

# Philco Model 39-116

## Radio

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Donated by Brian Belanger



This 1939 Philco is the first radio to be equipped with a wireless remote control so that the listener could change stations and turn the volume up or down from an easy chair. The wooden box remote control with its telephone-type dial contained a battery-operated one-tube transmitter that sent a low-power string of pulses to the radio. A special part of the radio's receiver detected those pulses, which were like quick signals. As someone rotated a telephone dial, a small transmitter inside the device sent out these signals. On the radio, another part received and counted these signals. Depending on how many signals it counted, a motor in the radio moved to select the desired station.

Philco advertised this as “The Philco Mystery Control—a miracle as big as radio itself.” The radio has the regular AM band as well as shortwave bands that could bring in stations from all over the world. (The remote control worked only for eight broadcast band stations that would be set by the dealer.)

There was a problem. If you lived in an apartment building and the family in the next apartment also purchased a mystery control Philco, then when your family changed stations, the signal would reach the next apartment and cause the neighbor’s radio to also change stations! A technician would need to visit both apartments, adjusting the remote frequency of one radio to the low end of its range and the remote frequency of the other radio to the high end of its range.