

Bronzed CD alert!

Gerry Gibson at Library of Congress has been following up an Internet posting about the bronze discolouration affecting the playability of CD's issued on certain labels. Members of the IASA Technical Committee will no doubt be aware of this phenomenon but the information obtained by Gerry may be news to other members.

Gerry checked out the record company Hyperion's Website:

"Any compact discs on the Hyperion, ASV, Unicorn-Kanchana, or Pearl labels made in UK by Philips Dupont Optical UK (PDO) from 1988 to 1993 may already be *unplayable*. The symptoms appear as a bronze discolouration toward the outer edge of the label side and a clicking noise like surface noise toward the end of the disk. Disks made by PDO will have an identifying stamp near the center of the disk stating "made in UK" or "made in UK by PDO". PDO will replace these corroded disks. All they need is a list of catalogue numbers, you need not, at the moment, return the disks. For more information, including address and phone numbers for PDO, go to the Hyperion web site <http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk> (link is external), and click on the *Hyperion News* link, where you will find:

"A note about corroding CDs manufactured by Philips & Du Pont Optical UK Ltd (PDO).

The pressing factory PDO has acknowledged responsibility for producing some CD's between 1988 and 1993 using a lacquer which was not suitable to withstand the corrosive effect of the sulphur content of paper used in the printing of CD booklets and other paper parts. The problem has been extremely disruptive to us and has caused much embarrassment. We can only apologise for any alarm and inconvenience caused and assure you of our commitment to your satisfaction.

The symptoms of the corrosion are obvious. Audibly it manifests first towards the end of the disc (i.e. the outer edge) and sounds not unlike rhythmic LP surface noise. Visibly it manifests as a coppery-bronze discolouration, usually on the edge of the label side of the disc. (n.b. it is NOT the overall yellow tint which is common to all PDO pressings. This is due to the addition of a tiny amount of yellow dye which PDO adds to the polycarbonate for cosmetic purposes).

At the time that PDO were manufacturing the affected CDs for us, they were also pressing for other classical labels and we suggest that you check any discs you have from ASV, Unicorn-Kanchana and Pearl. Given the nature of the problem of corrosion, in that it progresses over time, we recommend that you check any suspect discs on, say, a six-monthly basis. The name of the disc manufacturer is usually (but not always) engraved around the centre hole of the disc in the transparent area. If there is no manufacturer's name shown at all then it would be worth checking with PDO. They have agreed to replace any CDs which are corroding as a result of the defect and have set up a United Kingdom freephone helpline to deal with complaints and enquiries about it. The number is 0800 387063. If you live in the United Kingdom we suggest that you call them directly if you have reason to believe that there are discs in your collection made by PDO which are showing signs of corrosion.

Overseas customers will not be able to use the freephone line. They can, if they wish, communicate directly with PDO at the address below and perhaps ask for a refund of the cost of the telephone call, fax or letter. In any case they should NOT return faulty discs to either dealer or distributor, or to Hyperion. They can, if they wish, return the disc to PDO but it is not necessary. Initially at least, just a letter will do. If they do return any CDs they should send JUST THE DISC, NOT THE JEWEL CASE OR PRINTED MATTER, because PDO will replace only the disc.

Here is PDO's address:

Philips & Du Pont Optical UK Ltd, Philips Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 5RZ England. Fax: [44] [0]1254 54729 (dial 44 1254 54729 from outside U.K.), Telephone: [44] [0]1254 52448 (dial 44 1254 52448 from outside U.K.) Freephone: 0800 387063 (U.K. only)

Hyperion Records Ltd now uses PDO only for pressing replacement discs for earlier numbers. We are assured that the problem has been solved and see no reason to remove master tapes from them. We did retrieve a number of masters when the problem first came to light, and redirected them to another factory. Therefore, a small number of titles cannot be replaced by PDO and would have to be supplied by ourselves. All new titles are pressed elsewhere.

Although PDO have agreed to replace corroded CDs on our behalf, we are aware of our responsibilities to our customers and wish to reassure them that we are committed to seeing that they are ultimately satisfied with our products. Should you feel that you are not being treated efficiently by PDO, then please do not hesitate to get in touch with us directly: Richard Howard, Production Manager, Hyperion Records Limited, London, info@hyperion-records.co.uk (link sends e-mail)

Peter Copeland (Conservation Manager at the British Library National Sound Archive) adds:

"Barry Fox [renowned British commentator on audiovisual technology] has an alternative explanation

which seems rather more likely than Hyperion's. It is that PDO were understandably using silver in preference to aluminium for the reflective layer of CDs, because they thought a precious metal would be more stable. When the discs were packed in sulphuriferous sleeves, silver sulphate formed, and it is this which is "bronze." NSA's experience with Philips confirms the Hyperion information: they have been extremely helpful, offering to re-master any discs (even deleted ones), because where there is one defective disc there are likely to be others.

Note that the problem was first noticed with CD singles (packed in paper sleeves rather than jewel cases), but now regular CDs are becoming affected as well. As a conservation issue, the recording is in the polycarbonate, not the reflective layer; so in principle it would be possible to split the sandwich and re-coat the polycarbonate with aluminium as a last-ditch conservation measure.

Quelle <https://www.iasa-web.org/information-bulletin-no-22-july-1997>