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Highway hifi record player

This is an excerpt from chapter 9 of the book *Maverick Inventor* by Dr. Peter Goldmark (Copyright (c) 1973 by Peter C. Goldmark and Lee Edson). Here is the story of how Dr. Goldmark invented the Hi-Fi Highway. He was the man who ran CBS Labs and also invented the 33-1/3 rpm Long-Playing (LP) record format. Inventing in suburbia Father, Peter suddenly came out in the sea. Why don't they have adventure stories on the radio? Something you can put on. This thing can be so boring. Well, why not? How many times has he felt an agonizing boredom on long journeys, the irritating struggles between brother and sister, as young minds and bodies begin to feel cramped? I think I could have given up on the idea and moved on to things that were closer to CBS, but I kept thinking about my son's question. When I got back to work, I started to wonder how much information you can put on a small record to be used in a car without a changer. The answer, it turned out, is easy to imagine. To give us forty-five minutes of playing time on one side, as much content as both sides of an LP, and give us a record small enough to match its mechanism inside the glove compartment, the recording should be seven inches in diameter and should spin at 16 2/3 rpm, half the LP speed. In addition, it took almost three times the number of canels per inch as the LP did. I talked to my colleagues. I never know if they are affected by my enthusiasm or the idea itself. I generally try to limit the excitement that goes through me so that my associates won't feel they are dominated by my ideas, which I must admit, sometimes can seem to go far beyond the immediate achievements. In any case, they liked the notion of playing recordings in a car, and they seemed to say it. So we have to work right away. Our previous experience with LP has stayed in the right place, and in just six months we have developed the narrowest microgroove in the business, ultra microgroove. It was a third the width of a human hair. Fidelity was superb. It was time to show it to Stanton. I told him I had a present for him and I installed a custom-designed player in Thunderbird's glove. He liked it. I thought you gave up on the idea, he said. Then he added: 'I'm glad you didn't. I thought that the ultra microgroove turntable record could not only work in an auto, but also could become a standard in business record if radio stations went into broadcasting pop music, which generally comprises short numbers. Remembering the previous interest of Murphy and others at CBS in the 7-inch recording, I proposed it to management. Paley don't think much of this market; In fact, he doesn't that pop music was a market at all. He also considered that the recording players installed in the cars could cause the drivers to turn off the radio to listen to and thus CBS would lose listeners. I must confess that I didn't think the world would suffer if car drivers stopped The Shadow from time to time and listened to Debussy. Here is another case where I couldn't allow my enthusiasm to be mitigated by management negativity to new ideas. I decided to go ahead on my own and see how far I could get with the installation of cars. Since I was driving a Chrysler, I thought Chrysler Corporation might be interested in the device, and I got in touch with a man named Kent, who was the company's chief electrical engineer. A middle-aged man, face down in ruddy, who was then pioneering air conditioning in automobiles, Kent was interested in new ideas and invited me to Detroit. When I arrived, I told him I had something in the car that he was supposed to see. Curiously, he agreed to go to the parking lot with me. Inside the car, I turned on a switch. The music came pouring out of the car radio speaker, clear, beautiful, and static-free. Kent was scared. I opened the compartment and showed him the arrangement. He looked at the player's strange, homemade arm and nodded. It's fine while they're parked, he said. But is it all about driving on the road? You drive, I told him, giving him the keys. He slipped at the wheel, put the car in the car and slipped on the highway. The music continued to pour faithfully. Then it turned into a lot and stopped. Mind? be asked, pointing to a forward field. I looked at a land site that must have been created from a car engineer nightmare. There were cobblestones, pits, earth formations to wash, trestles, and almost every other strange irregularity he could find. This was Chrysler's testing ground, he told me, where the new models were shaken before being sent to distributors. My heart sank. I consoled myself with the thought that if the car is properly balanced, nothing can throw off. However, I couldn't help but worry. Kent shot the car over the trestles, but there was not even a whisper in the sound. He ran over the pavements, skidded on the washing board, climbed up and down. However, the music came out, loud and undisturbed. Kent was impressed and immediately said he would demonstrate President Chrysler's set. One thing I learned later was that each set of stones had its own frequency of vibrations when in contact with the moving machine, so I later had to design a filter that worked for more vibration possibilities than I ever thought. A few days later we went down to Chrysler's garage, where several people joined us. We all piled ourselves into one of the executive machines, which had been equipped with one of the sets Lynn Townsend, who later became president of the auto company, sat back with me while the then president of Chrysler headed. The directors gave the tone arm the same test as stones, around curves, over washboard roads, slowing down, accelerating, even emergency stops. The jolts were incredible. But so was the recordplayer. Nothing could stop him from fulfilling his designated mission. I, on the other hand, was getting sick. With air-filling music, the president wheels the car into the company garage. Townsend turned to me and said, I have to have it for Chrysler. Everyone else agreed and chanted, yes, we have to have it. In fact, I didn't know until later that the timing for my innovation was correct. Chrysler was then preparing for his annual face-lifting-a model change and they wanted to focus their advertising on a new development. Our car was glamorous, roman, and wouldn't add big expenses to the cost of the car. Chrysler people called it Highway Hi-Fi and designed it to fit under the dashboard with a 2-way switch, one for radio and the other for recordings. We agreed that everything would be ready for the 1956 model. We have made plans for a spectacular debut and a press presentation. I thought our new CBS Electronics Division (Hytron-Air King plus) could manufacture players and talked to Dave Cogan, the division chief. Sure, Pete, Cogan said, waving a cigar at me. That's a sure thing. I wasn't sure what that meant. Columbia Records was interested in providing records, but only if Chrysler ordered 20,000 cars so they could sell so many records to begin with. Chrysler seemed willing to force you. So CBS Electronics moved on. Everything went well until two weeks before the press showed up. I was called on the phone: emergency call from Chrysler. Something about installation. I flew to Detroit right away. As soon as I arrived, the engineer put me in a car and started driving with the player record on. It was incredible. The car whistling, waving, moaning, jumping the canes, and making noises I'd never heard before. He did everything he was designed not to do. What's going on? Then I looked at the dashboard and Almost jumped out of my skin. Engineers at Chrysler Corporation installed my car in dodges and Plymouths. The characteristics of these machines are quite different from those of the Chrysler line. They were lighter and harder riding, for one thing, with different types of suspension. Obviously, a player record installed in these machines need a different type of damping. Here was a major corporate fool from Chrysler's engineering department. I couldn't tell him anything else. There was no reason to believe that any device oriented to a type of car had a universal spirit in it that made it happy adjust to all cars. In the laboratory we simulated the vibrational behavior of the dodge and and we discovered what we had to do to match them with our cars. The night before the press business, we were still feverish. feverish. working, but in the morning we managed to install our last hi-fi system in the last of several cars to be used in the screen. I have to say that the press conference was a success, and CBS Electronics soon entered the preliminary production with 18,000 units. Somehow this beautiful cultural addition to American self-intoxication didn't take off with the kind of sales we expected. Chrysler had endless meetings with CBS engineers. There have been complaints from both parties about the way the record players worked. But the main reason for the middling response, I think, lay down in the fact that Chrysler and Columbia Records failed to make the proper marketing by failing to advise potential customers to obtain additional records. Dealers failed to stock them, and little or no attempt was made to see that they did. Without this purchase stimulus, the car buyer has not ordered the optional player record in the numbers that we imagined. Colombia persuaded Chrysler to pay for the initial set of records and phonographs and then became apathetic, leaving the Chrysler pursuit. Seeing slow sales, the car company relaxed its promotion. Ironically, even though the business fell, record-changer manufacturers were so in love with the L6 2/3 that they included the new speed in their changers – so you can take home the Hi Fi Highway – even though there was a record of 16 2/3 rpm in sight. As a spin-off from the new recording technology I developed for the Library of Congress a seven-inch record that plays four hours of spoken word and rotates at 831 rpm. This arose because of my association with Recording for the Blind, an organization that brought the beauties of the spoken word to the homes of thousands of blind students. I used the same tone arm as I did in the car, so it could be pummeled around a bit without distorting the sound. My wistful hope is yet to bring back the glories past radio days, so you can listen to drama, comedy, and stories on your own portable machine talk, and by doing so remind people that their senses are not only related to the primitive visual ones used in watching TV. Viewing.

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