National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

RCA 77DX Microphone



Developed by RCA engineer Harry F. Olson, the RCA 77-series represents perhaps the most successful microphones ever used in radio broadcasting. The 77D was introduced in 1945, replaced in the 1950s by Model 77DX. These were are called "ribbon" type microphones because the impinging sound waves strike a thin metallic ribbon rather than a more conventional circular diaphragm. The ribbon, vibrating in a magnetic field, converts the sound waves into an electrical signal.

A convenient feature of the 77DX is that its pattern of directivity can be adjusted to suit the circumstances of how it is used.

RCA continued to manufacture them until the 1970s. Today they are highly prized by collectors, and we are pleased to showcase one in our current 1950s radio studio exhibit.

Because of their superb sound quality, they have been popular with broadcasters. Larry King, pictured here on his "Larry King Live" program, always used one. When King was asked why he used a antique microphone rather than a smaller more modern one, his response was that he thought the old RCA ribbon mics sounded *better* than later types. David Letterman on "The Late-Show" agreed. He also used a 77D-series mic.



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!