RCA CT-100 Color TV

2004-8-1

Donated by David Schaefer

Introduced in 1954, this is RCA's first color TV set offered to consumers. RCA gets credit for developing the compatible color TV system whereby a family with a black and white set could watch color shows in black and white.

The CT-100 is so heavy (175 pounds!) it almost requires a forklift truck to pick it up. It sold for about $1,000 at first ($11,7000 in today's dollars). That was too much for most families to afford and so very few were sold. RCA began dropping the price, but sales were still slow. It was not until the 1960s when mass production kicked in that color TV prices became more affordable.

Another problem was that in 1954 most TV shows were still broadcast in black and white. Special events such as the Rose Bowl Parade were in color, but the owner of a color set had very little color programming to watch at first.

These early color sets were very sensitive to magnetic fields, even the Earth's magnetic field. When the dealer delivered a new color set, a technician would need to touch up the color adjustments in the home. If you moved the set to a perpendicular wall, it would need to have the color adjustments reset.

Early color picture tubes tended to develop leaks. Replacing one was very expensive.