

Chapter 1 – Washing Discs

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78 RPM records are 50 or more years old and they should always be washed before copying. These discs are made from shellac which dissolves in alcohol so it's absolutely essential that no alcohol is used to clean them! 45 RPM records can be as old as 56 years (RCA released the first ones in 1949) so they should be washed too. They are made of vinyl but water washing is still best.

78, 45 and LP (33 RPM) discs can be washed by hand using a fine bristle brush or a "paint pad" (a pad with fine bristles) and diluted dish washing detergent (NOT dish WASHER detergent). Rug shampoo works too but make sure the label says "safe for all synthetics." Scrub the disc to get the grime out of the grooves, rinse in warm tap water and then in room temperature distilled water. The distilled water rinse is especially important if your tap water contains a lot of dissolved minerals. Dry both sides with a CLEAN, soft cloth such as a bath towel or diaper and then place the disc on edge in a dish rack to finish drying. I have found that drying the disc with a cloth is not necessary if you use a distilled water rinse. Just place the disc on edge in a dish rack and let it dry. The distilled water rinse will leave the surface spot free. When the disc is dry, place it in a NEW sleeve [1]. They are inexpensive and won't re-contaminate the clean surfaces.

A method that works well if you have only a few records to wash is to buy a new 1 or 1-1/2 inch wide paint brush. Use a sharp knife or new single edge razor blade to cut the bristles off leaving about a half inch. This makes the brush stiff enough to scrub. Add about a teaspoon of dish washing detergent to four ounces of warm water and mix well. Dip the brush in this solution and scrub one side of the disc back and forth in the direction of the grooves. Go all the way around twice. Turn the disc over and repeat. With a really dirty disc you'll see the suds turn grey or brown. Rinse in warm tap water and then in distilled water and put the disc on edge in a dish rack to dry. Rinsing does get the label wet but after cleaning more than a hundred records this way, I've never had a label discolor or come off.

If you have a collection of records to clean you may want to step up to some amount of automation. For about \$60 you can get a "Spin-Clean Record Washing System" [2]. This system has a reservoir with a pair of built-in brushes that scrub both sides of the disc at the same time. You put some diluted proprietary cleaning solution in the reservoir and rotate the record by hand through the solution and between the brushes. Then you remove the record and wipe it dry with one of their washable drying cloths. I haven't tried this but it is probably faster than hand washing.

If you want even more automation, "Nitty Gritty" makes a vacuum record cleaning machine that comes in a variety of models: manual, semi-manual, semi-automatic and automatic at prices that range from about \$300 to \$900. The final step in the cleaning processing is the vacuuming of the cleaning solution and dirt out of the grooves. I have heard that these machines work very well. They are available from *Garage-A-Records* [2] and *Audio Advisor* [3] and others.

1. For example, *Hawthorn's Antique Audio* sells 10 and 12 inch sleeves made from heavy kraft paper. You can contact them at 77 Columbus Ave., Roseville, CA 95678. 1-916-773-4727 or online at <http://www.thoseoldrecords.com>.

Another sleeve supplier that I have been using is *Sleeve City*, 7600 Appling Center Drive, # 102,

Memphis, TN 38133 or online at <http://www.sleevetown.com>. They carry polylined heavy paper sleeves which are recommended for vinyl records but I've been using them for 78s too.

2. "Spin-Clean" is available from *Garage-A-Records*, 131 Wildthorne Court, Columbia City, IN 46725. Phone 1-888-800-7597 or online at <http://www.garage-a-records.com>.

3. "Nitty Gritty" systems are available from *Garage-A-Records* (above) and from *Audio Advisor* and others. You can contact *Audio Advisor, Inc.* at 4717A Broadmoor SE, Kentwood, MI 49512. Phone 1-800-942-0220 or online at <http://www.audioadvisor.com>.

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