

Artifact Showcase: Westinghouse Model RC

Westinghouse launched its pioneer Pittsburgh radio station KDKA on November 2, 1920 to provide entertainment to families. At the same time, it began offering radio gear to consumers by producing the Model RA receiver/tuner and the three-tube Model DA detector/amplifier. Early in 1921 Westinghouse combined the two modules in one cabinet and called the complete regenerative receiver the Model RC. In the photo, the RA unit is on the left and the DA on the right. Why didn't Westinghouse market the RC from the beginning? It's because Westinghouse initially did not have the patent rights to Howard Armstrong's regeneration patent. Separately, the RA and DA did not constitute a regenerative receiver, but combined suitably, they did. Westinghouse obtained Armstrong's patent rights *after* KDKA came on the air. Only then could the company offer a complete regenerative receiver without patent infringement.



The Model RC sold well, approximately 80,000 of them. While there were a few other radios suitable for consumer broadcast listening introduced prior to the RC, none sold in large quantities. The Model RC is often called the first mass-produced consumer radio. It was expensive—initially it sold for \$125 without tubes, which corresponds to about \$2,200 in today's dollars. (Early radio prices often did not include tubes.)

The circular hole in the DA unit is a screened "peephole" into which you could look to see whether the tubes were glowing properly.

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!