

## History of Parlophone Singles



Parlophon began as a German company founded in 1896 by Carl Lindström, a Swedish inventor who lived in Berlin. Lindström made phonographs using the name “Parlophon,” and dictating machines using the name “Parlograph.” In 1911, Lindström’s company obtained controlling interest in the International Talking Machine Company – the German corporation that owned and had created Odeon Records. Lindström saw the opportunity to merge the European record manufacturing and player manufacturing markets, and to expand this new industry. During this period, records were being exported from Germany to Great Britain in increasing numbers – so that German imports consisted of a sizable portion of the British record market. Lindström endeavored to expand the production of Odeon’s discs worldwide, and after the First World War he succeeded in

bringing the Odeon label to the United States, but his struggles to acquire a British company had been unsuccessful.

William Barry Owen worked for German-American inventor Emile Berliner, the man who introduced the disc record and “gramophone” in late 1887. In July, 1897, he left US-based National Gramophone Company, a subsidiary of Berliner Gramophone, to move to England. He and Trevor Williams founded the UK Gramophone Company in May, 1898 – not long after Lindström founded his Parlophon company in Germany. Their independent company became Berliner’s partner in Britain.



One of Berliner’s associates was Frank Seaman, who had managed the National Gramophone Company. Seaman left Berliner in 1899. Using technology that he “borrowed” from Berliner, Seaman founded Zon-o-Phone Records. Seaman pursued an alliance with Columbia Records, offering Columbia royalties for the stylus design in exchange for driving Emile Berliner out of business in America. The following year, a judge sided with Seaman, forcing the American Gramophone Company out of business.

Berliner and a co-defendant, Eldridge Johnson (who owned the Consolidated Talking Machine Company), counter sued. In 1901, the suit was adjudicated in their favor. As a result, since they were the ultimate winners, they founded a new company called Victor. Within two years, all of Zon-o-Phone’s American assets were handed over to Victor, while their British assets became part of Berliner’s British Partner – the Gramophone Company. This prompted an expansion and the foundation of His Master’s Voice (HMV) Records in England. The “Zonophone” name, now without



hyphens, continued to be used in Great Britain as a budget-priced label.

Beka Records became part of Lindström's company in 1910. Then in 1911, after taking over Odeon, Carl Lindström proposed an alliance between his German corporation and the Gramophone Company in England. By this time, Lindström had opened Parlophon records in Germany. Their logo featured a record player and a German "L" – standing for Lindström, of course. The Gramophone Company carefully considered the proposed merger, and determined that their own profits were higher than Lindström's. Since the Gramophone Company was also seeking to expand, a merger between the companies should have made sense. However, since Victor (USA) did not wish to merge with Lindström, since Gramophone was contracted to Victor for the purchase of record players, and since Eldridge Johnson of Victor planned to expand into Europe if Gramophone broke their arrangement, the merger fell through – at least temporarily.



This temporary setback in Lindström's expansion into England was met with the formation of Carl Lindström Ltd. in England on March 26, 1913. Due to the impending war with Germany, issues regarding that expansion could not be resolved until after the war ended, but Beka-Grand singles were manufactured in England in 1913; the British assets were sold off as enemy property; something similar happened in Germany to Deutsche Grammophon, the German branch of the Gramophone Co., Ltd.



The Transoceanic Trading Company opened in 1919 in Holland, thanks to Maurits Stibbe, who was the owner of an Odeon record shop in Amsterdam. The following year, all of Carl Lindström's overseas companies were being run through this Dutch affiliate. Through it, then, Lindström began operating his British office of the Beka label in England. On November 23, 1921, Lindström and Otto Heineman of General Phonograph (USA) reached an agreement allowing Lindström's companies to distribute Okeh records in Europe and to supply General Phonograph with foreign-language recordings. Now, Lindström's German record label was morphing into Parlophon. Therefore, Transoceanic founded a British branch of Parlophon on August 8, 1923. Adding an "e", the new company was christened the Parlophone Company. Parlophone produced record players and both 10-inch and 12-inch singles. Lindström's success brought interest from Columbia Graphophone. In October, 1925, Columbia Graphophone set up Columbia International and bought out Lindström and the US Columbia Phonograph Company, giving them control of Parlophone. As Columbia expanded, one year later they purchased the Okeh label, which was owned by one of Berliner's former partners and which had a good relationship with Parlophone already. This brought Parlophone a stronger arrangement with Okeh whereby Parlophone and Odeon



manufactured and distributed Okeh's catalog in Great Britain. This helped to orient the Parlophone catalog toward jazz recordings.

In the early days, Parlophone used both "E" and "R" to indicate price codes. The 3000 series became the "royal blue" series of deluxe recordings in 1926. Just over a year later, the company added a new "dark blue label" series that began with R-100 (apparently Sophie Tucker's "The Man I Love" and "My Pet," recorded for Okeh in March, 1928). On April 21, 1931, as many companies were having financial problems, Columbia merged with The Gramophone Company/HMV to form Electric & Musical Industries; EMI was born. In November that same year, Abbey Road Studios opened for business.



Anti-trust lawsuits caused EMI to sell the US branch of Columbia, and RCA (Victor) sold its shares in EMI in 1935. EMI retained the British rights to Nipper the dog, and to the HMV and Columbia labels. From that point on, Parlophone continued as a subsidiary of the larger corporation but retaining considerable autonomy. The label continued to release jazz records, but as the years went by, Parlophone became associated with home-grown British comedy records.

In 1953, Parlophone added the 45-RPM single to its list of available formats. At first, these were given their own series, prefixed with MSP – apparently standing for "Microgroove Single, Parlophone." The MSP-6000 series remained on a purple label with gold print throughout its three-year run – after which time the 45 RPM singles were merged into the R-series and given an additional 45- prefix. The gold print was difficult to read, and in 1957 the print was changed from gold to silver. This led to the well-known red label in 1958; the 78 RPM single lasted for approximately another year.



### Parlophone and the Pound Sign

Casual observers often inquire as to whether the Parlophone company logo is supposed to be the same symbol that is used in Great Britain to indicate their chief monetary unit: the Pound Sterling. The simple answer is "no," but the matter requires more explanation.

As we have seen, in creating his logo Carl Lindström used a German black-letter Gothic form of the letter "L". That "L", written in a fancy form of the letter as "£," stood for his last name.

Great Britain had been using pounds (librae), shillings (solidi), and pence (denarii) for many years. Since the Latin word for pound began with the letter L, the symbol for pound sterling also used an "L". The form taken by that "L" varied, but some form of Gothic wording always appeared on early British bank notes. Eventually, the printed symbol for the British



pound came to resemble the £ in the Parlophone logo almost exactly. It is quite possible that Lindström himself never saw the written symbol for the pound sterling. The symbol shown to the right appeared on a one-pound note from 1914.



## “Love Me Do”/ “PS I Love You”

### Label 01dj

Parlophone 45-R 4949

White label with black print and a red “A” on the A-side.

These 250 promotional copies misspell McCartney as McArtney.



### Label 01A

Parlophone 45-R 4949

Red label with silver print. The word “mono” does not appear on the label.

“Made in Gt. Britain” appears at the right side under the Parlophone logo.

These labels were printed between October and December, 1962, and from February to July, 1963.



Three “early” label variations are known. These are:

**Label 01A(i):** Publishing credits are indented.

**Label 01A(ii):** “Love Me Do” is centered properly over (Lennon-McCartney); the left side of the “C” of “7XCE” is over the right of the “RE” of “RECORDING.”

**Label 01A(iii):** As above, but the left side of the “C” of “7XCE” is at the left of the “R” in “RECORDING.”

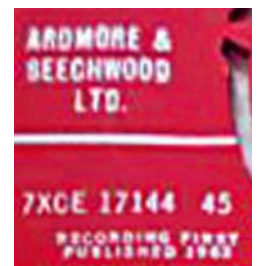
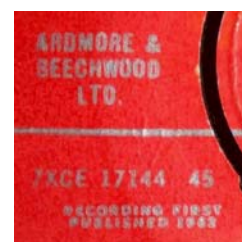


Two “late” label variations are known. These are:



**Label 01A(iv):** “Love Me Do” is aligned further to the right over (Lennon-McCartney); the left side of the “C” of “7XCE” is slightly to the left of the “R” of “RECORDING.”

**Label 01A(v):** As above, but the “C” of “7XCE” is centered over the “R” in “RECORDING.” There is also less space below the matrix number.



A few copies of Label 01A may be found with an MT tax stamp adhered to the label.



**Label 01B**

Parlophone 45-R 4949

Red label with silver print. The word “mono” does not appear on the label.

“Made in Gt. Britain” does NOT appear at the right side under the Parlophone logo.

These labels were printed from December, 1962, through February, 1963.



Three label variations are known. These are:



**Label 01B(i):** “Love Me Do” is properly centered over the author credit.

**Label 01B(ii):** “Love Me Do” is aligned further to the right over the author credit. The closing parenthesis is



missing on the “PS I Love You” side.

**Label 01B(iii):** The same as label 01b(ii), except the closing

parenthesis is present.

The order of the pressings of the red-label “Love Me Do” singles was as follows:

- 01A(i) October, 1962
- 01A(ii) and 01A(iii) October-December, 1962
- 01B(i) December, 1962
- 01B(ii) and 01B(iii) December, 1962, to February, 1963
- 01A(iv) Spring, 1963
- 01A(v) Summer, 1963

**Label 02**

Parlophone R 4949

Black label with silver print. No EMI logo

Parlophone Co. rim print in Title Case; no “Sold in UK” tax disclaimer

Pressed between Summer, 1963, and January, 1964



**Label 03A**

Parlophone R 4949

Black label with silver print. No EMI logo

Parlophone Co. rim print in Title Case; with "Sold in UK" tax disclaimer

RECORDING FIRST PUBLISHED 1962 is in all caps.

Pressed in early 1964.



**Label 03B**

Parlophone R 4949

Black label with silver print. No EMI logo

Parlophone Co. rim print in Title Case; with "Sold in UK" tax disclaimer

Recording First published 1962 is in Title Case.

Pressed in 1964.



**Label 03C**

Parlophone R 4949

Black label with silver print. No EMI logo

Parlophone Co. rim print in ALL CAPS; with "Sold in UK" tax disclaimer

Pressed in 1964-65.



Two label variations are known:

Label 03C(i) has the L of LTD under the EC of BEECHWOOD.

Label 03C(ii) has the L of LTD under the C of BEECHWOOD.



The single was out of print from 1965 to 1976. No pressings of this single are extant from Label 03C until March, 1976, when they were all reissued. This is confirmed by *Beatles (Monthly) Book No. 56*, where it is stated (p. 13) that most of the early singles were out of print.

**Label 76**

Parlophone R 4949

Black label with silver print. EMI logo.

Rim text begins with "EMI RECORDS LTD."

Pressed in 1976-82. This release features the version of the A-side with Andy White on drums.



**Picture Sleeve:** The entire series was released in sleeves with a common design showing a green "record sleeve" on one side and a photo of the Beatles on the other side. The photo used on this single shows the group crouched and sitting together, wearing brown suits.

**Label 82**

Parlophone 45-R 4949

Red label with silver print. The word "MONO" appears on the label.

Rim text begins with "the Parlophone Co., Ltd." The sides are labeled 'A' SIDE and 'B' SIDE.

Pressed from October, 1962, to c. 1984.



**Picture Sleeve:** The photograph from the 1976 sleeve was used on this "20<sup>th</sup> anniversary" sleeve; the back cover shows another shot from the same photo session, and "R 4949" appears alone in the upper right corner.



### Label 82R

Parlophone 45-R 4949

Red label with silver print. The word "MONO" appears on the label.

Rim text mentions EMI as manufacturer. The sides are labeled 'A' SIDE and 'B' SIDE.

The text at the bottom now includes "hiring" and "renting" among prohibited activities.

Pressed from c. 1984 to 1992.



### Label 92

Parlophone R 4949

Silver injection-molded label with black print.

Pressed in 1992.



**Picture Sleeve:** The picture sleeve resembles the 1980's reissue, but "R 4949" appears with bar code information in the upper right corner of the back cover.

### Label 12

Parlophone 45-R 4949 (LC0542)

Red label with silver print. The word "MONO" appears on the label.

Rim text mentions 2009 digital recordings. Pressed in 2012.



Copies with matrix number BC88258-01A1 mistakenly use the Andy White version of the A-side.

Corrected copies with the Ringo Starr version have the matrix number BC91232-01A1. These copies also have shinier silver print.

Although advertised by sellers as "withdrawn," EMI merely replaced one version with the other.

## Picture Disc

### Label PD

Parlophone RP 4949

In 1982, accompanying the singles boxed set and as a stand-alone release, Parlophone pressed copies of this single as a picture disc.



Information about the 1962 to 1965 pressings may be found in more detail in *Beatles for Sale on Parlophone Records*, by Bruce Spizer and Frank Daniels. This article © 2017 Frank Daniels.