved gram-o-phone records” until March, 1901, after which time they were briefly marketed simply as “improved records.” A countersuit by Berliner and Johnson brought out the details, though, and the two men emerged as victors. After the conclusion of the lawsuit, Berliner and Johnson gained control of Zon-o-Phone and organized a new company: the Victor Talking Machine Company.



Eldridge Johnson sent representatives to the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, NY, in 1901. Stationed in the Electrical Building, the exhibitors discovered quickly that there

was rising interest in both the company's records and its machines. “The Village Choir,” first recorded in 1900 by S.H. Dudley, proved to be a popular record as it was played at the expo. Johnson's presentation won a gold medal in Buffalo, leading to further competitions.



VICTOR CO. INCORPORATES.

The articles of incorporation of the Victor Talking Machine Co. were filed last week in Camden, N. J. The directors are: Albert C. Middleton, Chas. K. Hadden and L. F. Douglass. The main office is at 114 North Front street, Camden.

The October 26, 1901, issue of the *Music Trade Review* announced the incorporation of a new company.



One of the first trade cards featuring Nipper.



In October, 1901, they began publicly and 10" singles as the Victor Talking Company. The 7" records were labeled records, while the 10" singles were Monarch records. Twelve-inch Deluxe inch Deluxe Special records also first Victor labels were dominated by a disclaimer and the role of Eldridge company; the second labels indicated maker.

Meanwhile, Berliner had purchased the Francis Barraud's reworked painting of a to a record and had registered the dog as (along with "His Master's Voice"). Before long, the dog began to appear everywhere. Both Victor and Victor Monarch labels were redesigned so as to prominently feature Nipper the dog and the new company slogan. The first labels with Nipper were registered in 1902.



marketing 7" Machine as Victor called Victor and fourteen-emerged. The legal Johnson in the Victor as the rights to dog listening a trademark



With Columbia and Victor in heavy competition at the world expositions, Victor was quick to claim the grand prize at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and again at the Lewis and Clark expo; they began to advertise this on record labels beginning in March, 1905.

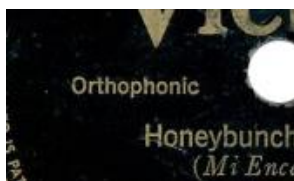
Victor 16000, released in 1908, inaugurated a new label style showing the relevant patents associated with Victor records. At first, the most recent patent was from August, 1908.



Two years later, a new patent was added to the group. The record shown on the right, above, dates to 1910. The rim print ends with a 1910 patent date. Later in 1910, some of the patents were removed, leading to a cleaner-looking label. In 1912, the reference to the “Emile Berliner Victor Talking Machine Co.” was shortened to read simply “Victor Talking Machine Co.”



In 1914, the reference to the ten-year-old expositions was removed, along with most of the patent information. Victor labels were redesigned to draw attention to the Nipper logo.



The design remained on Victor records through 1925, but that final year Victor was introducing its Orthophonic recording/playback process. The Orthophonic (“correct-sounding”) process had been developed by Western Electric and made use of microphones and electronics rather than mere acoustics. Recordings made this way were labeled with “Orthophonic” on the label, indicating the superior process.

The following year, Victor instituted a new label design. The “Scroll” label would last until 1937 with a few modifications. At first, the company name was listed as previously, as the “Victor Talking Machine Company.” In 1929, the Radio Corporation of America purchased the company. As a result, the labels underwent two subtle changes in order to mention the purchase.



An instrumental recording of "Frankie and Johnnie" by Bunny Berigan (later covered by Elvis) was first released on the scroll label. It was later reissued as one of the first singles in the 20- prefix series: the series that would eventually contain the 78 RPM releases by Mr. Presley. That reissue, 20-1500, came out in October, 1942.

From 1937 to February, 1946, Victor singles continued on a re-designed label without the fancy scroll work.

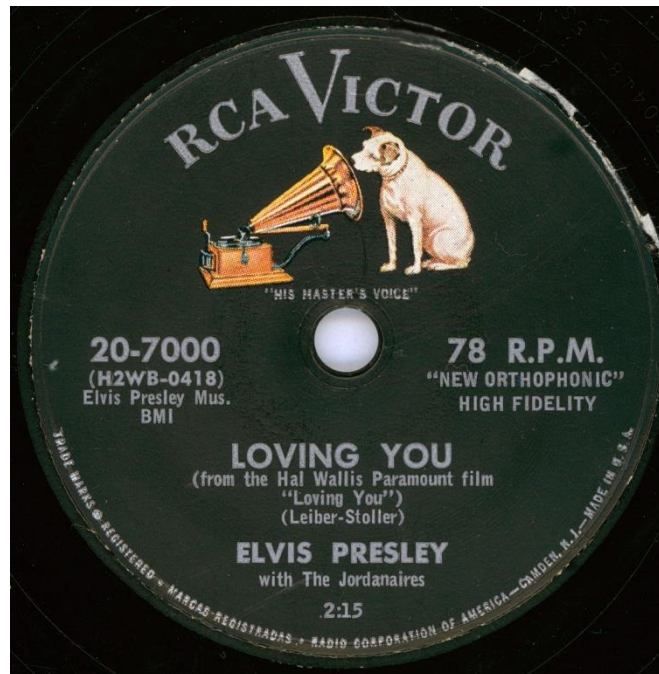


Victor began advertising themselves as RCA Victor in late June, 1945, In February, 1946, the company began to add RCA to the labels, officially dubbing them "RCA Victor" records.

Soon, the US patent was removed altogether from the labels, and eventually flat labels replaced slick ones. This was the label in place when 45 RPM singles were introduced in 1949.



In the middle of 1954, RCA Victor redesigned their 78 label. This would eventually lead to a reworking of all of their labels, creating black (or colored) backgrounds with the Nipper logo in color. This was the only design that graced Elvis' 78 RPM singles on RCA in the United States.





RCA Meets Victor

Guglielmo Marconi's experiments with wireless transmission in the 1890's proved to be successful. In spring, 1897, he tested his new transmission and reception process, and the wireless telegraph was born. One test, conducted on May 13th, involved the transmission of the message, "Are you ready?" in Morse code across the Bristol Channel. Knowing what we do now about the rapid development of radio in the succeeding years, the message proved to be a prophetic one. Along with Karl Braun, Marconi went on to receive a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1909 for his invention. Meanwhile, Guglielmo Marconi founded the Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company in Great Britain on July 20, 1897, with its purpose being to manufacture telegraph equipment. The company created the first radio factory and quickly became involved in several advances in radio technology. In 1900, the company was renamed The Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company.

It was not long before Marconi's invention crossed the Atlantic Ocean. On December 12, 1901, using his equipment, Marconi received the first transatlantic wireless broadcast – again in Morse code. The Marconi Company of America started constructing wireless telegraph stations in the United States in 1902, and inventors from several countries began to work on the accurate transmission of voice and music through the air. By 1906 this goal was achieved satisfactorily, and in 1912 a radio broadcast was used to relay the news about the sinking of the Titanic.

In 1915, **David Sarnoff** of the American Marconi company came up with an idea for commercial radio. This idea waited over a year to see fruition. In fall of 1916, experimental broadcasts in the New York City area appear to have led David Sarnoff's to suggest to Marconi that the American Marconi Company manufacture a "radio music box" – a receiver that would bring in regular wireless broadcasts.

The United States' entry into the great World War caused a temporary halt to proposed commercial radio transmissions. However, as the war neared a close, General Electric provided US military forces with wireless communications across the ocean. In March, 1919, the British Marconi Company arranged to purchase two dozen new transmitters from GE, but the latter company wanted at first only to lease the units. Marconi offered more money, and the negotiations made it to the ears of Naval Secretary Josephus Daniels, who had been campaigning in favor of "government control of radio communication." Secretary Daniels directed that General Electric delay any action that would result in the sale of equipment and patents.


Daniels had the support of President Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, and conferences were held with General Electric in April. Following the conferences, GE's directors voted to suspend the proposed sale to Marconi. Later that month, the American branch of the Marconi Company began working to become part of an independent American radio enterprise. Although Secretary Daniels wished for the government to control the new enterprise, that did not happen. On September 5, 1919, American Marconi sold controlling interest in their company to General Electric. Per agreement, the Radio Corporation of America was organized in Delaware on October 17th. Then on November 20, 1919, the new corporation officially took over the assets of American Marconi. Later, Westinghouse and AT&T bought into RCA.



Not long after the first commercial radio broadcast in 1920, RCA began to distribute radio equipment (manufactured at first by Westinghouse and GE). The first Radiola models went on sale in summer, 1922. Although fewer than 20,000 models were sold over the next year, in 1924 sales jumped, and the popularity of radio broadcasting spread like wildfire.

By 1925, the average consumer was more interested in radio receivers than in phonographs. The Radio Corporation of America purchased radio stations with the aim of creating a national radio network. This successful expansion resulted in the creation of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in October, 1926. By the middle of 1927, NBC was running three sets of programming. It was this large, expanding company that purchased the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1929.

DAVID STREET
WITH ORCHESTRA



I Don't Care Who Knows It
(From the 20th Century-Fox picture, "Nob Hill")

Nevada **20-1683**

Listen to The RCA Show . . . Sundays, 4:30 p.m., EWT, over the NBC Network.
BUY MORE WAR BONDS

RCA VICTOR RECORDS
RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA

The advertisement is a promotional poster for a radio broadcast. It features the RCA logo at the top left. The main title is "DAVID STREET WITH ORCHESTRA" in a stylized font. To the right is a black and white portrait of a man, David Street. Below the title is the song title "I Don't Care Who Knows It" and a note that it is from the movie "Nob Hill". The word "Nevada" is written in a large, bold font, followed by the number "20-1683". At the bottom, there is a call to action to listen to "The RCA Show" on Sundays and a "BUY MORE WAR BONDS" slogan. The RCA Victor Records logo is at the bottom, with "RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA" written below it.

Transitional ad from the June 30, 1945, *Billboard*, showing RCA alongside Victor.

RCA 45 RPM SINGLE LABELS

RCA49

This original RCA label appeared on all singles, originally in different colors and on different colored vinyl. These included popular records (black vinyl), pop classics (blue), country (green), blues (cerise), "red seal" classics (red), international series (light blue), and children's records (yellow). An outline of Nipper appears below RCA Victor at the top of the label. The catalog number and "Non Breakable" are at the left side. No Elvis singles appear on this label in the USA.



RCA54

Black label with "Nipper" the dog at the top in color. This label style is often called the "first 'dog on top' label." It began in June, 1954. At the right side of the label is "45 RPM". The label mentions the "New Orthophonic" High Fidelity process. The original rim print mentions "Camden, NJ." Until, 1959, copies pressed in Rockaway, NJ, have a horizontal silver line across the label.



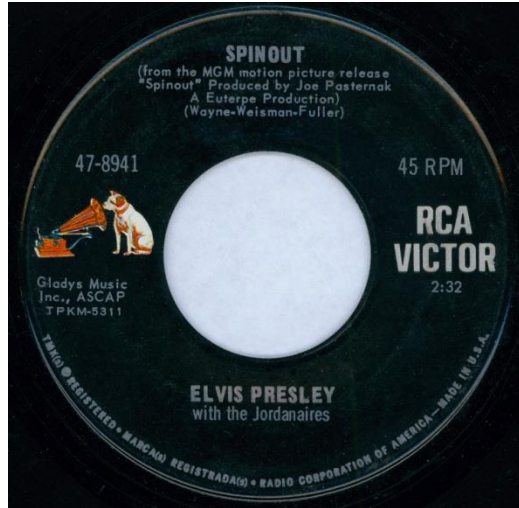
RCA54a

Black label with "Nipper" the dog at the top in color. Starting in October, 1959, the rim print of RCA singles and EP's no longer mentions Camden. In mid-1961, RCA removed the reference to the "New Orthophonic" process from most labels, except at the Hollywood plant.



RCA65

Although the album labels changed in 1963 and again in 1964, the singles continued on the "dog on top" label until early spring, 1965. Black label with "Nipper" the dog at the side in color. "RCA Victor" in white at top. "MONAURAL," "STEREO," "MONO DYNAGROOVE," or "STEREO DYNAGROOVE" appears at the bottom of the label in an ordinary font. This label style ran from 1965 to late 1968.

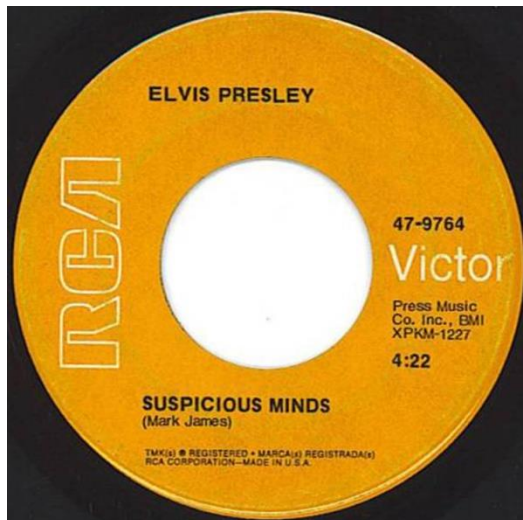


RCA68t

Late in 1974, RCA recolored their labels at the Indianapolis factory. This is a tan label with large RCA at left. The Hollywood plant reportedly continued to use orange labels until they closed. This supposedly took place in 1976, but I have been unable to confirm any orange-label records after August, 1975.

RCA68

The label style began in October, 1968, for new releases. Orange label with large RCA at left. The orange label was discontinued for general releases in 1975.



RCA76

In summer, 1976, RCA returned Nipper to their labels. Black label with RCA at top and Nipper in the upper right.

RCA68g

From August, 1974, to January, 1975, singles pressed in Indianapolis used a gray label instead of the new tan label. This seems to have been a transitional substitute for the orange label. Although reported in some guides as promotional copies, these are commercial singles.



RCA ALBUM LABELS

RCA50

This original RCA label appeared on all mainstream albums. These included popular records (black), popular "smart set" LP's (light blue), soundtrack series (green), "red seal" (red), and other series (blue, silver or gold) labels. An outline of Nipper appears below RCA Victor at the top of the label. The catalog number and "Non Breakable" are at the left side. No Elvis albums appear on this label in the USA.

RCA's 10" LP main series began with LPM-1, *Let's Dance Again With Flanagan*, by Ralph Flanagan. These were single LP records that corresponded to "musical smart sets": boxed sets of 45 RPM or 78 RPM singles. The series appears to have terminated with LPM-53, *Christmas Carols*, by the Hour of Charm All-Girls Orchestra and Choir (released in October, 1951).

The LPM-3000 series replaced it in January, 1952. The Collector's Series began with LPT-1 and appears to have terminated in 1952 with LPT-31, *Modern Jazz Piano* (by various artists), in January, 1952. The LPT-1000 and LPT-3000 series replaced this one.

The Red Seal 10" series began with LM-1 in 1950, *Boston Pops Orchestra*, by Arthur Fiedler. The Red Seal 12" series began that same year with LM-1000, Wagner's *Siegfried*, by the Rochester Philharmonic.

The first of RCA's "original cast" (LOC) series appeared in 1950 and was *Call Me Madam*, LOC-1000. The LPT-3000 series began with *Muggsy Spanier Favorites, Vol. 2* in 1952. The Collectors' Series LPT-3000 series and the LPM-3000 series were also 10" in size. The inaugural record in the popular series was *Beatrice Kay With Hugo Winterhalter and his Orchestra* (RCA LPM-3000). These coincided not with boxed sets (like the earlier series) but with double EP sets having the prefix EPB-.

The 10" Red Seal Collectors' Series began with LCT-1, *Composer's Favorite Interpretations*, by Various Artists, in February, 1951.

The 12" Red Seal Collectors' Series began with LCT-1000, *Genius at the Keyboard*, by Various Artists, also in February, 1951. Collectors' Series boxed sets were issued beginning with LCT-6000, Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

The 12" mainstream series began with LPM-1000 in 1954. This was *Music for Dining*, by the Melachrino Strings. In the 10" LPM- series, the label style lasted until approximately LPM-3217.

In the LPM main series, this label ran from 1000 to 1040, approximately.

In the LOC main series, this label ran from 1000 to 1019, approximately.

In the 10" LM- series, the label ran from 1 to 164.

In the 12" LM series, this label ran from 1000 to 1238 and 1700 to 1801.

There were also other series, such as the LM-6000 series and LM-7000 series.

The LK- (blue label) series lasted through at least LK-1026.

The "smart set" series, LPM-1, had light blue labels early in the series; the others (through LPM-53) were black.



RCA54

Black label with "Nipper" the dog at the top in color. This label style is often called the "first 'dog on top' label."

At the bottom of the mono label is "Long 33 1/3 Play". At the bottom of the stereo label, introduced in 1958, is "LIVING STEREO." At the bottom of rechanneled stereo labels was the single word "STEREO" -- occasionally with mention made of the reprocessed status. The original rim print mentions "Camden, NJ."

In the 10" LPM- series, the label style lasted until LPM-3282, at which point the series was discontinued.

In the LPM/LSP series, this label ran from 1033 (1041) to 2005, approximately.

In the LOC/LSO series, this label ran from 1021 to 1048, approximately.

In the LM/LSC series, this label ran from 1802 to 2345.



RCA54a

Black label with "Nipper" the dog at the top in color. Starting at the beginning of 1960, the rim print of RCA albums no longer mentions Camden. "Trade Mark" is now abbreviated as "TMK" with a ® logo.

In the LPM/LSP series, this label ran from 2000 to 2648, approximately.

In the LOC/LSO series, this label ran from 1050 to 1081, approximately.

In the LM/LSC series, this label ran from 2350 to 2660.



RCA63

Black label with "Nipper" the dog at the top in color. In spring, 1963, RCA introduced their "Dynagroove" process. Not every LP would be marketed as a Dynagroove album, and so their mono and stereo labels were split into Dynagroove and "regular" records. Regular albums were marked "MONO" or "STEREO", while Dynagroove albums received special labels featuring the Dynagroove logo.

In the LPM/LSP series, this label ran from 2620 to 2999, approximately.

In the LOC/LSO series, this label ran from 1083 to 1094, approximately.

In the LM/LSC series, this label ran from 2661 to 2773, approximately.

The early stereo Dynagroove labels read "Living Stereo Dynagroove."



RCA64

Black label with "Nipper" the dog at the top in color. "RCA Victor" in white at top. "MONAURAL," "STEREO," "MONO DYNAGROOVE," or "STEREO DYNAGROOVE" appears at the bottom of the label in an ordinary font. This label style ran from late 1964 to late 1968.

By October, 1964, the assignment of numbers for the main LPM/LSP- series reached number 2999. Although some later albums numbered in the 2900's were not released until March, 1965, the numbering itself had reached a stopping point. Album numbers LPM-3000 through LPM-3282 existed as ten-inch albums in the early 1950's, and RCA Victor elected not to re-use those numbers. Starting with the new year, the mainline series jumped ahead past the previously-used numbers. Album LPM-3315 is advertised along with numbers below 3000 in the January 9, 1965, issue of *Billboard* magazine.

In the LPM/LSP series, this label ran from 2978 (3300) to 4058, approximately. The last album advertised as being available in mono was LPM-4025. LPM-4028 has a higher number but was issued earlier. One copy of LPM-4032 sold in 2010 on eBay; that album has the new RCA logo on the cover.

In the LOC/LSO series, this label ran from 1096 to 1151, approximately. The last album advertised as being

available in mono was LOC-1151, although I have only seen through LOC-1150. That record, the original cast album to *Hair*, is rare in mono. In the LM/LSC series, this label ran from 2774 to 3045, approximately.



RCA68

The label style began in October, 1968, for new releases. Orange label with large RCA at left. The orange label was discontinued for general releases in 1975-6, but it remained on the ANL- series of budget-line issues well into 1977.

In the LSO series, this label ran from 1152 to 1172, approximately; in March, 1972, the soundtrack series was folded into the LSP series for the rest of the year. In the LSC series, this label ran from 3048 to 3336, approximately

In the LSP series, this label ran from 4059 to 4861. All three series terminated in 1972. In October of that year, RCA Victor announced the new prefixing. APL# would be the prefix for a stereo album; APD# would be the prefix for a quadraphonic album. Since P stood for popular, R would replace P for Red Seal records. The # indicates the number of records in the set, so APL1- was a popular stereo album with one record. "A" was the price code, with "C" as a common alternative and "D" indicating a promotional record. Toyota Jazz Parade, DPL1-0008, was one of the first records in the new series. The singles also changed at the same time, with most adopting the prefix APBO-.

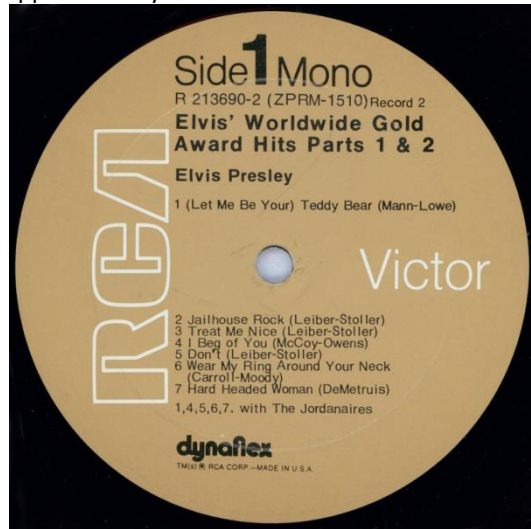
In the APL# series, the orange label ran from 0001 to 1183, approximately.



RCA68t

Late in 1974, RCA recolored their labels at the Indianapolis factory. This is a tan label with large RCA at left. The Hollywood plant reportedly continued to use orange labels until they closed. This supposedly took place in 1976, but I have been unable to confirm any orange-label records after August, 1975.

In the APL# series, the tan label ran from 1185 to 1792, approximately.



RCA76

In summer, 1976, RCA returned Nipper to their labels. Black label with RCA at top and Nipper in the upper right.



Selected Factories and Printers

Indianapolis, IN – Labels for the Indianapolis factory were printed in-house, via Monotype or Linotype. RCA Victor retained copies of many of the templates from Indianapolis.

Rockaway, NJ – The factory opened in July, 1954, and therefore was in operation during all of Elvis' life as an RCA Victor recording artist. Their labels were printed by Co-Service in Newark, NJ, until early 1959. After that time, RCA Victor printed labels in-house at Rockaway. Co-Service did not use templates in their printing process, instead typesetting new labels every time there was an order. For this reason, there are more label variations from the Rockaway plant between 1955 and 1959 than for either of the other plants. The plant closed in spring 1973.

Hollywood, CA – Labels for the Hollywood plant were printed by Bert-Co of Los Angeles. The same company also printed labels for other record companies, such as Capitol Records.

This document © 2016, 2021 Frank Daniels.

