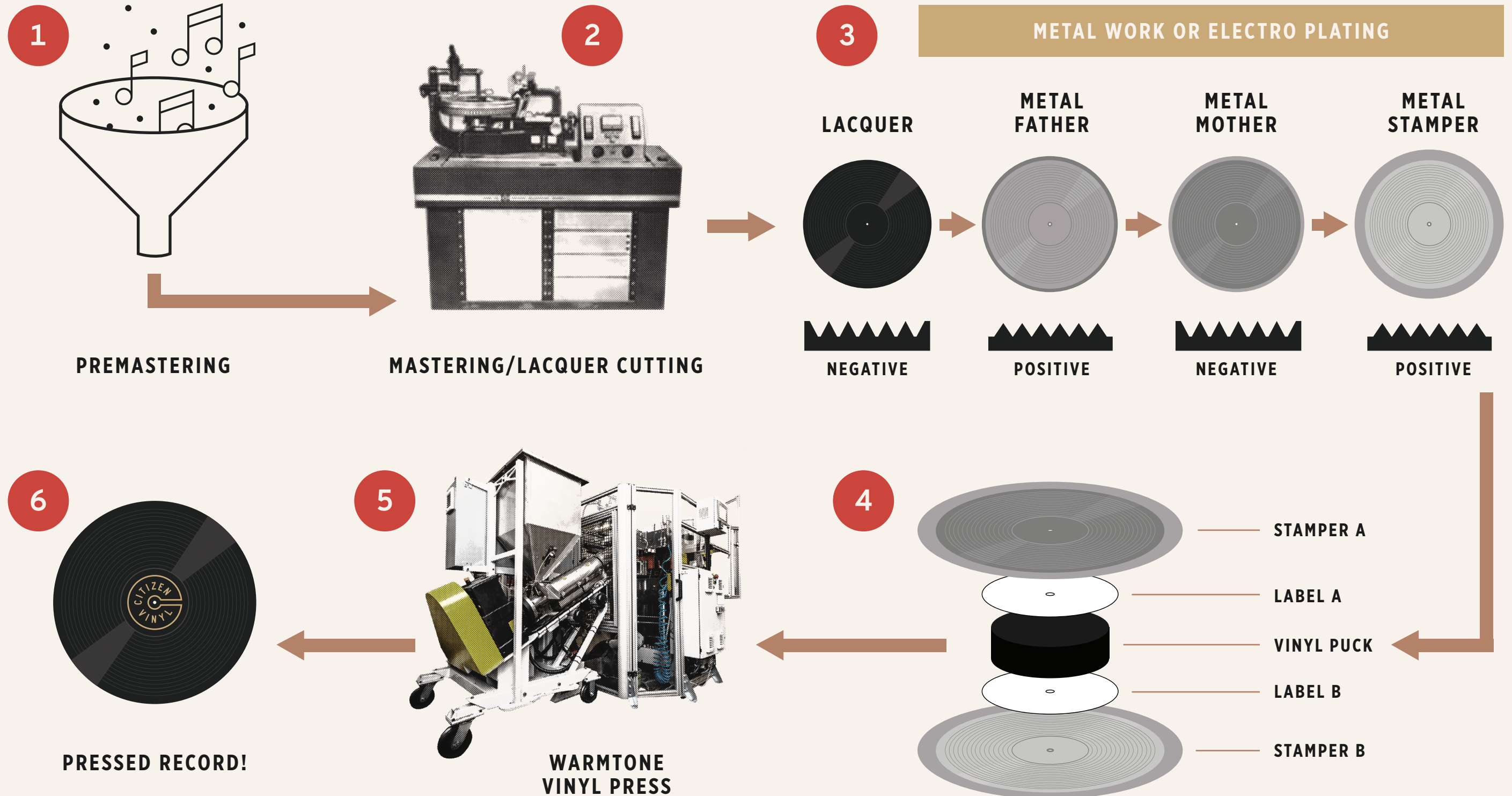




CITIZEN VINYL: HOW RECORDS ARE MADE





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PREMASTERING / MASTERING

Making a vinyl album all starts with “sending in music”, strangely enough this happens digitally most of the time, although a vinyl record is an analog format. The original lacquer recording of a record is called “the mastering”. This original record is a metal plate made out of aluminum with a firm layer of coating; this record is being used to make a mold to start the eventual process of actually producing the record. It takes about one hour to turn a lacquer disc into a master record on which music can be placed.

ELECTRO PLATING

The next step to take is all about making a mold also called stamper from the lacquer master for the record producing. Making a mold is done in two distinct steps:

The first step is that the “father” is being made. The lacquer is sprayed with silver to create in order to create a surface for electroplating, then submerged in a bath full nickel sulfamate and small pellets/ balls of pure nickel; these balls are being connected to the master disc by electrolytes. This process is a mix of physics at its best.

The father disc goes into the same bath to produce a “mother disc”; the mother disc is the actual record that can be played, but it will not be used to play music, since the mother disc is used as a mold to produce stampers which are used to press the vinyl record. The stamper/ mold is loaded into a pressing machine especially made to press vinyl records.

The mold is still rough and needs to be formed for the press before copies can be produced, so the stamper disc gets centered, polished, and any imperfections which could be pressed into a vinyl record are being removed. If this process of forming the metal part (stamper/ mold) is not completed, a record would have any imperfections from the mold and would not be the quality of music we want to hear.

RECORD PRESSING

Now the actual record can get pressed! A puck is melted from vinyl pellets through an extruder as a first step. The puck is then placed in the press, between the mold / (stampers), an A & B side. The press engages to press the vinyl puck with heat transferring throughout the mold for a consistent, uniform spread of the vinyl into the grooves. Pressing a record goes quite fast, after approximately 30 seconds a vinyl record is finished, trimmed and good to go. Vinyl can be used in various shapes and colors, which is great for all collectors of colored vinyl.

CHECKING THE RECORD

The next step is “checking the vinyl records” on the first batch. Checking these first-pressed vinyl albums thoroughly is necessary to make the production of an actual record more streamlined and without any blockages. This does not mean that afterwards no checks are being executed, but after the first batch is successful, the following copies are checked randomly during the production period. A mold of a vinyl record lasts for a maximum of 1,500 pressed records, and then a new mold is being made.

PACKAGING & LABELING

A vinyl album would not be the same without its packaging and labeling, most of the time this process happens by machines. The vinyl records go into thin, but firm paper sleeves, and after in a stronger carton sleeve that holds the cover art. Next the record package is wrapped in plastic foil - and boxed for shipping!