

Topps' "Wacky Packages" 13th Series - Clear Acetate Sticker Variations

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Back in "The Wrapper" issue #313, I reported on "Comic Book Heroes Stickers" clear acetate stickers, discovered by collector Joe Nocera. The stickers were the same as the regular retail version, just printed on clear acetate sticker stock. We know they were printed at the same time as the third revision of the regular stickers (in September 1975), based on paperwork from Zabel Bros. (Image 01), one of Topps' printers at the time. We also know they originated from a Topps' factory sale at the Duryea plant, sometime in the late 1970's. Zabel Bros. printed 500 full print sheets (264 stickers per sheet) at the time, which was more than enough for a test of some type, but evidence of that test is still lacking.

Look at the middle of the page on the left edge... the work order is for 24,000 sheets of "Pressure Sensitive" Ludlow stock of the 3rd revision print sheet (4-488-05-03-5) of "Comic Book Heroes Stickers", and 500 sheets of "Pressure Sensitive - acetate" Ludlow stock! Those 500 sheets are the clear acetate stickers and near the bottom of the page you will notice they were to be held at Zabels, so they did not immediately go to Card Processing in Duryea.

10/1/75

Job # 2369J	Customer P3/2 Tappan Chewing Gum Co.	Title Cocaine Proof Plate Labels
Salesman Bald	Address 254-36 th St - Brooklyn, N.Y.	Customer's No. _____ Date 9

ON PRESS PRINT USE	OFF PRESS by 10:3	Silver Point 3M	Color Proof Other	HOLD PLATES (Not held unless) 60 Days _____ Index _____
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Quantity	Trim Size 2 1/2" x 3 1/2"	O.K. ON PRESS BY Salesman _____ Customer _____	APPROVED BY _____
	X		
	X		

Stock Pressure Sensitive	43.50
Size 43 x 57	39.00
Em. Wt.	43.80
Basis Med	50.40
No. of Sheets 24,000	31.16
Supplier Ludlow	207.86
Del. by Land	

Stock Pressure Sensitive - acetate	43 x 57	Em. Wt.	Basis Med
No. of Sheets 570 sheets 2.16	Supplier Ludlow	Del. by Land	

4 Ink 0	Previous Job #	New Swatches
We Match	Printed Sample	Art
Red	201 - PL Red	
Yellow	102 - STAINING VARNISH	
Blue	301 - PL Blue	
Black	401 - PL Black	
Varnish	WILCOFF VARNISH	

BINDERY - Mark even if outside bindery		
Cut	Score	Fold
Bind	Punch	Spirit Varn.
Stitch	Perforate	Trim
Wrap	Collate	
Covers	Folds to	

OUTSIDE BINDERY

MUST SHIP BY
TO ARRIVE IN Card Processing

4-488-05-05-5
old job 2250J
New black film + f

Final cost 23,500

UP PRESS

FILM TO PROD 9/25/75
3 PLTS 47X60 TO PLT RM

15 28
15 28
15 28
33 14
37 28

9-23-75
(FILM-BLK SILVERPRINT)

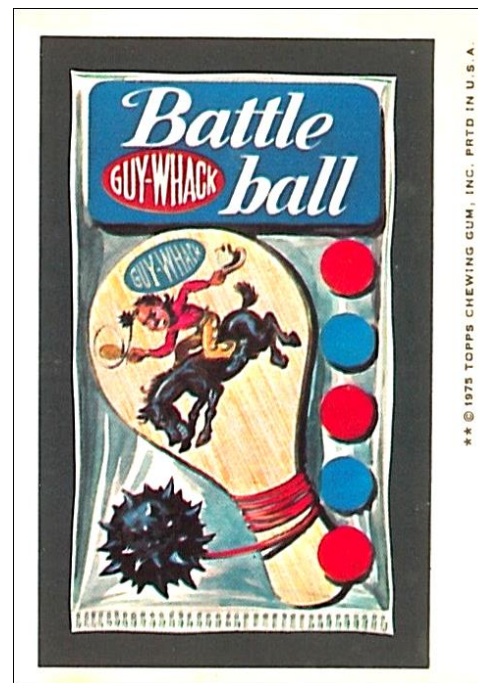
gold
Red
Blue
BLK -

Hold acetate sheets at labels!

Recently, while researching other Topps' issues, and saving images I came across, I stumbled upon some recent eBay auctions from January and early February of this year which immediately caught my attention! The auctions all had similar titles of "1975 Topps Wacky Packages Uncut Strips (5) White Back Test Stickers". I was intrigued by the "test" keyword and took a look at the auctions. To my surprise, the stickers were clear acetate (Image 02a) with white back stock, just like the "Comic Book Heroes Stickers" mentioned above! The peeled back sticker is of "Battle Ball" (Image 02b). All of the auctions were from the same seller who described the stickers as "...part of a test run apparently which is why the stickers are sort of translucent...". He also went on to state, "I got these from a guy who worked at the factory back in the 60s 70s and 80s where they packaged all the Topps cards...". There were also a few other auctions in mid to late February, from a second seller, but I believe he was reselling strips obtained from the first seller. Taking all the auction results into consideration, the stickers averaged \$13.69 per sticker, or \$68.43 per strip of five.



"Wacky Packages" 13th Series acetate sticker
Image 02a



"Wacky Packages" 13th Series – "Battle Ball"
Image 02b

All of the acetate stickers that I have found so far, are always in strips of five uncut stickers (Image 03), obviously hand-cut from a print sheet. The strips consist of either the left five stickers or right five stickers of a row. Twenty-seven of the thirty titles in the set, along with three double-prints, are represented on the strips, with the three titles from the middle column (sixth column of eleven) nowhere to be seen! Also, strips were cut from both half sheets of a full 264 sticker print sheet, having either one asterisk or two asterisks. The stickers do not have the normal die-cuts associated with the regular 13th series stickers.



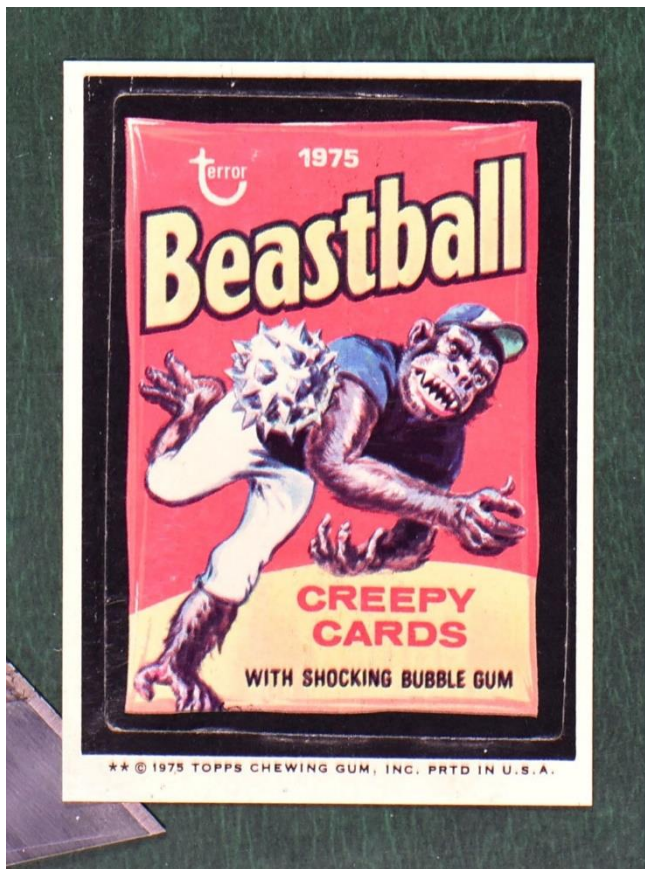
"Wacky Packages" 13th Series clear acetate stickers strip
Image 03

The 13th series of "Wacky Packages" were released around February/March of 1975 according to the wackypackages.org website, run by collector Greg Grant. Topps most likely printed these 13th series acetate stickers from the same print sheet layout as the regular stickers, and probably around the same time or very soon after, if the same procedures took place as with the "Comic Book Heroes Stickers" acetates. Considering both these "Wacky Packages" and the "Comic Book Heroes Stickers", it is obvious Topps was experimenting with the clear acetate sticker stock, so it would be no surprise at all if other clear acetate issues (especially sports) eventually turn up. From my research, I've found Topps was tenacious when it came to experimenting and testing new ideas like cloth stickers, clear acetate stickers, size and format of cards and non-traditional novelty releases. They would try to use the new stock, size, format or novelty across both sports and non-sports releases in the hopes an issue would excel and be successful enough to fully release at retail.

I communicated with Greg about these stickers and he pointed me in the direction of Ernie de la Fuentes who had mentioned these 'strange' sheets in a couple of threads on the "Wacky Packages Forum". I started searching the Wacky forum and finally found one of the threads where these acetate stickers were discussed. Quoting Ernie from one of his 2017 posts, "...It is whiteback stock. The titles are not diecut. I have three sheets that seems to be cutting floor samples of some kind of mistake perhaps a transition from tan to white stock coded 483-05-01-4 with a stamp of "enco" stouffer in the lower left corner of each sheet...". I then got in contact with Ernie, who stated, "...yes, I was the one who first called out that I found series 13 partial sheets that are clear acetate stock. I knew they looked different so I peeled a corner and sure enough, acetate. They are not diecut...".

The next question I had was, are die-cut 13th series white back stickers, regular sticker stock or the acetate sticker stock. Back to the forum and a 2019 post from Ernie, "...There were several uncut series 13 whiteback sheets floating around, a couple of them got cut up from what I hear. I have found singles in the wild so not sure what counts as genuine whiteback set. These are not normal cards though as I called out long ago. The series 13 white back sticker part is made with like a see thru cello type of paper. I posted pics somewhere hear long ago. I am fairly certain all my series 13 whites have been this way. You can't really tell for sure unless you peel a corner which seems sacrilegious but I always thought the color looked off and now I know why...". Ernie's respond via our email communications, "...Yes, I have non acetate 13th white back diecut stickers. There is no proof these came from packs a I don't know anyone who has pulled 13th white directly from packs..." and "...I believe there are true 13th whites in the wild as too many of them are cut correctly. I have seen many non acetate with diecuts...". So, while not conclusive, the evidence suggested that both regular and acetate white back stickers could be found. I continued my communication with Greg and he offered to try and acquire some die-cut white backs and check the sticker stock. With the help of fellow

collector Jeffrey Abish (who supplied three white back die-cut stickers), Greg took the plunge and checked both versions of white back stickers. His results, "...I got the cards today and did the test. I put a razor blade between the sticker and the backing. It's 100% proof these are legitimate white back die-cut stickers just like any other series' white back sticker. I stuck the razor blade also between the front and backing of a 13th cello card and it's clearly different..." (Image 03a and 03b).



"Wacky Packages" 13th Series regular white back sticker stock
Image 03a



"Wacky Packages" 13th Series clear acetate white back sticker stock
Image 03b

So, were these "Wacky Packages" 13th Series clear acetate stickers ever tested? I have to assume they were indeed tested. Since both these stickers and the "Comic Book Heroes Stickers" clear acetate stickers originated from the Topps' Duryea plant, one can argue they were sent to the "Card Processing" department to be cut, collated and packaged for testing, otherwise, one would assume they would have gone to the Brooklyn office if they were just printed for proofing and review. We have no definite evidence of this for either issue however. I can envision Topps not die-cutting the stickers since the background was clear, but they did die-cut the "Comic Book Heroes Stickers" so it could go either way.