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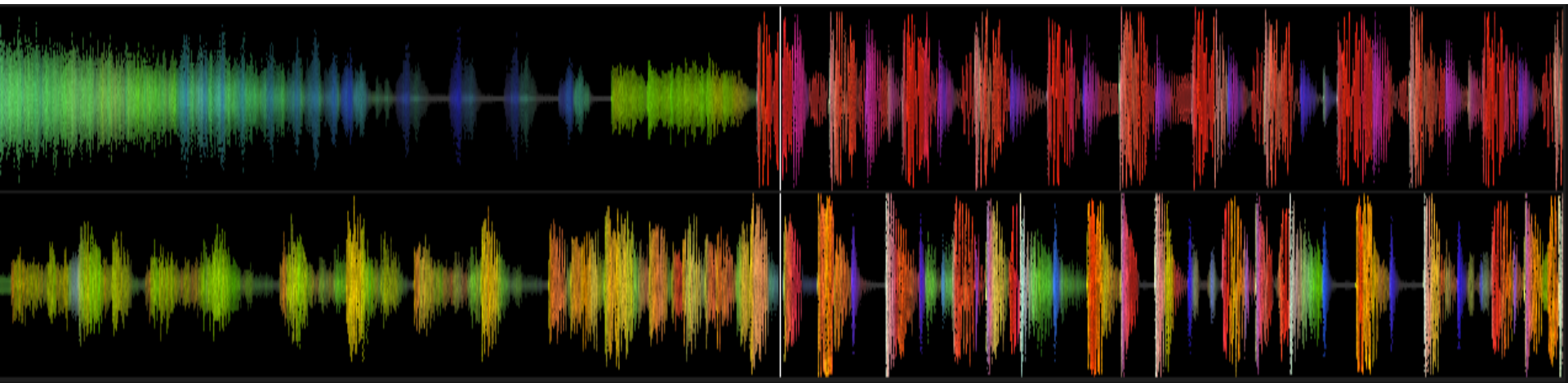








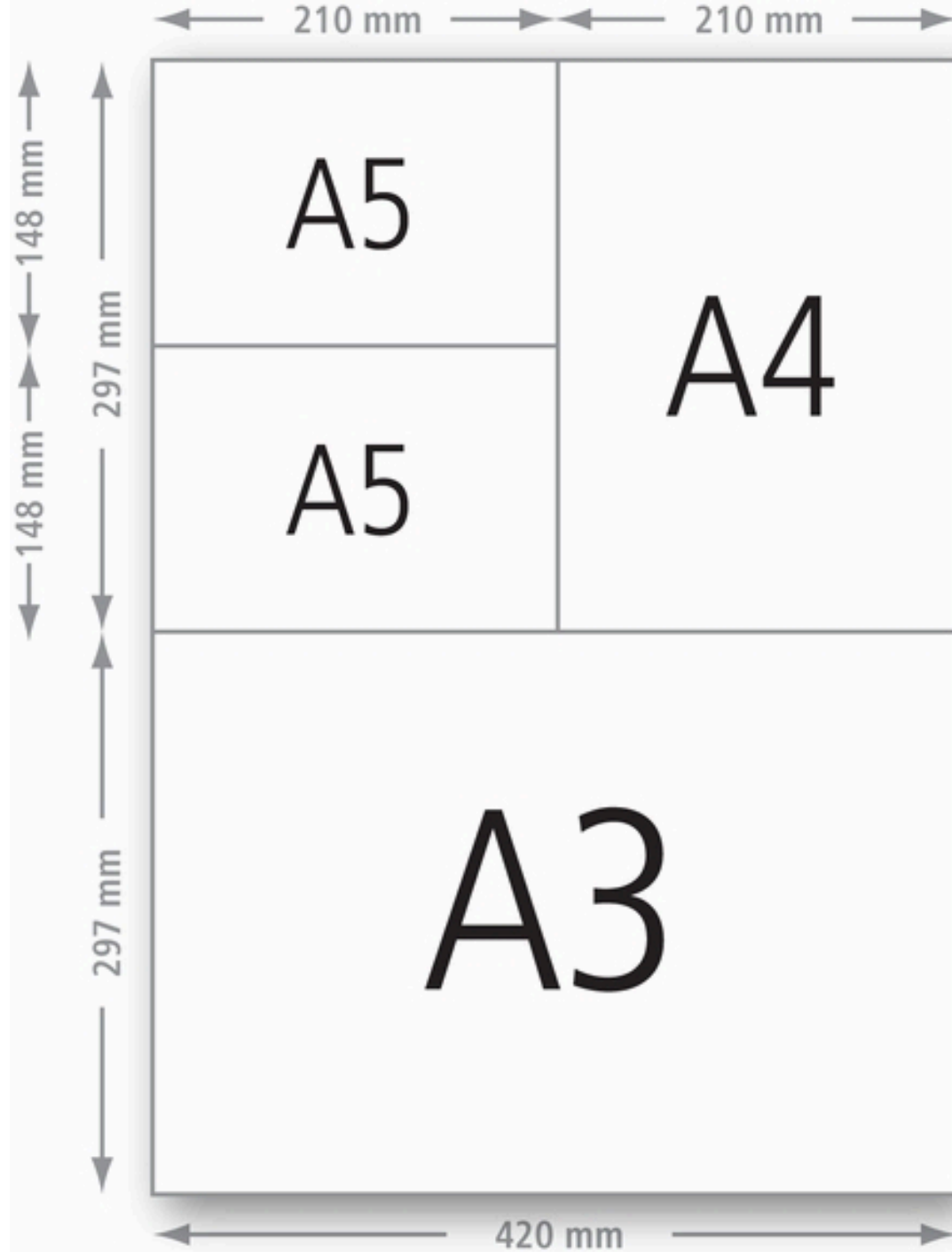


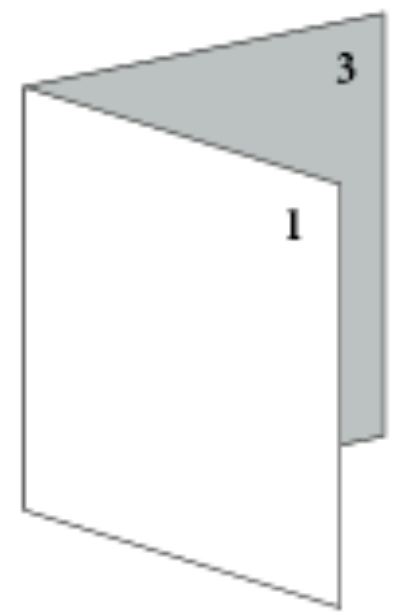
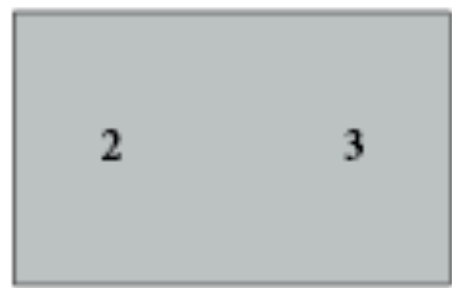


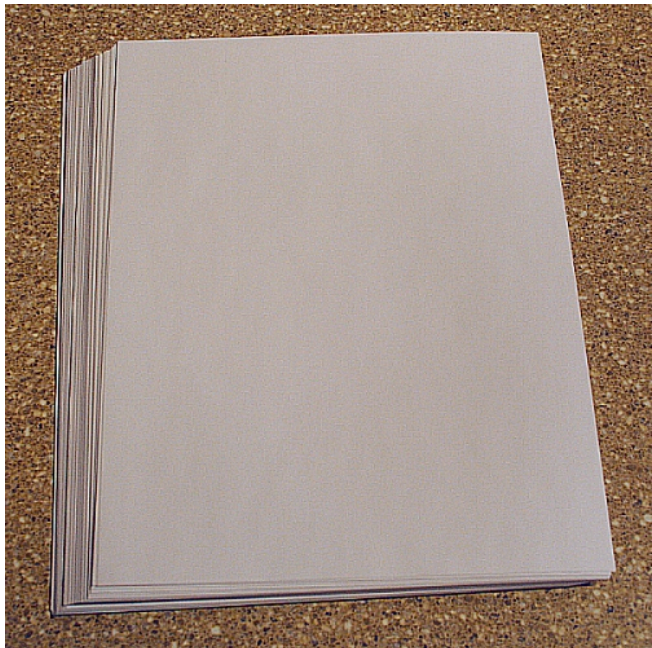












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HOSPITAL

along with vocalist i-Kay, heads back, as though their lives depended on it.

Hospitality, the live incarnation of the label, all started in October 2001 at Herbal, East London: the kind of intimate, sometimes claustrophobic venue for 300 revs where sweat drips from the ceiling. After Herbal closed, the parties moved into the 1,800-capacity Heaven for four years. Then came Matter: six sold-out events and 2,500 people. When Matter shut down, the Hospital crew took the venue's events manager along with them and took a punt on the 4,500-capacity Britton Academy, where they have sold out every party they've done, weeks, sometimes months in advance. This incremental increase in venue capacity gives you a good indication of the label's ambition. While many are happy to stay with what they've got, Hospital always seems to be looking to grow, to become bigger than in the past.

And there's one reason why, when it comes to parties these days, bigger is definitely better: money. The sad fact is, the revenue from music sales alone can no longer keep a label with the size and ambition of Hospital Records afloat. People buy less music, so live gigs are where it's at. Head to any major city in the UK and chances are you'll find a Hospital-branded night at some stage during the year. European nights are a regular fixture. And on this year's summer festival circuit, Hospitality was an omnipresent force, providing the drum 'n' bass option at Parklife, Lounge On The Farm, Lovebox and Global Gathering. "It's not as simple as putting on more parties because sales are down, though," Tony says. "One feeds the other. Events will help to sell records, and selling records will help to fuel events." Get the two working well together and you have a blueprint for success.

BUT WITH SUCCESS inevitably comes criticism, and Hospital, for so long a label that could seemingly do no wrong with hardcore fans, has come under fire, accused of that bete noire of drum 'n' bass selling out. High Contrast's recent collaboration with Tiesto and Underworld has unsurprisingly drawn flak, with one online critic declaring, "The tragedy is, [Hospital] could've been the next Ninja Tune or Warp if they'd invested some imagination, but instead they've become the musical equivalent of Topshop." Colman is bullish in his response: "There has never been a master plan," he says. "The label is led completely by what our artists make. We've never said to anyone, 'You have to make this more commercial.' And to be honest, as soon as anyone attains any level of commercial success in drum 'n' bass you're immediately accused of having sold out. So we look on it as a badge of honour. If you haven't been hated on on YouTube or Dogs On Acid, you haven't really made it."

By the passionate way Colman talks, you definitely get the feeling the label has been stung by some of the criticism—and as elder statesman of the imprint, it falls to him to be a kind of father figure in the camp. "It can be very psychologically destructive," he admits. "You have to remember, some of these young artists have grown through the internet; they've built up their confidence online, and received so much support, so when people suddenly turn on them it must be very hard to take."

The truth is, Hospital's sound has become more mainstream, with the likes of Danny Byrd, Camo & Krooked and High Contrast all making tunes that sit comfortably on the daytime Radio 1 playlist. But the label also releases some of the most leftfield, cutting-edge of 'n' out there through its Med School offshoot, and plenty in between. "And if you didn't



"If you haven't been hated, you haven't made it"

have the big tunes, we wouldn't be able to put out stuff like Bop [Med School's bearded purveyor of 'existentialist electronica'], Tony says. The days of being able to ring out a vinyl single and sell 10,000 copies without much promotion are well and truly over. Some labels in d'n'b's history weren't able to adapt: sometimes through greed, but mostly through a lack of vision, planning and effort. Hospital has always attempted to stay ahead of the curve, and its current popularity tells you that it's doing the big things right. "We do try and keep our eye on the ball at all times," Tony says. "But I think the main reason we're at the stage we are now, fifteen years down the line, is effort. Some people think running a label is simple, and get into the music industry for an easy ride. Let me tell you: it's not. It's a lot of hard work."

As a result of that hard work Hospital Records is bigger, brasher and further reaching than ever before. Some may not like what they've become. But they've done it through a combination of bloody-minded determination, big thinking and, critically, a catalogue of quality drum 'n' bass. In a world where music has seemingly lost value for many and businesses are falling daily, the fact that an esoteric dance label from such humble origins has managed to become so successful should be celebrated.

And that's exactly what the crowd at the Britton Academy do, into the early hours of a crisp London morning. Up on the stage, inside a cylinder made of shafts of blue glowing light, new signings Camo & Krooked launch into "Beezoback", and in front of them, a thousand fists punch the air in a metronomic unison. The people keep on dancing. And the big H keeps on flashing. **H**

15 Years Of Hospital Records: it out this month



THE BIG 3
The best parties of the last month

1 LIVERPOOL

CIRCUS X

Celebrating 10 years of Liverpool's home-grown superstar

WHERE The Masque, Seel St, Liverpool
WHEN Monthly Saturdays
MUSIC House and techno

"DO YOU WANT to blow up some monkey?" Yousef's wife Delta asks. #Kirmag. Were it not for the party hats and inflatable pled around we might have learned the circus concept had been taken to a disturbing extreme. But we happily oblige, as does Delta's mum — here for the first time to celebrate 10 years of Circus with her daughter, a sell-out crowd and her superstar son-in-law, Yousef.

With its elegant architecture, former theatre The Masque is the perfect venue for celebration. Circus has been here since the beginning following the closure of its intended home at Cream; the club that saw Yousef rise from

local punter to globe-trotting resident with Circus, which now boasts a residency at London's Egg club and recent debut in New York. And by then the place has begun working its magic. Marco Pileri's deep, disorientating house seeps through a crisp Funktion One soundsystem, enhanced by the acoustics of the building. Layers of clubbers line the sloping steps of the dancefloor, somehow staying sure-footed — a clear sign that they've been here before.

Navigating the maze of corridors to the Loft, we're greeted by an animated Seth Troobor, just one of many names to have shot to the forefront of clubbing consciousness in the past few years with a little help from the Circus cannon. Suddenly, a burst of breakbeat briefly cuts through his four-to-the-

floor set, catching the crowd off-guard, but like the rest of tonight's lineup, Seth's a man who certainly knows how to read his audience.

Back in the theatre the intermittent whistles and cheers have merged into one continuous din, as if the crowd had been storing disbeliefs in preparation of Yousef's arrival. Inflatables and novelty glasses are hurled from the stage and soon the bespectacled masses, now key players in Circus's birthday performance, are fully absorbed in Yousef's trademark kaleidoscopic mix of house and techno. At 3am one stalwart makes way for another as

Sasha takes over. It's the perfect way to round off a decade of Circus, a period that has seen many big brands get left behind amid the shifting sands of electronic music. But, at the end of the day, it's all about the punters. "It reflects Yousef with a smile. If we make every event unmissable, they'll keep coming back." **GOOD STRINGS**

COMING UP

1/12 Laurent Garner presents LBS (live), Gut (live), Yousef, Lewis Boardman, Scott Lewis and more! 15C @ Masque www.circusclub.co.uk



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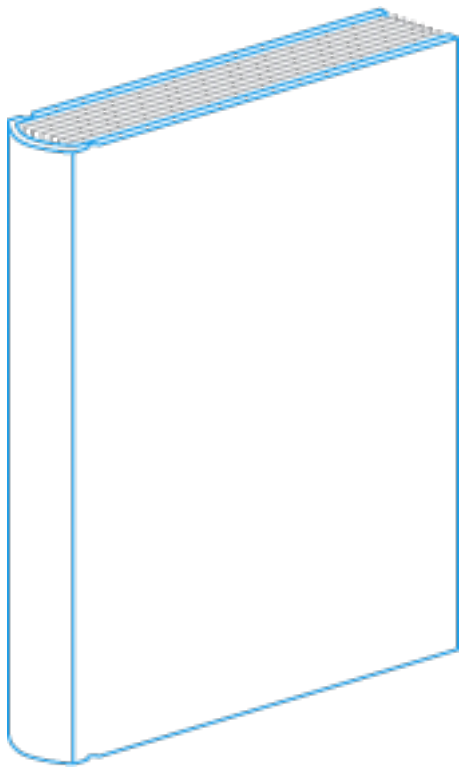
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SAMPLE MASTERPIECES

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KAYTRANADA**

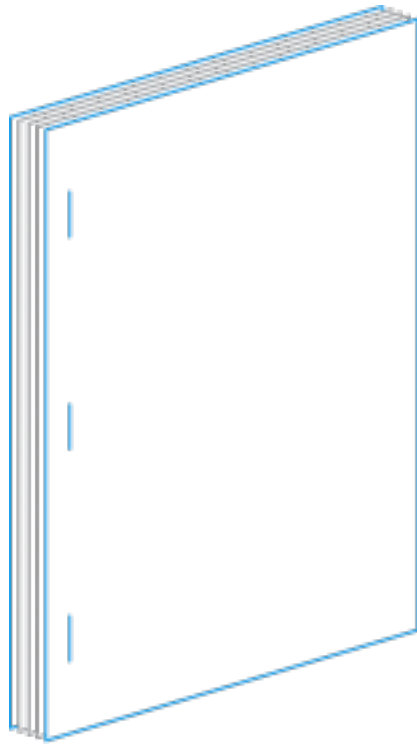
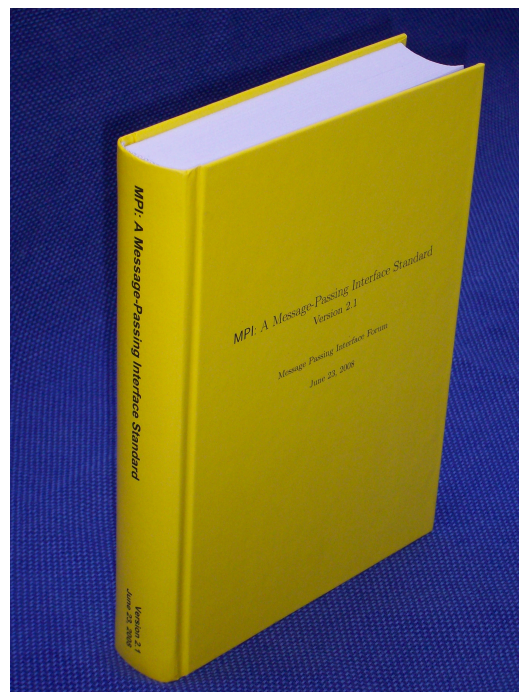
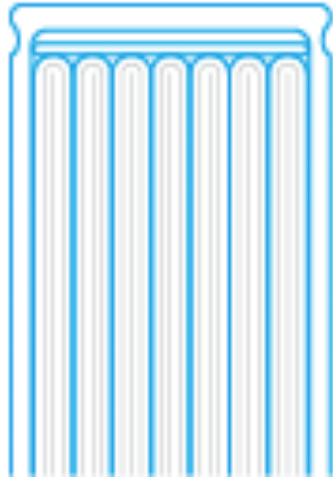
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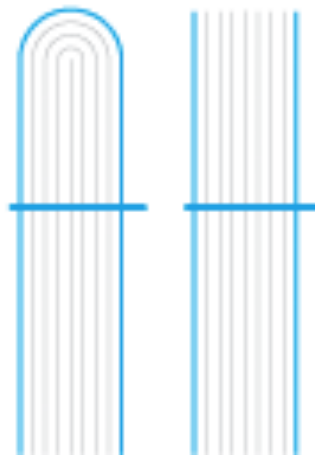
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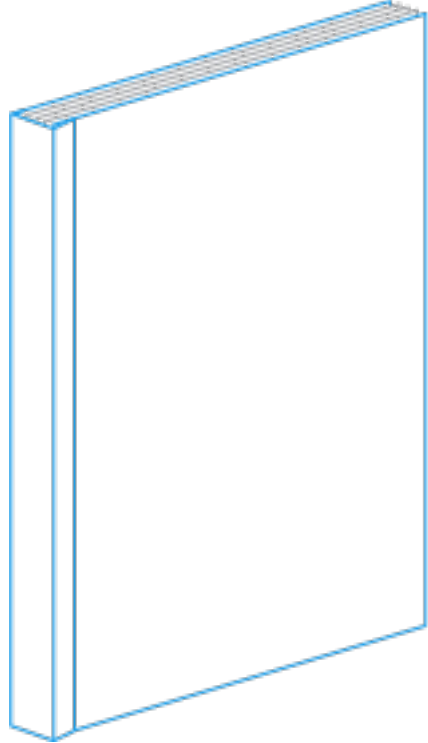


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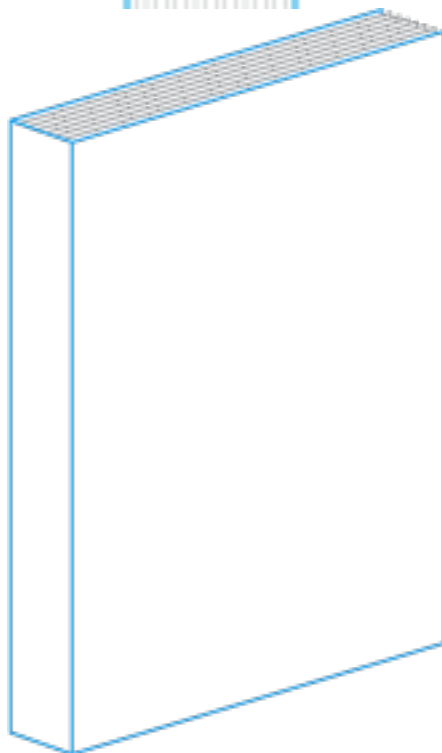
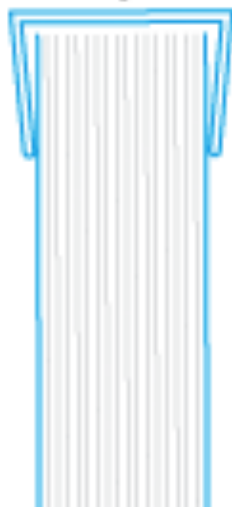


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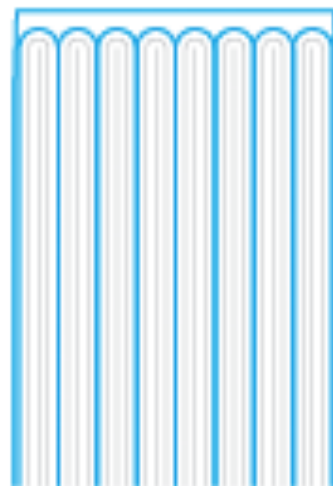




Plastic Grip



Glue





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