The four-track cartridge is an unfamiliar item to most music listeners today. It was invented shortly before the eight-track cartridge, but for some reason it never attained the popular appeal that the eight track did. A four-track cartridge might be mistaken for an eight track, the most visible difference between the two being a hole in the cartridge approximately 3/4 inches in diameter. Four tracks manufactured for Capitol before 1969 also feature transparent front shells, making them readily distinguishable from eight tracks for those who know that four tracks existed.

Earl "Madman" Muntz was the chief producer of four track cartridges, having purchased the right to do so in order to equip his cars with tape machines. By 1963, the four track was on the horizon as the successor to reel tapes and singles players -- at least as far as the automobile was concerned.
Double four tracks (B-series), which measured approximately 6" wide by 7" deep, and the even-larger C-series tapes were also produced for a short season, but the standard size single-album cartridge soon became the standard. For several years, cartridge players were made that were "four/eight compatible." Finding such a player today is a rarity. I know of no company that has manufactured four track players in the last twenty years. This is unfortunate, since the four track was an interesting format.

Four tracks play at 3¾ inches per second, as do eight tracks. However, being in stereo, they only have two programs. This provided an advantage over the eight-track of seldom having a song split between two programs. As every buyer of eight tracks knows, this was a major annoyance with the eight track. Four tracks seldom had this problem. The big disadvantage to the four-track, which made the eight track an improvement, was the fact that one roller was part of the machine and came up into the hole in the back.

Due to the fact that they wanted to wait to see whether the format would be successful, Capitol Records delayed entering the four-track market until March 4, 1967. Citing increased demand and the prevalence of pirate tapes, Capitol signed a three-year contract with Muntz to release the cartridges. Capitol Records executives, including Alan Livingston (the company president) expressed the viewpoint that since tape cartridges were more costly than record albums and since they were almost exclusively used in automobiles, vinyl records were the preferred format in the 1960's. Nevertheless, Capitol had been exploring the possibility of entering the four-track tape market as early as 1965 – even though it was the March 4, 1967, issue of Billboard that actually introduced them to the public. Two weeks later, Columbia Records also entered the four-track market.

The first cartridges that Muntz produced for Capitol differ from later copies slightly. For example, if you look at the back of the cartridge, the earlier cartridges have a corner hole next to the hole for the capstan (upper left-hand corner). Cartridges made from about mid-1967 onward have only the round capstan hole in that corner. There are also other slight design differences. Beginning in late 1967, the tape's front shell was made in transparent or translucent colors. Pink was the first color used -- it is most common in 1968. Transparent brown was the most common colored shell from 1969.

Capitol never manufactured their own four tracks. Prior to October, 1969, they licensed out to Muntz Stereo-Pak in Van Nuys, California. On these four tracks, the statement "not affiliated with Muntz T.V." appears. Then that month Capitol contracted with Ampex Tapes to manufacture both its reel tapes and its four tracks. Since Capitol switched from their traditional dome logo to the new "C" logo in June, 1969, this means that Muntz-made copies which feature the new logo are harder to find. Also, these later
Muntz tapes feature new (colored) shells which have "rib grips" on the sides, making them easier to extract from four track machines. Tapes made by Ampex for Capitol are easy to spot, since they have opaque tan or yellow colored shells.

All Capitol four tracks prior to early-to-mid-1969 appear to have been housed in the same white boxes. Those made during 1969 by Muntz have black and red boxes, and there was a unique Apple box that is most often found with Mary Hopkin's *Post Card* tape. The outer boxes that accompanied Ampex tapes tended to have the contents printed on the back. Ampex four tracks made for Apple featured their own Apple boxes.

As far as Capitol is concerned, four tracks and reel-to-reel tapes seem to have perished at the same time, although the reels MAY have lasted slightly longer. Beatles-related (Ampex) four tracks do not seem to have been manufactured after 1970. This is likely when Capitol's 1967 contract to offer the format expired.

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**Muntz Out as Cap's Licensee**

LOS ANGELES — Capitol has not renewed its duplicating license with Muntz Stereo-Pak for 4-track. Muntz has handled the Capitol line since March 1967, when the two parties signed a three-year contract.

Capitol initially entered the cartridge business by duplicating its own 8-track and then moving into the 4-track configuration. Product by the Beatles and Beach Boys had been among the most widely bootlegged acts in 4-track, Earl Muntz had indicated before receiving the line. Capitol plans signing with another licensee who will handle both 4-track and reel-to-reel tapes. The company's decision for dropping Muntz was that it wanted to handle 4 and reel operation, a Capitol executive said. Capitol itself has been handling its own reel tapes, using custom duplicators in the past.

Muntz has a sell off period in which to clean out his Capitol product. Muntz has filed suit in Superior Court against Fireman's Fund Insurance Co., charging breach of contract and negligence. (Billboard, Sept. 9, 1969). The company seeks to recover funds on its insurance policy covering a fire in May 1968 which caused property damage at the headquarters plant of $605,000.
Here is a pictorial listing of all known Beatles and solo 4 tracks:

A Hard Day’s Night United Artists UA4T-4013
This was probably the first Beatles four-track tape. *Billboard* magazines, beginning with the July 31, 1965, issue, began to advertise tapes made by International Tape Cartridge Corporation (ITCC). Larry Finley, who started the company, became the first manufacturer to produce both four-track and eight-track cartridges. This first pressing of the LP in the cartridge format is very hard to find. The outer box is even scarcer.

SI = 9

Ain’t She Sweet Atco 21-276A
This was probably the second Beatles four track. According to *Billboard*, Atlantic-Atco signed on to release four-track cartridges in Fall, 1965. Since the LP had stopped selling by the time this tape came out – to the point that Atlantic was re-releasing it on its Clarion (budget) subsidiary, this tape is scarce.

SI = 10

In the March 18, 1967, issue of *Billboard*, Muntz proudly rolled out a list of its new Capitol four-track tapes. Among these was a nearly-complete roster of Beatles recordings through their latest album, *Revolver*. The only musical Beatles album not named in that first roster was *Yesterday...And Today*. Muntz trumpeted the release of that straggling Beatles LP in the April 29, 1967, issue of *Billboard*.
Meet the Beatles!  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5  

The Beatles’ Second Album  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 6  

Something New  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5  

Beatles ’65  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5  

The Early Beatles  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 8  

Beatles VI  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5
Help!  
Capitol 4CL-2386  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5

Rubber Soul  
Capitol 4CL-2442  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5

Revolver  
Capitol 4CL-2576  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5

Yesterday...And Today  
Capitol 4CL-2553  
Released March 18, 1967.  
SI = 5

The Family Way  
London LFX-17136  
Released c. July, 1967. These tapes were manufactured by Ampex. The earliest copies have no images on the front cover — showing only blue print on a white background; these have cartridges made by Telepro. Other copies show a picture of the front cover to the LP.  
SI = 8
Sgt. Pepper’s LHCB
Capitol 4CL-2653
Released July 15, 1967.
SI = 5

Magical Mystery Tour
Capitol 4CL-2835
Released December 16, 1967.
SI = 5

A Hard Day’s Night
United Artists U-6006
Released fall 1968. White shell with cover slicks.
SI = 7

All of the Capitol four tracks above feature clear front shells. At about the time of Sgt. Pepper, some tapes can be found with pink frosted front shells. Still later (1968-9), Muntz-made tapes feature frosted brown front shells.

On Sunday, May 5, 1968, an out-of-control fire destroyed one of the buildings at the Muntz Stereo-Pak facility in Los Angeles, causing a production setback.

$1 Mil. Blaze Razes Muntz Duplication Plant in L. A.

LOS ANGELES — Fire gutted the building housing tape duplication, cartridge assembly and the music library at Muntz Stereo-Pak Sunday (5).
Six firemen battled the blaze which destroyed the company’s banks of 4-track duplicators and its complete cartridge assembly line. Damage was estimated at $1,000,000.
Two days after the fire, company officials were removing salvageable equipment and office furniture into other buildings. The destroyed building was Building No. 9 in the company’s complex which spreads over two streets in the industrial section of Van Noy.
Ed Michel, national record relations director, said the company will build new duplicators.
The company’s executive offices, located next door, were not affected by the blaze which began in the afternoon. There are generally no workers in the building on Sunday.
Building No. 9 is generally full of women employees assembling plastic cases and loading blank tape into cartridges on assembly lines. The duplication and loading operations are being located in other buildings, as the fire destroyed the facility’s roof.
Since part of the 4-track master tape library was destroyed in the blaze, Michel last week had an employee make many of his master tapes. “We’re fortunate in that we have all the records. This will be a very fast process,” Michel said. “Building duplicators in quick fashion to continue the flow of product to meet record manufacturer requirements will be a much more complex project.
President Earl Muntz said the company’s “crash program” to establish temporary duplicating facilities would help continue the flow of product to accounts.
John’s *Two Virgins* album was released in January, 1969. Since Capitol did not manufacture the album in America, the four-track tapes were not made by Muntz but by other companies that were contracted by Tetragrammaton Records, the label that released the album in the United States. This resulted in the simultaneous release of four different tapes.

*Two Virgins* (J) Apple/Tetragrammaton TNX-45001
SI = 10

*Two Virgins* (J) Apple/Tetragrammaton 473-5001
Released 1969. With outer title box. Made by General Recorded Tape, Inc..
SI = 8

*Two Virgins* (J) Apple/Tetragrammaton F-5-5001
SI = 8
Wonderwall Music (G)  
*Apple 4CL-3350*

Released 1969.  
SI = 10

Post Card  
*Apple 4CL-3351*

Mary Hopkin  
Released March-April, 1969.  
SI = 10

Under the Jasmin Tree  
*Capitol 4CL-3353*

Modern Jazz Quartet  
Released April, 1969.  
SI = 10

Yes, this tape is on Capitol – not Apple.

Is This What You Want  
*Apple 4CL-3354*

Jackie Lomax  
Released May, 1969.  
SI = 10
Life With The Lions (I) Zapple 4CL-3357
Released May, 1969.
SI = 10

Electronic Sound (G) Zapple 4CL-3358
Released May, 1969.
SI = 10
As mentioned above, all of the Capitol 4 tracks are found with the Capitol "dome logo", which was in use until June, 1969. Only a few have yet been discovered to carry the new "C" logo, so that these are certainly scarcer, having been made for about 4 months at most.

I have verified the existence of the following Beatles four-track cartridges on Muntz tapes with the "C" logo:

The Early Beatles

Rubber Soul

Yesterday...And Today

Revolver

Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band
NOTE: It may be true that all of the mainstream Capitol four tracks were reissued when the tape catalog switched to Ampex in 1969. The following tapes, with yellow or tan shells, have been verified to exist:

*The Beatles' Second Album*  
Capitol/Ampex X-42080  
Tan/yellow shell with outer title box.  
Issued 1969.  
SI = 9

*Beatles '65*  
Capitol/Ampex X-42228  
Tan/yellow shell with outer title box.  
Issued 1969.  
SI = 10

*Revolver*  
Capitol/Ampex X-42576  
Tan/yellow shell with outer title box.  
Issued 1969.  
SI = 10
**Sgt. Pepper’s LHCB** Capitol/Ampex X-42653
Tan/yellow shell with outer title box.
Issued 1969.
SI = 10

**Magical Mystery Tour** Capitol/Ampex X-42835
Tan/yellow shell with outer title box.
Issued 1969.
SI = 10

**The Beatles** Apple/Ampex M4-101 and M4-2101
Tan/yellow shell with outer title box. Two-tape set.
Issued 1969.
SI = 9

**Yellow Submarine** Capitol/Ampex X-4153
Tan/yellow shell with outer title box.
Issued 1969.
SI = 10

All of the Ampex-made four-track reissues of the Capitol/Apple catalog are much scarcer than their Muntz-made counterparts.
The following tapes were all made by Ampex unless indicated. Therefore, they all have tan shells and an outer title box (with a large Apple), unless indicated.

**Abbey Road**
Apple/Ampex X-4383
Tan/yellow shell with outer box. The cover to the above tape does not list “Her Majesty.” Issued October, 1969.
SI = 7

**Live Peace in Toronto (J)**
Apple/Ampex X-43362
SI = 8

**Hey Jude**
Apple/Ampex X-4385
SI = 6
Let it Be  Apple/Ampex X-434001
SI = 6

A Hard Day’s Night  United Artists U-6006
Released 1970. Black shell with cover sicks.
SI = 6

McCartney (P)  Apple/Ampex X-43363
SI = 8
McCartney (P)  
Apple/Ampex X-43365  
SI = 9

Plastic Ono Band (J)  
Apple/Ampex X-43372  
SI = 9

Got any others (Beatles/solo) not listed here? Send me photos of 'em!

Mary Hopkin's Post Card, sold for $192.50. Wonderwall Music is in the same price range, and Electronic Sound has sold for about $300.

The four-track tape passed on in favor of the eight track, which in turn was to die in favor of the cassette. The very rare Ain't She Sweet album goes for over $500.