National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

Cheeseburger Radio



More than a few radio collectors specialize in novelty radios—radios resembling something other than a radio. During the vacuum tube era, novelty radios included such things as a whiskey bottle, a Coca-Cola cooler, and a set of books. But novelty radios really took off when transistors came along, because now radios could be made smaller, without generating the heat that tube radios did. Lightweight batteries could power them. And the cost of a radio was reduced dramatically. The museum's collection includes several dozen transistor novelty radios.

This week we feature the Stellarsonic "radioburger." It is a fully functioning AM radio. Note the tuning and volume knobs that resemble pickles spilling over the edge. In our museum's current novelty radio exhibit this radio is part of a whole fast food meal, where it is accompanied by a McDonald's French fries radio, a Pepsi Cola bottle radio, and a Heinz ketchup bottle radio.

Kids who visit the museum love this exhibit. We suggest they flummox their friends by announcing that "I can listen to radio programs on a cheeseburger!"

Some radio collectors might prefer a 1930s era console with inlaid wood, art deco styling, and high quality sound, but given a choice, most seven-year old visitors might opt to take home the cheeseburger radio.

We appreciate your support of the museum so that historical artifacts like this one, and the stories that go with them, can be preserved for future generations. THANKS!