

Zenith TV / radio / phonograph Combo

2006-39-1

Donated by Leonard Lucchi



The donor, Mr. Lucchi's story recounts that only a about 4 of the 1956 custom “Hi-Fidelity” model were ever produced. One unit went to the White House, while the others were placed in the homes of top Zenith executives. It is presumed that the unit we possess originated from one of these Zenith executives.

This unique combination boasts an exceptional AM/FM radio alongside a 21-inch black and white picture tube with a four-speed “cobra” record changer (16 rpm, 33.3 rpm, 45 rpm, and 78 rpm). The name "cobra" derives from the snake-like shape of the tone arm's end.

The Zenith TV also introduced the pioneering “Flash-Matic” remote control, the first wireless remote for televisions. Initially featured in select 1955 high-end Zenith models, this remote operated using a beam of light. Earlier remotes required a wired connection, which led to consumer complaints about tripping hazards. The Flash-Matic allowed users to control the TV by aiming a light beam from a pistol-shaped device at photocells positioned in the screen’s corners.

Despite some challenges, such as inadvertent activations from reflections, consumers appreciated the convenience of muting commercials from their armchairs. Zenith later improved upon this technology with the “Space Command” remote, setting a new standard for remote control performance.

