National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

Audiovox Automobile FM Tuner



FM (Frequency Modulation) radio was invented in the 1930s, but did not become widely accepted by consumers until the 1960s. Today every car comes from the factory with an AM/FM radio as well as other features, which may include a USB port, a GPS system, a hard disc for storing favorite music, a satellite radio, and perhaps more. But in the 1950s, many automobiles were sold without a radio. If a car did have one, it would almost always have been an AM-only radio.

A few companies, such as Europe-based Blaupunkt, began offering FM car radios in the 1950s, but they were rare. If you drove a car with an AM-only radio in the late 1960s and wanted to have FM reception, you could purchase this separate FM tuner. Only a few inches wide, it mounted under the dashboard, taking up little space. It received FM stations and converted the signals to AM that could be played through the regular car radio. Automotive FM tuner units were offered throughout the 1970s. By 1980 AM/FM car radios had become standard equipment.

This week's artifact is an Audiovox Model FMC-IC FM tuner from the late 1960s. Audiovox began making radio gear in the mid-1960s and continues today.

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!