US Decca Records Singles

This labelography addresses “main” line singles only. Decca used several series to indicate “main” series. These were usually divided by musical style early on (pop, country/western, “race”), but that distinction diminished as time passed. The series addressed here are described in the paragraphs below.

100 – 4500 (from 1934 to 1945) Popular Music series
5000 – 6112 (from 1934 to 1945) Country & Western series
7000 – 7910 (from 1934 to 1944) Jazz and Blues series

A new series opens up at 23000, starting in 1936, and another at 18000 in 1939. At first these were mainly limited to singles that were part of Decca albums.

18000 – 18999 (1939 – 1946)
23000 – 23999 (1936 to 1947) “Personality Series”
The series that wound up as the “last” mainline series started with 23000 in 1942, jumped from 23999 to 24100 in 1947, and jumped from 24999 to 27000 in 1950.
24100 – 24999 (1947 to 1950)
27000 – 33057+ (1950 to 1973)

Factory information about Decca:
New York plant 1934 (closes 1949)
Bridgeport, CT, plant 1938
Richmond, IN, plant 1939 (to December, 1957). The plant was idle from 1948 to October, 1949.
Richmond used a star (★) symbol until August, 1952, and then a diamond symbol (◊). The diamond was also used on LP’s.
Lee Records of Hollywood, CA, began pressing west-coast copies 1946, but the Decca Los Angeles plant opened in 1947 (to 2/13/1954). From 1954 to 1958, west-coast copies were pressed for Decca by RCA Hollywood, with labels from Bert-Co.

The factory symbol represents the B-side (or side two) in most cases.
The Gloversville, NY plant opened in summer, 1953.
They used a quatrefoil (✝) or plus-like symbol for singles; they used a target (☉) for LP’s.
By this time Bridgeport was probably making only LP’s, and LA was probably pressing only 78’s.

Pinckneyville, IL, plant opened 1957.
They used a filled-in diamond (✞) for singles and for LP’s.

Label 34 – October, 1934, through December, 1937

Blue label. DECCA appears in 3D letters.
There is a short manufacturing statement at the bottom of the label.

Highest known:
Series A: 1597
Series B: 5456
Series C: 7295
**Label 38** – January, 1938, through July, 1941

Blue label with DECCA in gold at top in 2D letters. Rim text shows three patent numbers and “other patents pending.” A manufacturing statement runs across middle of label, reading “Manufactured in U.S.A. by Decca Records, Inc.” Above it is written “TRADE MARK REGISTERED.” Records in the 18000 series have red labels.

Highest known:
Series A: 3732 (March, 1941)
Series B: 5869
Series C: 7827

**Label 38t** – July, 1941, through January, 1942

Blue label with DECCA in gold at top in 2D letters. Rim text shows three patent numbers and “other patents pending.” Manufacturing statement across middle of label, above which is written “REG US PAT OFF.” Records in the 18000 series have red labels.

Highest known:
Series A: 4047, 4288
Series B: 
Series C: 

**Label 38m** – January, 1942, through 1945

Blue label with DECCA in gold at top in 2D letters. The manufacturing statement across the middle of the label now reads “Manufactured by Decca Records, Inc., New York, U.S.A.” Above that are written “REG US PAT OFF” and “MARCA REGISTRADA.” Records in the 18000 series have red labels until April, 1942. At that time, the 18000 series switched to the script label, below.

Highest known:
Series A: 4455
Series B: 6107
Series C: 7910

The Decca Personality Series (23000) began with a red label that looked very similar to those above. The earliest labels had “Personality Series” in a curvy Art-Deco style, and “Not licensed for radio broadcast” ran across the middle of the label. At least by 1940 the labels came to resemble more closely the standard series.
**Label 42** – April, 1942, through November, 1946

Black label with gold print. “Decca” is in a script typeface. There is now only one line of print running around the lower rim of the label. The Personality Series (23000) switched labels, too. Their version of the Script label has Personality Series above “Decca” – with “Personality” also in script.

The Personality Series remained on the script label for part of 1942 (at least through 23255), but after that time it spawned a label style of its own. See below. The 18000 series remained on the script label until single 18923 in November, 1946. At that point in time the series concluded; the script label lived on in other series.

**Label 43** – September, 1942, through December, 1954

The personality series changed to an entirely new label style. This one has a star at the top of the label and features “DECCA” in a thin font with serifs. After the catalog number, each side ends with an “A” or “B” designator.

When the 23000 series reached 23999 in 1947, since numbers 23400 through 23099 had been taken up with a set of “songs of the year” packages back in 1942, the numbering skipped ahead to 24100.

By this time, the distinction in price between different series of singles had been eliminated – with all of the prices shifting to 75 cents. The series began to combine, with the 24000 series becoming the main series. Circa single 24714 there was a minor shift.

From August, 1949, to mid-October, 1949, there is no “hit side” designator on either side.
From October, 1949, to about August, 1952, there is a star (★) next to the matrix number marking the B-side. After that time the Richmond factory used a diamond (◊) next to the B-side.

In late April, 1950, the numbering reached 24999 (a single by Guy Lombardo). Since there already had been series with intervening numbers, the numbering jumped ahead to 27000 (a single by Evelyn Knight). Both singles are advertised in the 4/29/1950 issue of *Billboard*.
The first “new” 45-RPM singles were numbered around 9-27125, and the company began pressing a lot of its back catalog in the new format. While the 78 RPM label continued for four more years, 45 RPM singles got their own style. See “label 50” below.

In September, 1954, the print changed from gold to silver. This label remained in use on the west coast, with labels by Bert-Co, until about June, 1956.

**Label 50** – August, 1950, through December, 1954*
This label is found on 45 RPM singles only.
“DECCA” appears in an arc across the top of the label.
To each side of “DECCA” appear concentric circular arcs.
*West coast pressings printed by Bert-Co in Los Angeles continued to have this label style until at least the middle of 1958, since they had so many blank labels in their possession.
As with the 78’s, from August, 1950, to about August, 1952, there is a star (★) next to the matrix number marking the B-side. After that time the Richmond factory began to use a diamond (◇) next to the B-side.

Late 9-29374 (Georgie Shaw)

**Label 55** – December, 1954, through February, 1960

“DECCA” appears in a wider arc across the label.
There is a star under DECCA. On the 78 RPM label, there is a single horizontal line to either side of the star; on the 45 RPM label there are three concentric arcs to either side of the star.
In about December, 1957, east coast copies switched to Gloversville, who used a quatrefoil (◇) or plus-like symbol.
30515 – diamond
30520 – quatrefoil
The last 78 RPM single appears to have been Decca 30681, Bill Haley’s “Don’t Nobody Move”/“Lean Jean” – from July, 1958.
In 1960, Decca followed other record companies in switching most of their line to a more colorful label. That style featured the letters of "DECCA" in five different colors across the middle of the label in a band of colors. The rest of the label was black. To the left of the spindle hole, the printing indicated that the record was manufactured by "DECCA RECORDS INC NEW YORK USA."

At first, the singles on this label maintained the 9- prefix that distinguished 45's from 78's. With 78 RPM singles now a memory, there was really no need for this. At the beginning of 1961, Decca dropped the 9- prefix.

Promotional labels remained in the earlier style (label 55).

Pinckneyville labels switched to the new style (60m) at the end of January, 1967. Many singles from 1967 are known with Gloversville labels having the earlier “60” backdrop: from 32118 until at least 32206. Gloversville seemed to have used up old labels until October, 1967.

In 1962, the Music Corporation of America (MCA) bought out Universal-International (which was owned by Decca). They did not immediately change their label styles. But by 1967, Decca Records began to proclaim on its labels their affiliation with MCA. Labels from this period look almost identical to labels from the early 60's. However, the words "A DIVISION OF MCA" were added to the printing underneath the color band on the label. During this period, Decca altered their promotional labels to make the more contemporary.

In 1970 Decca was completely absorbed by MCA. There were enough blank 45 labels to last until November, 1971, after which time the fine print changed again. Picture sleeves issued during this last period list Decca's new address in Universal City, California. The fine print on the label is supposed to read “Mf'd by © MCA Records Inc., Calif. U.S.A.,” but the copyright symbol is missing from the print on 45's.

The Decca label has been revived a few times for limited promotional or jukebox singles: notably from 1994-1998 in 1998, and in 2007. There were standard label designs in the 90’s, but no records from the earlier catalog was reissued onto these label styles, since they were not regular issues. Nevertheless they are shown below.
US Decca Album Labels

Following Columbia's introduction of the LP, American Decca quickly embraced the long play format and began issuing LP albums. This label guide covers album labels by Decca Records from 1949 until 1973, when MCA stopped using the Decca name on albums.

DEC49

The first Decca label had gold print and featured "DECCA" along with "Long Play" and "33 1/3 RPM" at the top of the label. The words "Microgroove UNBREAKABLE" appear at the bottom. Along the label's sides are eight concentric bands.

Main line Decca labels were dark brown (whether 10" LP's or soundtracks). Decca also introduced a 9000 series which sported maroon labels with the same design. There was also a gold label design (DL 9600 series) that was short-lived. All albums, except for gold label albums, that were released before the middle of 1955 had this label design on first pressings.

Note: Decca Records bought Universal Studios in 1952.
Decca's second label retained some circular banding along the sides but reduced the overall size of the label. Stars were added, "LONG PLAY 33 1/3 RPM" was moved to the bottom of the label, and the reference to the microgroove process was removed. Main line labels were black, while the 9000 series was again a maroon or dark red. Promotional labels from this period were pink, with the earliest promo labels having the banding along the sides of the label.

This Decca style began with approximately album DL 8100 in the 8000 series, 8319 in the 8300 series, and 9018 in the 9000 series. After the introduction of stereo in 1958, stereo labels were introduced. It was decided that stereo records would have the same catalog numbers as their mono counterparts but would begin with "7". Before long, a new label design was in the works....
In 1960, Decca followed other record companies in switching most of their line to a more colorful label. That style featured the letters of "DECCA" in five different colors across the middle of the label in a band of colors. The rest of the label was black. Underneath the color band, the printing indicated that the record was manufactured by "DECCA RECORDS INC NEW YORK USA." This same print had been on the earlier label style (above) without the color band. Decca soon adopted a new cover logo that was shaped like an arrow.

At the top of the label, the words "LONG PLAY 33" appear on mono albums; the word "STEREOPHONIC" appears at the top of stereo LP’s. Promotional copies of this label style (and the ones that follow) were white with black print.

An apparent exception to this rule is the DL 9000/79000 series, which seems to have remained on the earlier red label style for first pressings in both mono and stereo. For example, I have seen DL 79114 from 1964 on the red label.
In 1962, the Music Corporation of America (MCA) bought out Universal-International (which was owned by Decca). They did not immediately change their label styles. But by 1967, Decca Records began to proclaim on its labels their affiliation with MCA. Labels from this period look almost identical to labels from the early 60's. However, the words "A DIVISION OF MCA" were added to the printing underneath the color band on the label. Decca also updated its maroon label for DL 9000 series LP's with a production statement on the label indicating "A DIV. OF MCA, INC.".

After the creation of another new Decca logo in 1970, Decca was completely absorbed by MCA. Covers of albums originally issued from 1971 on list Decca's new address in Universal City, California. The fine print on the label now reads, "Mf'd by © MCA Records Inc., Calif. U.S.A." Around DL 79180, the 79000 series switched to the black label like other releases. Decca used this label style until 1973, when MCA switched all Decca albums and singles to its own (MCA) label. This same change happened too on other labels (e.g., Uni) which were also owned by MCA.

Footnote: MCA continued to grow, purchasing ABC-Paramount (including its subsidiaries, such as Dunhill), Chess, Dot, Command Records, and eventually Motown, Verve, GRP, Def Jam, and Geffen. In early 1991, the parent company of Panasonic -- Matsushita Electrical Industrial Co. -- bought MCA. In June, 1995, MCA was sold to the Seagram Company Ltd., makers of fine liquor and (by that time) a large, multinational company. Near the end of 1996, MCA formally became Universal Studios. After the purchase of PolyGram in 1998, the Universal Music Group became the largest in the recording industry. Seagram was bought by a French company, and the conglomerate became known as Vivendi Universal. Even with all of these changes, MCA Records still thrives...but without Decca/Coral/Brunswick.

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