

Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to product packaging, particularly to such packaging having tamper-evident means thereon, and more particularly to such packaging suitable for protectively enclosing a photosensitive product, comprising the features of the pre-characterizing portion of claim 1.

Description of the Prior Art

Various schemes for discouraging or evidencing product-package tampering are known in the prior art. Pertinent examples may be found in the following documents:

U.S. Patent No. 4,702,383 (Wender) - Discloses a tamper-evident package comprising a jar with a circular opening, a circular cap that is closingly matable with the opening, and an annular connecting member on the cap with diametrically opposed, frangible tabs extending downwardly therefrom and secured to correspondingly opposite sides of the jar, to seal the jar closed and to evidence tampering by breaking or tearing apart whenever the cap is moved relative to the opening.

Jap. Patent Pub. No. 1-113235 (Fuji) - Discloses a film package comprising a plastic cylindrical can with an open end and an end cap hingedly attached thereto by a sealing tape that extends across the cap and down onto opposite sides of the can, for protectively containing a 35mm film cartridge.

Jap. Patent Pub. No. 1-113237 (Fuji) - discloses a film package comprising a plastic cylindrical can with an open end and an end cap removably attached thereto by a disposable sealing tape that extends across the cap and down onto opposite sides of the can, for protectively containing a 35mm film cartridge.

U.K. Published Patent Application No. GB-2,213,135-A (Fuji) - Discloses a film package comprising a plastic container with an open end or side and a removable or hingedly attached cap, for opening and closing the container around a 35mm film cartridge, wherein an information-displaying label may be attached to the container's outer surface, a seal may extend from the container to the cap to indicate whether the package has been opened, and a lug or tab may project from an edge of the cap to facilitate opening.

US-A-1 743 980 discloses a shipping container for shipping medical specimens which is provided with a detachable closure and a sealing strip hav-

ing one end thereof initially secured to one side of the container and extending in the direction of the closure, and having the loose, free or unattached portion thereof secured to the body of the container in a temporary manner, so that the container may thus be shipped with the sealing strip safely attached to the container and always ready for use.

BE-A-965 24 discloses a cap for bottles and other containers comprising a bottle neck bearing a first label and a second label thereon. The second label includes a perforation line.

US-A-3 292 807 discloses a tamper-proof closure for bottles. This closure is made from a film of plastic resin and a skirt of this closure has an inwardly projecting bead which is adapted to reach under the outer bead of the bottle after being snapped on and thereby to hold the closure in the closed position. A tab projects laterally from the skirt surface for pulling off the closure. The tab is connected to the skirt by means of a connecting web which is considerably thinner than the skirt of the closure or the back of the tab.

While protective packages with schemes such as those referred to above may have sufficed for their intended purposes, there is now an increasing need for product packages having a more efficient and reliable means for evidencing, and thereby discouraging, any attempted tampering with the enclosed product. That need heretofore has not been satisfactorily met.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, a primary object of this invention has been to meet the foregoing need. That and other objects have been achieved by the invention herein claimed.

This invention finds particular utility in a package improvement for protectively enclosing a product, the package as defined by the pre-characterizing portion of claim 1 (US-A-17 43 980) further comprising the features of the characterizing portion of claim 1.

This invention, and its objects and advantages, will become more apparent in the detailed description of the preferred embodiment thereof presented hereinbelow.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the detailed description of the preferred embodiment of this invention presented below, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference characters denote like elements, and wherein:

Fig. 1 is an exploded perspective view of a package constructed and configured, in accordance with the preferred embodiment of this

invention, to protectively enclose a cartridge of photographic roll film;

Fig. 2 is an assembled perspective view of the film package shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a side-elevational view, partially broken away, of the film package shown in Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a top-plan view of the film package shown in Fig. 3, illustrating an outer top label thereon being peeled away and revealing part of an inner top label thereunder;

Fig. 5 is a top-plan view similar to Fig. 4, somewhat enlarged and depicting the inner top label remaining after the outer top label has been removed;

Fig. 6 is a perspective view of the film package shown in Fig. 5, illustrating an outer side label thereon being peeled back and revealing an inner side label thereunder;

Fig. 7 is an enlarged fragmentary view of the circled portion of Fig. 6 but depicting a modification of the side labels there shown;

Fig. 8 is a perspective view of a device constructed and configured to display and dispense a plurality of product packages such as the film package shown in Figs. 1-7;

Fig. 9 is an enlarged, partial, front-elevational view of the displaying and dispensing device illustrated in Fig. 8;

Fig. 10 is a cross-sectional view, taken along line 10-10 in Fig. 9, showing internal details of the device there depicted; and

Fig. 11 is an enlarged, partial, top-perspective view of the device illustrated in Fig. 8, showing further details thereof.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Because certain parts of product packaging arrangements, methods of assembling them, and devices for displaying and dispensing them, are well known, the following description is directed in particular to those elements and steps forming, cooperating directly with, or relating especially to, this invention. Elements and steps not specifically shown or described herein are selectable from those known in the pertinent art.

Fig. 1 illustrates, via an exploded perspective view, a package P constructed and configured, in accordance with the preferred embodiment of this invention, to protectively enclose a cartridge C of photographic roll film F, such as color print film in the popular 35mm size.

Package P comprises a substantially cylindrical, or can-shaped, container 10 having a closed bottom end 12, an exterior sidewall surface 14, and an open top end 16, through which film cartridge C is insertable and removable. Attachable to and de-

tachable from end 16, to respectively close and open container 10, is a closure in the form of a mating end cap 18, which fits closely over and around end 16 in a light-tight manner. Container 10 and cap 18 are both made of an opaque plastic material, such as polyethylene, which is readily recyclable. Cap 18 has a substantially round exterior end wall surface 20 and a peripheral exterior sidewall surface 22 depending therefrom as shown in Figs. 2-4. Projecting radially outward from one side of peripheral sidewall surface 22 is a thumb tab 24 to facilitate pushing cap 18 away from end 16, and to serve other important purposes to be discussed hereinbelow.

A first label 26, mainly round in configuration, has a pair of elongate, flexible, and readily tearable tab portions 28 extending respectively from opposite sides thereof and bent downwardly therefrom as shown in Fig. 1. Label 26 is adhesively secured to the exterior end wall surface 20 of cap 18, while tab portions 28 are wrapped over and secured to respective sides of the exterior sidewall surface 22 of cap 18. With the cap firmly attached to the container top end 16, the tab portions 28 are then tautly secured to corresponding opposite sides of the exterior sidewall surface 14 of container 10 as shown in Fig. 3. Each tab portion 28 is provided with a small slit 30 at approximately the location thereon where the tab portion leaves the cap, as shown in Figs. 2 and 3, to render the tab portion more easily tearable whenever the cap is pushed upwardly to open the container. Fig. 6 illustrates one of the tab portions having been so torn.

A second label 32, basically rectangular in shape, is adhesively secured to the exterior sidewall surface 14 of container 10, over the tearable tab portions 28, thereby further securing the tab portions to the container sidewall. Label 32 comprises substantially coextensive and registered inner and outer sheet-like portions 34 and 36 respectively. Inner portion 34 has first and second ends 34a and 34b respectively, an inner surface 34i facing toward and adhesively secured to sidewall surface 14, and an outer surface 34o facing away from surface 14. Superposed outer portion 36 has corresponding first and second ends 36a and 36b respectively, an inner surface 36i facing toward and separably adhered to inner-portion outer surface 34o, and an outer surface 36o facing away from the inner portion. The inner-portion outer surface 34o and the outer-portion inner and outer surfaces 36i and 36o all have product information thereon. Such information presented on outer surface 36o is fully visible when the inner and outer portions are registered as shown in Figs. 2 and 3. To render such information on surfaces 34o and 36i viewable, outer portion 36 is at least partially separable from inner

portion 34. Thus, starting at its first end 36a, outer portion 36 is readily peelable away from inner portion 34 toward its second end 36b, but is firmly secured to the inner portion at its second end to prevent the outer portion from being removed entirely. Figs. 6 and 7 illustrate the outer portion 36 peeled back from inner portion 34 almost to their registered second ends 34b and 36b. Consistent with the purpose of keeping the outer portion on the container, its inner surface 36i is adapted to be separably re-adhered to surface 34o when superposed thereupon again after being peeled away to view the product information thereon. Preferably, label 32 is formed as two distinct, coextensive, sheet-like elements comprising its inner and outer portions 34 and 36 brought together in registered face-to-face relation as aforesaid and firmly secured at their second ends 34b and 36b. Alternatively, label 32 could be formed as a unitary sheet-like element folded over upon itself at a medial fold line thereon defining the joined second ends 34b and 36b of its coextensive, registered inner and outer portions, as illustrated partially in Fig. 7.

A third label 38, also mainly round, is separably adhered to the top surface of first label 26. With the help of a peripheral pull tab 40, label 38 is readily peelable away from label 26, as illustrated in Fig. 4, and is re-adherable to another surface, such as an exterior surface on the user's camera, for reference in reminding the user of the particular product removed from the container. As depicted in Figs. 4-6, removal of label 38 leaves label 26 remaining on cap 18. The now-exposed top surface of label 26 may provide information relating to the product, such as the status of an exposed film cartridge returned to the container, as well as spaces wherein the user can record his own information.

An especially advantageous feature of all three of labels 26, 32, and 38 is that they are made of recyclable plastic material that is recyclably compatible with the recyclable plastic material, such as polyethylene, of which the container and cap are made. This feature extends as well to the adhesives used on their adhering surfaces, and to the inks used on their information surfaces. With this feature, the entire package (without the product therein) can be recycled as a whole, without first having to remove the labels.

In assembling the package P just described, after film cartridge C has been fully inserted into container 10 through open top end 16 thereof, end cap 18 is first attached to end 16 to close container 10. Using the outwardly projecting thumb tab 24 as an orienting guide, the joined container and cap are then placed in a predetermined angular position relative to their longitudinal axis A.

Next, with the container and cap held in that position, the first label 26 is adhesively secured to the cap exterior end wall surface 20, and its oppositely extending tearable tab portions 28 are then folded downwardly over corresponding opposite portions of cap exterior sidewall surface 22 and container exterior sidewall surface 14, and are tautly secured thereto, so that label 26 and tab portions 28 are secured in a preselected angular orientation relative to thumb tab 24. In the preferred embodiment illustrated, that orientation is such that at least a principal part of the information borne by label 26 is readily viewable from a direction substantially opposite to the direction in which tab 24 projects outwardly from surface 22, and tab portions 28 are substantially equally spaced peripherally from tab 24, i.e., tab 24 is peripherally midway between tab portions 28. With that orientation, any upward force exerted upon tab 24, to remove cap 18 results in substantially equal upward tearing forces on tab portions 28 at the locations thereon where those portions have been weakened by the small slits 30.

The next step, with the container and cap still held in the aforementioned predetermined position, is to secure the second label 32 to the container exterior sidewall surface 14 over the depending tab portions 28 already secured thereto, and in the aforementioned angular orientation wherein at least a principal part of the information borne by label 32 is viewable from a direction substantially opposite to that in which tab 24 projects.

Assuming such information to be symmetrically displayed on label 32, this orientation would place the vertical centerline of label 32 diametrically opposite tab 24. As previously mentioned, applying label 32 over tab portions 28 further secures them to the container sidewall.

The final step, still with the container and cap in their predetermined position, is to separably adhere the third label 38 to the upward-facing exterior surface of first label 26, again in the aforementioned angular orientation, so that at least a principal part of the information borne by label 38 is viewable from the aforementioned direction opposite that in which tab 24 projects. With label 38 so oriented, according to the preferred embodiment depicted in Fig. 4, pull tab 40 projects radially outward approximately midway peripherally between thumb tab 24 and the closer one of tab portions 28.

With all three of labels 26, 32, and 38 applied in the same preselected angular orientation relative to thumb tab 24, when container 10 and cap 18 are held in the desired predetermined angular position relative to their longitudinal axis A, at least the principal part of the information visible on each label can be viewed from a side of the package

which is substantially diametrically opposite thumb tab 24. A particularly useful advantage of this arrangement will become readily apparent in the following description of a cooperating device for displaying and dispensing a plurality of such film packages.

Fig. 8 illustrates, in perspective, a point-of-sale device D constructed and configured to display and dispense a plurality of product-enclosing packages such as the film package P described above with reference to Figs. 1-7.

In its illustrated embodiment, the device D comprises a plurality of upstanding tubes 50, each having upper and lower open end portions 52 and 54, respectively, and a substantially cylindrical sidewall 56 with a longitudinal slot 58 therein extending between the two end portions. Each tube 50 is configured to slidably receive therein a plurality of film packages P for successive gravity feeding from upper end portion 52 to lower end portion 54. Each package is received through the open end of portion 52 in such orientation that its end cap 18 faces upward, its thumb tab 24 projects radially in a first direction d1 into slot 58, and at least a principal part of visible information on its label 32 faces outwardly in a second direction d2 generally opposite the first direction d1 in which tab 24 projects.

The device D also comprises means 60 for supporting each tube 50 in an orientation wherein the second direction d2 coincides substantially with a display direction dd suitable for viewing. As depicted in Fig. 8, such means is provided by a partial enclosure 62 having opposing sidewalls 64 and 66, a rear wall 68, a short front panel 70 at its upper end, a front brace 72, and a bottom wall 74. Thus, as oriented by enclosure 62, the second direction d2 coincides with the desired display direction dd, which extends forwardly from each tube 50 while the tab-receiving slot 58 is disposed rearwardly therein. Also as oriented by enclosure 62, each tube is tilted so that its upper end portion 52 is slightly rearward of its lower end portion 54.

In the preferred embodiment illustrated, the cylindrical sidewall 56 of each tube is substantially transparent, so that at least the forward-facing portion of the label 32 on each package in the tube can be viewed therethrough.

As can be seen in Figs. 8 and 11, the slot 58 in each tube is widened, or flared as at 76, at its open end in upper end portion 52 to facilitate receiving the package thumb tabs 24 therein.

Device D further comprises means 78 adjacent to the lower end portion 54 of each tube for supporting the lowermost one of the packages therein in such a way as to render that package accessible for convenient removal. As depicted in Figs. 8 and 9, such means is provided by a substantially U-

shaped shelf 80 disposed immediately under the open end of each lower end portion 54 and projecting forwardly therefrom. In supporting the lowermost package, shelf 80 of course serves to support all other packages stacked above that one. It will be noted that the front half of each lower end portion 54 is cut away to a height that permits the lowermost package to be readily grasped and removed, after which the next package above that one simply slides downward to take its place.

In the illustrated embodiment, the displaying and dispensing device D comprises a cluster of eight closely arranged tubes, including front and rear rows of four tubes each, disposed in side-by-side relation. It will be seen that the U-shaped shelves 80 under the four tubes in each row are joined together as one integrally formed piece. Also, it will be seen that the rear row of tubes extends to a lower level than the front row. Thus both the lower end portions 54 of the rear tubes and the joined shelves 80 thereunder are sufficiently below their front-row counterparts to render the lowermost packages in the rear row fully accessible for removal.

While the present invention has been described in detail with particular reference to its preferred embodiment illustrated herein, it should be understood that variations and modifications can be effected within the scope of this invention as defined by the following claims.

Claims

1. A package (P) for protectively enclosing a product (C), the package (P) including a substantially cylindrical can (10) having a substantially circular access opening (16) through which the product (C) is insertable into and removable from the container (10) and an end cap (18) matably attachable to and detachable from the opening (16) to close and open the container (10), respectively, the container (10) and the closure (18) each having an outward-facing exterior surface (14 and 20, 22) wherein a first label (26) is secured to said closure exterior surface (20, 22), said first label (26) having at least one tearable tab portion (28) extending therefrom and tautly secured to said container exterior surface (14); and a second label (32) is secured to said container exterior surface (14) in overlapping relation to said at least one tearable tab portion (28) to said container exterior surface (14) and thereby prevent said closure (18) from being moved relative to said opening (16) to open said container (10) without tearing said tab portion (28), at least one tearable tab portion (28) comprises



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shaped shelf 80 disposed immediately under the open end of each lower end portion 54 and projecting forwardly therefrom. In supporting the lowermost package, shelf 80 of course serves to support all other packages stacked above that one. It will be noted that the front half of each lower end portion 54 is cut away to a height that permits the lowermost package to be readily grasped and removed, after which the next package above that one simply slides downward to take its place.

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a spaced-apart plurality of such tab portions (28) extending from opposite sides of said first label (26) on said cap (18) and tautly secured to corresponding opposite sides of said container exterior surface (15), said second label (32) being secured to said container exterior surface (14) in overlapping relation to said plurality of tab portions (28), characterized in that said end cap (18) is a snap-on cap, at least one tearable tab portion (28) includes weakening means (30) for rendering said tab portion (28) more easily tearable, and a thumb tab (24) on said cap (18) facilitates opening said can (10), said thumb tab (24) projecting from a side of said cap (18) substantially midway between said tab portions (28) and wherein a principal part of said second label (32) is positioned substantially opposite to said tab (24).

2. A package (P) as claimed in claim 1 further comprising a third label (38) separably adhered to said first label (26), said third label (38) being readily peelable away from said first label (26) and re-adherable to another surface for reference after the product (C) has been removed from said can (10).

Patentansprüche

1. Verpackung (P) zum schützenden Umschließen eines Produkts (C), wobei die Verpackung (P) eine im wesentlichen zylindrische Dose (10) mit einer im wesentlichen kreisförmigen Zugangsöffnung (16), durch die das Produkt (C) in den Behälter einführbar und aus ihm herausnehmbar ist, und einen endseitigen Deckel (18) aufweist, der passend an der Öffnung (16) anbringbar und von dieser abnehmbar ist, um den Behälter (10) zu verschließen bzw. zu öffnen, wobei der Behälter (10) und der Verschluss (18) je eine nach außen weisende Oberfläche (14 und 20, 22) haben, und wobei ein erstes Etikett (26) an der Außenfläche (20, 22) des Verschlusses befestigt ist, das erste Etikett (26) zumindest eine zerreißbare Lasche (28) aufweist, die sich davon erstreckt und an der Behälteraußenfläche (14) sicher befestigt ist, und ein zweites Etikett (32) an der Behälteraußenfläche (14) die zumindest eine an der Behälteraußenfläche (14) befestigte, zerreißbare Lasche (28) überlappend befestigt ist, um dadurch zu verhindern, daß der Verschluss (18) relativ zur Öffnung (16) zum Öffnen des Behälters (10) bewegt wird, ohne die Lasche (28) zu zerreißen, zumindest eine zerreißbare Lasche (28) mehre-

re voneinander beabstandete Laschen (28) aufweist, die sich von entgegengesetzten Seiten des ersten Etiketts (26) auf dem Deckel (18) erstrecken und sicher an entsprechenden gegenüberliegenden Seiten der Behälteraußenfläche (15) befestigt sind, wobei das zweite Etikett (32) die mehreren Laschen (28) überlappend auf der Behälteraußenfläche (14) befestigt ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der endseitige Deckel (18) ein aufzuschnappender Deckel ist, zumindest eine zerreißbare Lasche (28) eine Schwächung aufweist, um die Lasche (28) leichter zerreißbar zu gestalten, und wobei ein Daumenvorsprung (24) am Deckel (18) ein Öffnen der Dose (10) erleichtert, wobei der Daumenvorsprung (24) von einer Seite des Deckels (18) im wesentlichen in der Mitte zwischen den Laschen (28) hervorsteht, und wobei ein Hauptteil des zweiten Etiketts (32) im wesentlichen dem Vorsprung (24) gegenüberliegend angeordnet ist.

2. Verpackung (P) nach Anspruch 1, ferner aufweisend ein drittes Etikett (38), das trennbar am ersten Etikett (26) anhaftet, wobei das dritte Etikett (38) ohne weiteres von dem ersten Etikett (26) abziehbar und als Hinweis an einer anderen Oberfläche wieder anbringbar ist, nachdem das Produkt (C) aus der Dose (10) entnommen worden ist.

Revendications

1. Conditionnement (P) destiné à enfermer un produit (C) en le protégeant, le conditionnement (P) comportant une boîte sensiblement cylindrique (10) ayant une ouverture d'accès pratiquement circulaire (16) par laquelle le produit (C) peut être introduit dans le récipient (10) et retiré de celui-ci, et un capuchon (18) d'extrémité qui peut être fixé à l'ouverture (16), sous forme complémentaire et séparé de celle-ci de manière que le récipient (10) soit fermé et ouvert respectivement, le récipient (10) et l'organe de fermeture (18) ayant chacun une surface externe tournée vers l'extérieur (14 et 20, 22), dans lequel
une première étiquette (26) est fixée à la surface externe (20, 22) de l'organe de fermeture, la première étiquette (26) ayant au moins une partie de patte (28) à déchirer qui en dépasse et qui est fixée sous forme tendue à la surface externe (14) du récipient, et
une seconde étiquette (32) est fixée à la surface externe (14) du récipient afin qu'elle recouvre ladite partie (28) de patte à déchirer au moins à la surface externe (14) du récipient.



et empêche ainsi le déplacement de l'organe (18) de fermeture par rapport à l'ouverture (16) afin que l'ouverture du récipient (10) ne puisse être exécutée sans déchirure de la partie de patte (28),

ladite partie de patte à déchirer au moins (28) comprenant plusieurs parties de patte espacées (28) dépassant des côtés opposés de la première étiquette (26) sur le capuchon (18) et étant fixée de manière tendue à des faces opposées correspondantes de la surface externe (15) du récipient, la seconde étiquette (32) étant fixée à la surface externe (14) du récipient avec recouvrement des parties de patte (28),

caractérisé en ce que

le capuchon d'extrémité (18) est un capuchon à enclenchement élastique, et une partie de patte à déchirer au moins (28) comporte un dispositif (30) d'affaiblissement destiné à rendre plus facile la déchirure de la partie de patte (28), et une patte (24) à pousser par le pouce, placée sur le capuchon (18), facilite l'ouverture du récipient (10), la patte (24) à pousser dépassant d'un côté du capuchon (18) pratiquement à mi-distance entre les parties de patte (28), et une partie principale de la seconde étiquette (32) est positionnée pratiquement en position opposée à la patte à pousser (24).

2. Conditionnement (P) selon la revendication 1, comprenant en outre une troisième étiquette (38) collée de façon séparable à la première étiquette (26), la troisième étiquette (38) pouvant être facilement retirée par pelage de la première étiquette (26) et pouvant être recollée sur une autre surface afin qu'on puisse s'y référer après que le produit (C) a été retiré du récipient (10).

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