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(54) **CAN COVER**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A protective covering or film for a can is configured to prevent the lips of a user from touching a dirty or contaminated can when imbibing the beverage within. The protective covering is form-fitted to the top of a conventional beverage can, being inserted into the groove found on the top of conventional drinking cans. The film of the present invention is preferably a thin plastic or acrylic membrane that is designed to be removed from the beverage can after the beverage can arrives at an end user. The film may be equipped with a tongue-shaped extension, designed to protect an extended portion of the can that is frequently known to come into contact with a user's lips during the act of drinking from a conventional beverage can.

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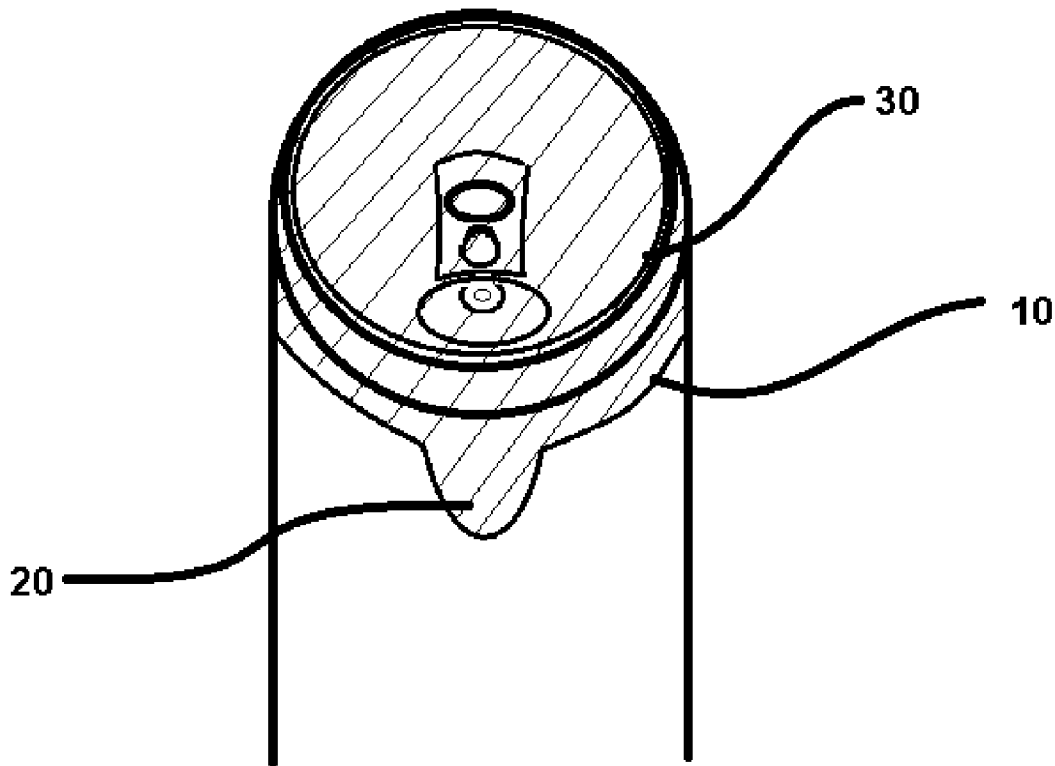


FIG. 1

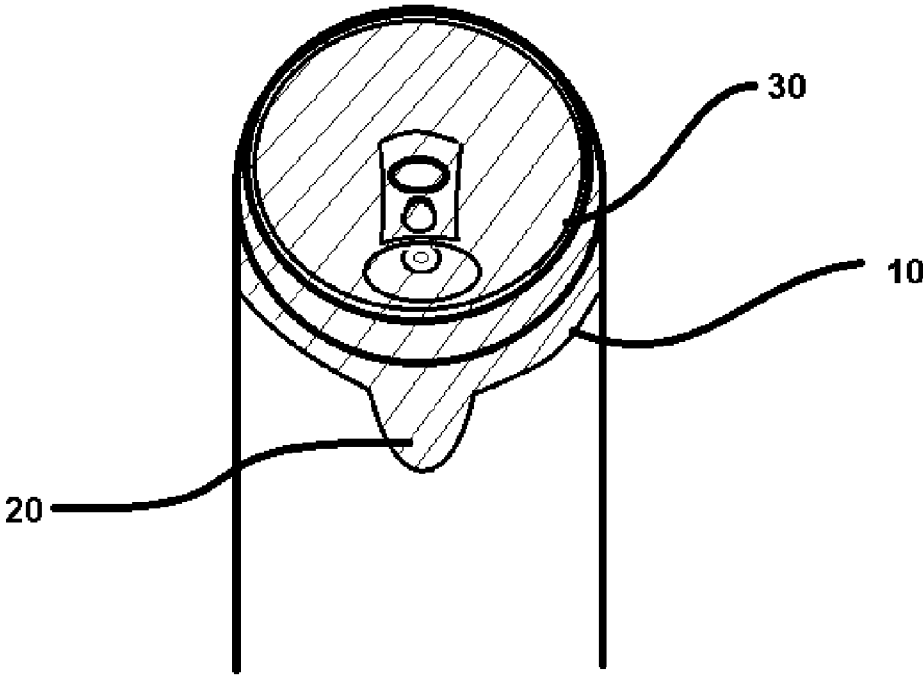
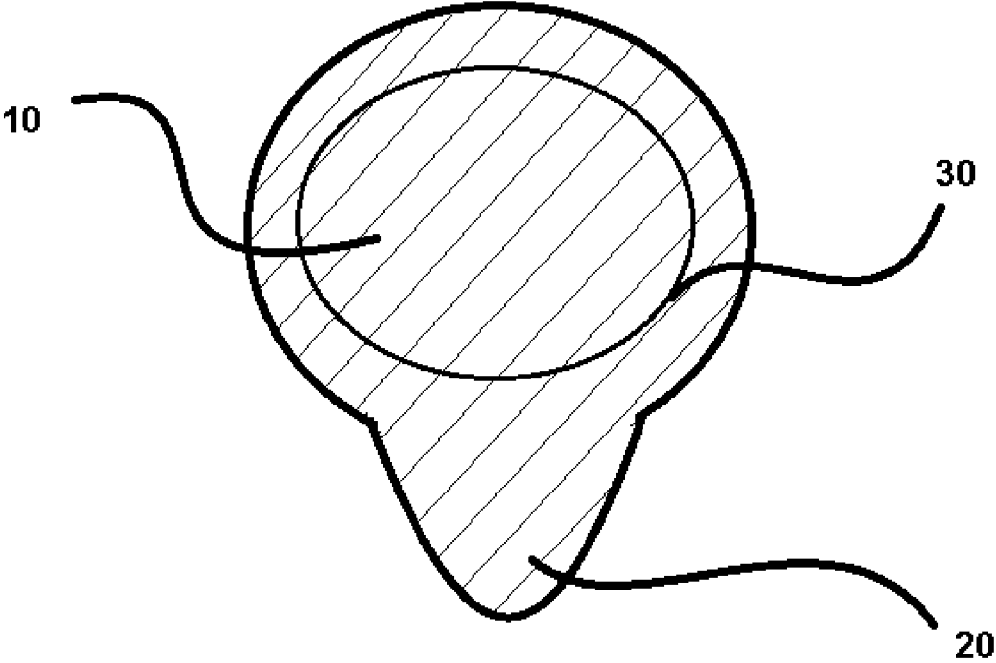


FIG. 2



**CAN COVER**

**FIELD OF THE PRESENT INVENTION**

[0001] The present invention relates to protection devices, and more specifically, protection devices designed to protect an individual from bacteria, pesticides, and other contaminants commonly found on the top of conventional beverage cans, such as those constructed of aluminum or tin. The present invention is intended to be placed on cans at the factory after the cans are filled with liquid, and removed by the user prior to imbibing the beverage within the can. In this manner, the present invention functions as a protective film, ensuring that the top of the can remains safe from contaminants during storage and transit.

**BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT INVENTION**

[0002] Through the ages, the manner by which individuals imbibe beverages has gradually evolved. From the early glasses and jars of medieval times, to the modern drink ware of today such as plastic bottles and aluminum cans, each has presented unique problems regarding the nature of sanitation. Initially, open top containers posed the issue of contaminants entering the beverage. Covered containers were introduced both to keep liquids held safely within, as well as to keep contaminants and hazards out.

[0003] Unfortunately, modern drinking containers still require one to place his or her lips directly on the drinking container itself, which is often shipped to the individual via a long supply chain. It is known that, along the route from the production line to the end user, the conventional drinking container, such as a can, is often compromised by dirt, dust, rats, insects, and other bacteria or virus carrying elements. As such, occasionally palates of conventional drinking containers are contaminated with conventional pesticides or poisons, in order to keep the insects, rats, and other living animals off of the cans, in an attempt to limit the can's exposure to harmful bacteria, especially bacteria and viruses harbored on the feet of the rats.

[0004] While one solution to this problem is to simply rinse the cans prior to their arrival at store shelves, often cardboard packaging prevents such a simple solution from remaining plausible, as water would bring about a decrease in the cardboard's structural integrity, or indeed, its complete destruction. End users of the cans may wash them prior to use, but this is cumbersome and laborious, and often isn't possible when on the go, when water is not available or readily accessible.

[0005] The other often thought of solution is for the user to simply cover the potentially contaminated can with a 'can cover' when the can arrives to the end user. In this likeness, the end user would conventionally open the can, and then attach the can cover prior to drinking from the can. However, this requires that the user carry the can cover around with them, always remaining prepared with a clean cover when ready to drink from a can. This poses a need for the can cover to be washed after each use in order to maintain the sanitary environment, making the prospect cumbersome, given that these can covers are not designed to be disposable, and are preferably designed to be used more than once.

[0006] Thus, there is a need for a device capable of protecting the user from harmful bacteria, dirt, debris, and other contaminants from coming into contact with the lips of a user

when imbibing a beverage from a can, which does not necessitate the user to place a cover on the can prior to use, and wash after each use.

[0007] US Patent Application No. D/148502 by Olsen is for a Beverage Can Cap. While Olsen does provide an extended lip extending from the Beverage Can Cap to the can, preventing a user's lips from coming into contact with the user's lips, it is designed to be installed by the user, and kept on for the duration of the drinking experience; whereas the present invention is installed at the can-filling plant or factory, protecting the top of the can, until the user removes the present invention just prior to use, revealing a clean can top and drinking point of contact.

[0008] US. Patent Publication No. US20040625386A by LaFortune on Dec. 23, 2004 is for a Beverage Can and Seal Cover. Unlike the present invention however, LaFortune does not have a lip extending from the Beverage Can and Seal Cover, preventing the lips of the user from touching the can at all. Similarly, LaFortune is designed to be placed onto the can by the user prior to imbibing the beverage within the can, whereas the present invention is configured to be removed by the user prior to drinking the beverage within the can, or even opening the can itself.

[0009] U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/362,700 by Pladsbjerg and filed on Feb. 26, 2003 is for a Top For Mounting on a Container. Pladsbjerg differs from the present invention in that it is designed to be placed on the can prior to imbibing the beverage within, whereas the present invention is designed to be removed from the can, revealing a portion of the can that has been protected from the point that the can was filled at the factory or can-filling plant.

**SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION**

[0010] The present invention is a protective covering for a conventional pop-top or other similar drinking canister designed to prevent the lips of the user from coming in contact with a dirty can. The present invention achieves this goal by placing a sterilized buffer, preferably composed of a plastic or acrylic polymer, onto the can shortly after the can is filled with liquid on the production line. Each instance of the present invention is configured to be employed once, and then thrown away or recycled in accordance with local recycling provisions.

[0011] The present invention is configured to function as a form of protective film, designed to be removed by the user prior to imbibing the liquid within a beverage can. The present invention preferably has an extended tongue, which extends past the rim of the can, and down the cylindrical portion of the can, in order to provide protection to the portion of the can that comes in to contact with a user's lips when drinking

[0012] The present invention is form fitted to the specific size of can it is deployed on in accordance with the size specifications of the can. In this manner, the present invention is designed to fit within the groove in the lip of the can, in order to maintain the can's capacity to be stacked atop one another, commonly found in conventional drinking cans, without the potential for the perforation of the present invention when cans are stacked.

[0013] When a can equipped with the present invention arrives at the end user, the present invention must be removed in order for the can to be opened, and for liquid to escape the can. The present invention is designed to cover and protect the entire top of the can, extending approximately one centimeter

from the top circumference of the can. Additionally, an extension extends down the front portion of the can, beginning at the approximate location of the opening of the can, and ending approximately 1/4 of the way down the can. The extension is designed to protect the portion of the can that conventionally comes into contact with the user's lower lip during the act of drinking. After the present invention is removed from the can, it reveals a portion of the can that has not been exposed to air, dirt, debris, pesticides, and other contaminants since it's rinsing at the factory after being filled with liquid. In this manner, this portion of the can has been protected by the present invention, and may thus be pressed against the lips of a user safely, without fear of contaminants entering the mouth of the user.

[0014] It is to be understood that the preferred embodiment of the present invention is designed as a unitary piece of film, preferably composed of a plastic or acrylic; however, it can be envisioned that an alternate embodiment of the present invention may have a slight perforation, such that the present invention can be removed in two or more stages. For example, the present invention could be equipped with a two-stage removal process, such that the user would first remove the top portion of the film which protects the top of the can. Then the user would open the can itself. And then finally, the user would remove the remaining portion of the film, revealing the portion of the can that would touch the user's lips.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] FIG. 1 exhibits an angled view of the present invention from the front when in place on a can.

[0016] FIG. 2 is a view of the present invention from the top.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0017] The present invention is a protective film (10), form-fitted to the top of a conventional drinking can, configured to protect the portion of a can that comes into contact with a user from contaminants when imbibing the beverage within the can. The film (10) of the present invention is designed to be installed onto each individual beverage can at the factory at which the cans are filled with liquid. The beverage cans are preferably washed after filling, at which time the present invention is installed onto the top of the beverage can via an air-tight, potentially vacuum-created seal. The film (10) of the present invention is configured to be thin, in order to tightly seal to the can, and fit within small spaces located on the can. It is preferred that the film (10) of the present invention does not employ a conventional adhesive, but that the properties of the material the present invention is composed of could be held on the cans via a static force, or via vacuum-applied friction, causing the material to stretch or be 'shrink-wrapped' to the can, forming a tight seal.

[0018] The film (10) of the present invention is preferably circularly shaped, in order to conform to the dimensions of the drinking can. The film (10) has an inner ridge (30) that is designed to be wedged within the groove commonly found on drinking cans to facilitate the stacking of multiple cans together at storage warehouses as well as in transit to stores and customers. The film (10) of the present invention is preferably equipped with a tongue (20) which extends down the front of the conventional drinking can as seen in FIG. 1. The function of the tongue (20) is to protect the portion of the can

that comes into contact with the user's lips while the can is held in storage at a warehouse, or in transit.

[0019] The tongue (20) of the present invention can be used as an easy point of removal of the film (10) of the present invention from a can prior to drinking. Ideally, the user would simply use his or her nail to gently pull the tongue (20) on the film (10) of the present invention upward, towards the top of the can, causing the film to gradually peel off of the can, preferably in one piece. It is also envisioned that the tongue (20) of the present invention could be equipped with an extra flap of plastic that is not stuck to the can, which would act as a pull tab for removing the film (10) of the present invention from the can, facilitating the process.

[0020] The present invention is envisioned to be designed in a wide assortment of sizes and colors in order to accommodate drinking cans of all sizes. Additionally, it is envisioned that the present invention may be formed in a different shape than previously outlined, provided that it still secures an air-tight seal across the top of the container.

[0021] Alternate embodiments of the present invention could include other configurations designed for liquid food cans and containers, such as soup cans, tuna fish cans, and the like. In this manner, the present invention could be employed in a variety of settings in order to keep the portion of the can that comes into contact with the food or liquid safe from contaminants. For example, on conventional tuna fish or soup cans, often a conventional can opener is employed. Occasionally, the lid of the can falls inside of the can upon opening, potentially releasing contaminants from the top of the can lid into the contents of the can. The present invention could be employed on cans such as those containing tuna fish and soup cans in order to ensure that, in the event that the lid of the can falls into the contents of the can upon the act of a user opening the can with a can opener, the lid of the can is free of contaminants that were collected on the top of the film (10) of the present invention rather than on the lid of the can itself. In this manner, the film (10) would protect the lid of the can in the same manner in which the top of drinking cans are protected in the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] Having illustrated the present invention, it should be understood that various adjustments and versions might be implemented without venturing away from the essence of the present invention. Further, it should be understood that the present invention is not solely limited to the invention as described in the embodiments above, but further comprises any and all embodiments within the scope of this application.

1. A protective device for a drinking can comprising:
  - a film;
  - said film configured to conform to a top of the drinking can;
  - said film configured to be mechanically affixed to said top of the drinking can;
  - said film configured to cover the entire surface of said top of the drinking can; and
  - said film configured to form an airtight seal over said top of the drinking can.
2. The protective device for a drinking can of claim 1, further comprising:
  - a tongue that extends down a front of the drinking can below a opening of the drinking can.
3. The protective device for a drinking can of claim 1, wherein said film is vacuum sealed to said top of the drinking can.

4. The protective device for a drinking can of claim 1, wherein said film is configured to fit within a groove found on a lip of said top of the drinking can.

5. The protective device for a drinking can of claim 2, wherein said film is easily removed when peeled upwards from said tongue.

6. The protective device for a drinking can of claim 1, wherein said film is affixed to said top of the drinking can immediately after the can is filled.

7. The protective device for a drinking can of claim 1, wherein said film is elastic, enabling adherence to said top of the drinking can without an adhesive.

8-12. (canceled)

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