

“What the world needs is a zine for people who actually use 8-tracks.”Mr. Paul Mendelowitz

The Use of 8-Tracks and The Theory of The Frozen Cart

I have an 8-track cartridge in my freezer. It's been there for a long time and I'm not certain how it got there. I never thought about it until I read Mr. Mendelowitz's thought provoking comments on the use of 8-tracks in 8-Track Mind (Fall 1997 #93). I know there have been several occasions when friends visiting me have spotted the 8-track in my freezer and have pulled it out to ask me why it's in my freezer. My standard reply has been "I don't know". We laugh about it and then I put it back in the same place where it's been for years. I don't pay attention to it. I can't even remember the artist. Nobody very famous. The cart has never been played, still in shrinkwrap, a thin layer of frost has accumulated obscuring the label. After reading the last issue of 8-Track Mind I began to reflect about this situation and now I have an idea how it got there.

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There is nothing special about the tape and since I can't even remember who the artist is I doubt I even bought it. So, I expect it must have been a gift. I usually remember when someone gives me an 8-Track because the occasions are rare and often it's a Sparks 8-Track, which I wouldn't leave in the freezer and I wouldn't forget. I remember having an 8-Track thrown at me at a screening of "So Wrong Their Right", the film by Russ Forrester. Maybe this is the 8-Track that caught that night. That would explain how it could be separate from all my other 8-Tracks. Often when I come home I unloaded my pockets onto the kitchen table. I don't usually have an 8-Track in my pocket but on the night of Russ's screening I would have. It may have sat on the table for a while as many things often do because that's the way things work around my house. It may have remained there for days. My next guess is that I came home from grocery shopping and dumped everything out of the shopping bags onto the table, as usual. If I didn't have time to put everything in it's proper place or if I was running late for work because I spent too much time listening to WFMU, as is often the case, then I might have accidentally tossed the 8-Track into the freezer with other perishable items. Since it was sealed in plastic it might have felt not too different from a box of frozen whatever. Around my house things just stay in the freezer until you eat them. So this could explain why it remained there for a long time. How's that for the use of an 8 Track?

Blank 8 Tracks Tapes

I have 3 blank 8-Tracks that I really like because of the design on the label of the cartridges. I don't know much about evaluating the tape within, other than to say they all play and whatever sounds are on or not on them sound perfectly fine to me. I will now describe the outer packages.

1. **Sentry PROFESSIONAL 8-Track Recording Cartridge 80 minute Low Noise, High Output.**

The cartridge has a black case with a brightly colored pattern of two converging circles filled with brightly colored bands similar to a target or two targets, one overlapping the other. Mildly psychedelic. The outer band is magenta then comes orange, then yellow, green and the bulls eye is blue. In a white oval placed over the centers of the targets is a Brit with the big black furry headdress and a red jacket holding a rifle over his shoulder. Looks like those palace guards you see on travel brochures about London. He looks like he's marching. On the back is a handy label that has a little picture of the Brit in the oval and a white box with lines numbered one to four. (two lines for each number). Apparently it's made and assembled in the U.S.A. because it says "made and assembled in the U.S.A." There's also some sort of an email address printed — *80min.totaltime@33/4 i.p.s.* The spine reads *SENTRY 8-Track Recording Cartridge* with a very large and prominent 80 and under it, very small, the word minutes, and another oval with the British marching man.

2. **Panasonic® 8-Track Cartridge Tape For Recording.** Playing time: 20 min./100 ft. (31m).

The case is beige with a black & white label. Over the black is the word *Panasonic* in the classic style of the Panasonic Corporation, like the logo that flashes on Times Square. The type is white so it stands out against the black. There is a ® placed just over the "c" in Panasonic which may have something to do with why Panasonic is a household word compared to Sentry which doesn't even have a registration mark. *8-Track Cartridge Tape* is in a dark green ink and below that, just as large, is *For Recording* which is in orange. It's a very handsome color scheme. Below are four white spaces separated by thin black lines. In the first space is a black circle with the word *Title* inside. Below that in the next space is a green circle with *Side 1* inside. The next space has an orange circle with *Side 2* inside, the next space has a green circle with *Side 3* inside, and finally at the bottom is another orange circle with *Side 4* inside. So you see there is a really good color scheme going on. Very well designed. Somebody studied color theory. On the spine is a smaller repeat of the title in white green and orange, along with a small *Made in Japan*. There is no label on the back but the naked beige plastic has a beautifully embedded impression that reads "STEREO CARTRIDGE SA-80 Made in Japan." It leaves a very good impression when turning it over.

3. **Audition Blank 8-Track Cartridge.** This cartridge is bright, bright orange. The label is off white, maybe it used to be white. It's a square label so it lets lots of the orange plastic show around it. It features a very large modern orange "40" prominently displayed. It almost shouts at you. Then, above it and to the left, another "40", a bit smaller and not quite as bright of orange color, and then above and to the left of it another even smaller and lighter "40", and then one more that almost reaches the upper left edge of the label. Each "40" gets smaller and lighter so they seem to be fading out or maybe soaring off the upper left edge of the label. I guess if the

label was bigger it would go on and on until at the end there would be just a tiny speck of a “40”, in white, on the white background. But since the label is off-white from age, maybe would see the white “40”. Who knows? Conversely I could imagine the effect being perceived as a the little light “40” zooming down into the center of the label and into your face because it ends up being really big and bright orange. But not as bright as the orange plastic case. Beautifully designed. There are some codes under the name *Audition*, some of which are faded beyond readability. *Audition* is in a handwritten kind of typestyle contrasting with the rest of the typography which is straight-edged and modern. There is also some necessary and possibly redundant information, in case you didn’t know what all the 40’s were about, that reads *40 minutes total time @33/4 i.p.s.* (or is that just the email address?) *Made in U.S.A. by Columbia Magnetics* is printed fairly large along the bottom of the label with a really simple but slick logo design that has a thin outline of a box with a pattern inside that looks like it could be a TV eye with pins sticking out of it. Or it could be a time tunnel with stickman legs that’s dancing and would fall over if the edges of the box weren’t there to hold him or her up. The spine just reads INDEX in the modern type, printed in orange with 2 black lines on the off-white label which extends to the back of the cartridge. On the back is the word CONTENTS with an orange rectangle next to it. Under that are lines numbered 1 to 4. The numbers are black and quite large with big black periods next to them in the modern type style of the 40 on the front. They really stand out against all the orange and off-white. Below is another orange rectangle with Woolworth and the Woolco logos in white or off-white. There’s a New York address, well I guess it’s an address although it only has New York, N.Y. and a zip code 10007. That’s downtown, I wonder if that’s the Woolworth building? Finally there’s a message printed very very small in all caps that reads SATISFACTION GUARANTEED REPLACEMENT MONEY REFUNDED. Makes me feel more confident about the product. Since I got this tape used there is some very faint ball point pen scribbles on the lines after the numbers which I expect weren’t on the packaging when it was new but fit the design very well anyway so I’ll mention them. After #1 is Bloody Mary Morning/It doesn’t Seem Right/Bad songs ain’t Selling This Year/ Coat of Many Colors. After #2 is You Look Like The Devil/ She Will Always be With Me/ Sunny Side of The Street. After #3 is Whisky River/ Travelin Man/, then some word I can’t read at all, and after #4 there is nothing written.

What I have been describing are the cartridges themselves. I haven’t mentioned the cases or sleeves. The sleeves don’t match the cartridges but they are really beautiful designed. Sometimes I buy an 8-Track for the sleeve and then I put the sleeve I like on cartridges I like best. Lately I have been paying special attention to the sleeves made for blank cartridges. Probably inspired by reading the 8-Track Mind. But I won’t get into that now.