



Artifact Showcase

RCA Selectavision VDT 625

This 1979 videocassette recorder/player was part of the first generation of home video devices. It was a "top-loader": the cassette was inserted into the carrier unit which popped up from the unit, which then pulled the cassette down to run on the two-head transducer. The VDT 625 features an NTSC tuner with 14 presets (to choose channels) via mechanical push buttons plus a wired remote control.

Matsushita designed the RCA unit using the Video Home System (VHS) format; it was the first VHS device made by a company other than Japan Victor Corp. (JVC), which offered almost identical VCRs. The VDT 625 could record up to six hours, which became a crucial factor in the "format war" versus the Sony Betamax VCR, which at the time only had a two-hour capacity. The longer capacity was expected to be attractive to sports fans, who wanted to record football games.

A label on the back of this VCR warns, "Unauthorized recording of television programs and other material may infringe the rights of others"—an early example of the brewing war between copyright owners (e.g. movie studios) and technology providers.

Although VCRs were introduced with expectations that consumers would use



them to "time shift" TV programs for viewing at a more convenient time (hence the longer recording time appeal), they were quickly seen as a device for playing pre-recorded programs. That triggered the boom in video rentals of popular films (and pornography).

RCA also used the "SelectaVision" brand for its analog Capacitance Electronic Disc (CED) system, introduced in 1981 as a rival to the Philips/Magnavox "Magnavision" reflective optical videodisc player. RCA reportedly invested \$650 million in that failed project, which (like the Philips device) eventually was eclipsed by digital video discs (DVDs)

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!

Donated by Gary Arlen