

DISK SEPARATOR PLATES AND METHOD OF MAKING DISK SEPARATOR PLATES FOR HARD DISK DRIVES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention.

[0001] The present invention relates to disk separator plates for reducing airborne noise and vibration in hard disk drives, and more particularly, pertains to methods of manufacturing disk separator plates.

2. Description of Related Art.

[0002] It has been common practice for hard disk drives (HDD) to incorporate disk separator plates in order to reduce vibration caused by wind created by the rotating disk surfaces. This generates undesired noise in the hard disk drive assembly. It is thought that the disk separator plates should cover a maximum of the disk surfaces in order to minimize these vibration effects. It has been experimentally proven that the main airflow in a hard disk drive assembly, which is tangential to the circumferential edge of the rotating disks causes vortexes to be created between the airflow fluid layers, causing disk flutter and vibration of the magnetic reading heads during operation, thereby increasing noise and decreasing HDD performance.

[0003] The use of disk separator plates in hard disk drives has become common place. This increased use of disk separator plates in a hard

disk drive increases the cost of the disk drive because of the increased raw materials required, and the secondary manufacturing operations required to make the disk separator plates, after initial stamping, forging, extrusion or casting.

[0004] Figure 1 illustrates the environment in which disk separator plates of the present invention, also known as air damper plates disk damages, and anti disks, are utilized in a hard disk drive 9 which has a housing 11 with side walls 15 and 13 and a top enclosing the housing (not shown).

[0005] Contained within the housing 11 is the actuator drive assembly 17. An actuator 19, along with actuator arms 21 that carry read/write heads (22) are part of the drive assembly. A disk separator plate 25 is mounted over a top disk 23 to the side walls 15 and 13, or in any other convenient manner, to the housing 11 of hard disk drive 9. Besides being mounted over a disk stack 23, the disk separator plates are mounted between each of the disks in the disk stack, as will be explained hereinafter.

[0006] The shape and construction of the disk separator plates in the prior art are quite varied, although they have a common purpose of reducing airflow induced vibration.

[0007] Figure 2 illustrates a disk separator plate 27 which is manufactured by casting and then machining to provide the correct thickness and flatness of the offset structures 31, 29, 32, and 33 which are used to hold the

disk separator plate to the housing of a hard disk drive. Pins 30 and 34 are inserted into the casting or are machined from the casting as secondary operations. These pins mate with corresponding holes in the next separator plate in the stack, or in the drive base.

[0008] Figure 3 illustrates a disk separator plate 35 that is manufactured by injection molding a plastic material. The plastic separator plate 35 has offset structures 37, 38 and 39 formed in the molding process.

[0009] Figure 4 shows a disk separator plate 41 which is manufactured by extrusion and then milled or turned to reduce the main disk separator plate thickness 44 and establish the offset structures 42, 45, 46 required for mounting the disk separator plate to the housing of a hard disk drive. Boss 43 is milled from the extrusion to provide location alignment by nesting with an opposing separator plate or a drive base.

[0010] Each of these manufacturing processes has considerable shortcomings with respect to cost for the manufacturing methods used to produce metal disk separator plates. Furthermore, the ability to produce separator plates to precise dimensional control is difficult for each of the above described methods of manufacture.

[0011] The plastic injection molding process has special problems associated with it. The method produces voids and anisotropies in the product.

The plastic plates are distorted when clamped. The plates are not as clean as required. The surface finish is not as smooth as required.

[0012] The major problem with the metal disk separator plates is the cost of manufacturing such plates.

[0013] Figure 5 illustrates a side cross-section of a stack of disk separator plates 49, 51, 53, which are fastened to the enclosure 47 of a hard disk drive by a hold down bolt 55. The stack of disk separator plates illustrated is designed to cover the portions of the disks not swept by the use of the recording heads (not shown) which would rotate in the space between disk separator 49 and 51, 51 and 53, and 53 and the base 54 of housing 47. Hub 57 is the center around which the disks rotate.

[0014] The offsets 56, which are designed to provide the correct amount of separation between the disk separators 49, 51, and 53, and the base 54 of the hard disk drive are created as part of the separator plate during the manufacturing process. As can be seen by the structure of the offset 56 of separator plate 49, for example, the machining required after initial manufacturing is significant and increases the cost of each separator plate. The amount of metal required to make forged, fully machined, or extruded and machined disk separator plates is large because the starting thickness is at least that of the full offset height. The main plate thickness of the separator plate must be created by removing material.

[0015] Although flat stamped disk separator plates provide the best dimensional control, of all these manufacturing processes, at a minimum manufacturing cost, the stamping process cannot create the thickness, or material reduction required in a typical offset at the mounting points for the disk separator plate.

[0016] Accordingly, the present invention provides a method for manufacturing disk separator plates using disk stamping techniques which reduce raw material content and secondary manufacturing operations, while providing the necessary offset heights, required at the offset points, used for mounting the separator plates to the hard disk drive.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0017] Making a disk separator plate by stamping and then extruding the offsets to a desired dimension, offset forming, or folding and making layers of material to obtain desired offset structure heights, provides a disk separator plate that is dimensionally controlled, has less debris, less weight and is less expensive to make than disk separator plates made by traditional methods. Extruded offsets are designed to nest into opposing counterbores to provide location alignment in-plane. This eliminates the need for additional alignment pins and holes, freeing up space and enabling more compact designs. Folded offsets also provide for precise alignment of the separator plates, as

needed, by the extension of pins in the offset structures or by use of pins in the drive base. These pins mate with corresponding holes in mating parts.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The exact nature of this invention, as well as the objects and advantages thereof, will become readily apparent from consideration of the following specification in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which like reference numerals designate like parts throughout the figures thereof and wherein:

[0019] Figure 1 is an illustration of a hard disk drive with a disk separator plate located therein;

[0020] Figure 2 is a perspective illustration of a prior art separator plate;

[0021] Figure 3 is a perspective illustration of a prior art separator plate;

[0022] Figure 4 is a perspective illustration of a prior art separator plate;

[0023] Figure 5 is a side view illustration of a stack of prior art separator plates assembled in a hard disk drive;

[0024] Figure 6 is a side view of a hard disk drive with separator plates, according to the present invention;

[0025] Figure 7 is a perspective illustration of a disk separator plate according to the present invention;

[0026] Figure 8 is a perspective illustration of disk separator plates according to the present invention;

[0027] Figure 9 is a perspective illustration of separator plate offsets, according to the present invention;

[0028] Figure 10 is a perspective illustration of a disk separator plate, according to the present invention;

[0029] Figure 11 is a perspective illustration of the counterbore in a disk separator plate, according to the present invention;

[0030] Figure 12 is a schematic illustration of the nesting of two disk separator plates, according to the present invention;

[0031] Figure 13 is a perspective illustration of stacked disk separator plates, according to the present invention;

[0032] Figure 14 is a perspective illustration of stacked disk separator plates, according to the present invention;

[0033] Figure 15 is a perspective illustration of a disk separator plate, according to the present invention;

[0034] Figure 16 is a perspective illustration of stacked disk separator plates, according to the present invention;

[0035] Figure 17 is a perspective illustration of a disk separator plate, according to the present invention, before an offset structure is formed;

[0036] Figure 18 is a perspective illustration of a disk separator plate, after the offset structure is formed;

[0037] Figure 19 is a perspective illustration of a disk separator plate with an alternate offset, according to the present invention;

[0038] Figure 20 is a perspective illustration of the offset assembly of Figure 19;

[0039] Figure 21 is a perspective illustration of the offset assembly of Figure 20 in a finished state; and

[0040] Figure 22 is a perspective illustration of stacked disk separator plates utilizing the offset assembly of Figure 21.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0041] Figure 6 illustrates a stack of separator plates 61, 63, 65, manufactured according to the present invention, attached to a housing 59 of a hard disk drive. The upper separator plate 61 and the lower separator plate 65 create the required offset between separator plates 61 and 63, 63 and 65, and 65 and the base 66 respectively, by offset forming the ends of the separator plate 61 and 65 a certain distance to create the offset 71 for separator plate 61 and the offset 73 for separator plate 65. The center separator plate 63 is not bent and

has no offset. The stack of separator plates 61, 63, and 65, is assembled on a standoff 68 which is part of the frame 59 of the hard disk drive housing. The stack is fastened down by a fastening bolt 67.

[0042] The disks (not shown) that rotate in the spaces between the separator plates 61 and 63, 63 and 65 and 65 and the base 66, are attached to a rotating spindle 69, in a manner well known.

[0043] Manufacturing the separator plates of Figure 6 by stamping and then forming the ends to create a standoff has proven to be a less expensive method of manufacturing, while at the same time producing a more accurately dimensioned disk of separator plates. Moreover, much less raw material is required since the raw material thickness is close to the smaller plate tip thickness 72, instead of the larger offset thickness 71.

[0044] Figure 7 illustrates a disk separator plate manufactured by stamping the shape of the plate 75 out of a preferred metal such as aluminum, along with the tabs 77, 81, 79. The offset on the tabs is formed by offset forming, essentially two right angle bends. Pins 76 and 82 are extruded during stamping to provide location alignment.

[0045] Figure 8 illustrates two disk separator plates mounted together. A top plate 75 is mounted to a bottom plate 83 to create a gap 80 within which a disk rotates. The tabs 85, 89, and 87 are joined together so that the alignment pins and holes 76 and 78, line up.

[0046] Figure 9 schematically illustrates the offset bends 84 and 86 in the upper disk separator plate 75 and the lower disk separator plate 83 that create the respective tabs 85A and 85B. These tabs are mated together to form tab 85.

[0047] Besides creating offsets in the stamped plates by offset forming, the present invention creates offsets by extrusion from thinner raw material. Extrusion of an offset boss is illustrated in Figure 10, which shows a disk separator plate 91 having tabs with extruded offset bosses 93, 97, and 95 which create the offset structure. It is contemplated that the top face of the disk separator plate around the perimeter of the offset boss 93 has a counterbore 101 with a diameter slightly larger than the extruded boss (Figure 11) to provide location alignment with the separator plate above.

[0048] Figure 12 schematically illustrates how two extruded offset bosses nest. The top plate 105 with offset boss 107 is supported by the bottom plate 103 with offset boss 109, nesting offset boss 107 in the counterbore 111.

[0049] It is contemplated that rather than creating a counterbore in the face of a separator plate around each offset boss, the extruded offsets could be made larger in diameter than the apertures through the boss.

[0050] Figure 13 illustrates three separator plates 113, 115, and 117 each having extruded bosses as offsets 119, 121, and 123 respectively. The aperture 125 through offset boss 119, for example, has a smaller diameter than

the external diameter of offset boss 119, as do each of the other separator plates 115 and 117. The result is the three separator plates can be simply stacked one on top of the other, with the bottom of the boss of one plate 119 sitting on the top surface of disk separator plate 115, and the bottom of offset boss 121 sitting on the top surface of separator plate 117.

[0051] A slight variation of this construction is illustrated in Figure 14, which shows separator plates 127, 129, and 131 having offset bosses 133, 135, and 137 that are extruded and then flared in a slightly upside-down V-shaped cross section with the top of the boss being smaller in diameter than the bottom. Thus, separator plate 127 with a V-shaped extruded offset boss 133 has a larger diameter at its base than at the top. The aperture 139 which passes through boss 133 has a smaller diameter than the top of boss 133. As a result, the separator plates 127, 129, 131 all have the same footprint and each sit on top of the separator plate below it. These V-shaped offset bosses allow use of the full offset height when large aperture 139 lead-in radii are required to generate enough material volume to create the required offset height. Without the flare, bosses 133 and 135 would recess into the apertures and reduce the stack height.

[0052] The present invention also contemplates the creation of offsets in stamped metal disk separator plates by double internal tabs. As shown in Figure 15, a disk separator plate 141 has the tab internally cut 143 to create legs 144 and 146. These legs are then bent again at top surface 141 of the

disk to create the offset and bent at the end of the legs to create feet 145, 147. These feet extend beyond the diameter of the aperture 143.

[0053] This permits stacking of the disk separator plates as illustrated in Figure 16. Disk separator plate 141 is stacked on disk separator plate 149, which is, in turn, stacked on disk separator plate 157. The offset legs of disk separator plate 141 rest on the top surface of disk separator plate 149 because of the feet 147 and 145 created by the bend in the legs 144, 146. The feet of disk separator plate 149, feet 155 and 153 sit on the top surface of disk separator plate 157. The feet 161, 163 of disk separator plate 157, sit on top of another disk separator plate, or a fastening protrusion on the frame of a disk drive.

[0054] The present invention also contemplates the creation of offsets by folding tabs in parallel. As illustrated in Figure 17, a disk separator plate 165 is stamped from a metal to create the shape of the disk separator plate, as well as a tab configuration 167. This tab configuration will create the offset required. Two overlapping folds accurately align the apertures 169, 171, and 173 in the tab 167. Figure 18 shows the tab 167 after the parallel folds are completed. Aperture 173 is on the bottom, aperture 171 is in the middle, as the result of first bend 177. Aperture 169 is on top, as the result of second bend 165. Aperture 169 can also be pierced through all three layers after folding.

Offset height can be reduced as required by corning the three folded tabs during stamping.

[0055] The present invention also contemplates the creation of offsets in a stamped disk separator plate by attaching a separate piece formed around a fastening tab of the stamped separator plate.

[0056] Figure 19 illustrates a disk separator plate 181 having a fastening tab with an aperture 189 and a ridge 183 on the tab. A bent clip 185, having an aperture 187 in the top and bottom legs of the clip, is formed to fit over the tab so the apertures 187 and 189 align, as illustrated in Figure 20. Upon alignment, the clip 185 is crimped and/or corned to the tab of disk separator plate 181 to create the required offset height, as illustrated in Figure 21.

[0057] Disk separator plates manufactured in Figures 19-21 can be stacked as shown in Figure 22. Disk separator plate 193 with its offset clip 195 is stacked on top of disk separator plate 197 with its offset 199. The apertures 201 of both offsets align with considerable precision. Disk separator plates using an attached offset can be easily stacked to any required height.

CLAIMS

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method of making disk separator plates for mounting in a hard disk drive, each disk separator plate having a plurality of mounting apertures for fastening the separator plate to the frame of a hard disk drive, the method comprising:

stamping a separator plate having a top and a bottom and external edge and mounting apertures from a sheet of metal; and

forming an offset at each of the mounting apertures extending from the top or bottom surface of the separator plate, for a predefined distance.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the forming an offset step comprises:

extruding a boss having an inner and outer diameter and a predefined distance, extending from the top or bottom surface of the separator plate, around each mounting aperture.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the extruding boss step comprises forming a boss having a larger diameter at the predefined height than at the top of the plate.

4. The method of claim 2 further comprising enlarging the inner diameter of the boss at the top of the separator plate sufficiently to receive the outer diameter of the boss.

5. A method of making disk separator plates for mounting in a hard disk drive, each disk separator plate having a plurality of mounting apertures for fastening the separator plate to the frame of a hard disk drive, the method comprising:

stamping a separator plate having a top and a bottom and external edge with tabs at predetermined location on the external edge with apertures in each tab; and

forming an offset at the apertures in tabs extending from the top or bottom surfaces of the separator plate, for a predefined distance.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said forming an offset step comprises:

extruding a boss having an inner and outer diameter and a predefined height extending from the bottom of the plate around each mounting aperture.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the extruding a boss step comprises forming a boss having a larger diameter at the predefined height than at the top of the plate.

8. The method of claim 5 further comprising enlarging the inner diameter of the boss at the top of the plate sufficient to receive the outer diameter of the boss.

9. The method of claim 5 further comprising bending each tab at the external edge of the plate a predefined distance from the edge to form an offset of a certain height.

10. The method of claim 5 wherein the mounting apertures are formed by cutting the material inside a predefined area in each tab, and bending the material at the top of the plate to create an offset having a predefined height.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising bending the ends of material at the required height to form feet.

12. The method of claim 5 wherein each mounting tab is formed elongated and tangentially to the external edge of the separator plates, shaped as connected like formed parts, and the offset is formed by bending one part of the mounting tab to completely overlap the other part.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein a mounting aperture is formed in each like formed part, and the mounting apertures align when the parts of the mounting tab are bent to overlap each other.

14. The method of claim 5 further comprising forming a separate piece in the shape of the mounting tabs and bending the separate piece to overlap a mounting tab on the top and bottom.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein a mounting aperture is formed in the mounting tab and in the separate bent piece, the mounting apertures align when the separate bent piece overlaps the mounting tab.

16. A disk separator plate for hard disk drives, comprising:

a separator plate having a top and bottom surface and external edge stamped from a single sheet of metal; and

an offset around each of the mounting apertures extending from the top or bottom surface of the separator plate for a predefined distance, formed in the stamped separator plate.

17. The disk separator plate of claim 16 wherein the offset around each of the mounting apertures is extruded into a boss.

18. The disk separator plate of claim 17 wherein the boss has a larger diameter at the predefined distance than at the surface of the plate.

19. The disk separator plate of claim 17 further comprising counterboring the inner diameter of the boss at the surface of the separator plate to receive the outer diameter of the boss at the predefined distance.

20. A disk separator plate for hard disk drives, comprising:

a separator plate having a top and bottom surface and external edge with tabs at predetermined locations on the external edge with a top and bottom surface, and aperture in each tab stamped from a single sheet of metal; and

an offset at each of the mounting apertures extending from a top or bottom surface of the tabs for a predefined distance formed in the stamped separator plate.

21. The disk separator plate of claim 20 wherein the offset around each aperture is extruded into a boss.

22. The disk separator plate of claim 21 wherein the boss has a larger diameter at the predefined distance than at the surface of the tab.

23. The disk separator plate of claim 20 further comprising a counterbore at the inner diameter of the boss at the surface of the tab to receive the outer diameter of the boss at the predefined distance.

24. The disk separator plate of claim 20 wherein the offset is formed by bending each tab a predefined distance from the edge to form an offset of a center height.

25. The disk separator plate of claim 20 wherein the offset is formed by bending each tab to fold over itself to form an offset of a certain height.

26. The disk separator plate of claim 20 wherein the offset is formed by clamping a U-shaped piece on each tab to form an offset of a certain height.