
Aging Strikers

One thing I've wondered about over the years has to do with aging strikers that are already in my albums. The strikers I'm referring to here are already 'green,' or brittle, or soft--you can usually readily recognize them because they're at least partially discolored. I've worried, off and on, whether that process of striker degradation is 'contagious'.

This might sound silly, I know, but, as many other collectors have certainly noticed, where you have a degraded striker mounted on a paper page, very often, over time, that part of the page, itself, discolours...so there's something going on in the way of 'transference', here. Thus, I wonder...

For example, if I have a striker that's deteriorating mounted on one slotted page, is there any chance that other covers on that page will 'catch' that condition and begin deteriorating, themselves? How about when the album is closed and that bad striker on one cover is actually pressed against the striker of another cover on the opposing page? Is that going to affect the cover with the good striker?

Assuming that there is a possible problem here, and assuming that paper pages are going to be continued to be used, how does the collector go about preventing it? Do you just avoid covers with bad strikers? Do you make sure that the opposing cover on the opposite page is mounted upside down so that the strikers don't actually touch? Will doing so just deteriorate the opposing cover in a different place?!

And, if this problem actually exists, do we avoid it by not using paper pages? What about all the collectors, including myself, who have at least part of their collections in trays or boxes?--No paper pages there, but covers are still touching each other, and so once again you're back to paper on paper.

Do plastic pages solve this problem? They're PVC-safe, so the pages, themselves, won't cause a problem, but when we put covers with degraded strikers into those plastic pockets, are we introducing a problem to those pages. I doubt if such strikers would do anything to the plastic, itself, in the long run, but those pockets aren't air tight, so once again I wonder if there's any chance of that degradation, oxidation, etc. from the one poor cover spreading to the good covers in the other pockets. And, of course, you usually have two covers in pocket, so you still have the possible problem with the bad cover touching another cover.

If there is such a problem, I'd make an educated guess that it involves a very slow process. Otherwise, prior collectors would have raised an alarm earlier on as they noticed several, or even all of their covers on a page begin to deteriorate where before there was only that single bad cover on that page. But, what if such a process takes, say, a generation? Then the collector doesn't see it happening in his collection, and when the collection moves on to someone else, the next collector may just see a page of covers with discolored strikers and simply accept it as their always having been that way.

And how often is the average collector checking on each individual album page, in any event? I know I certainly don't go through each of my albums every year. Indeed, there are a number of albums that I haven't had occasion to open in the last several years! I could have an entire science experiment going on in those pages and not know it.

Of course, there may be no such problem, and all that I've constructed here may be a mere house of cards.....But if I am right...then may future generations sing my praises and herald the insight and wisdom of your (ever humble) Editor!...If I'm wrong, forget it!