

My First Stereo

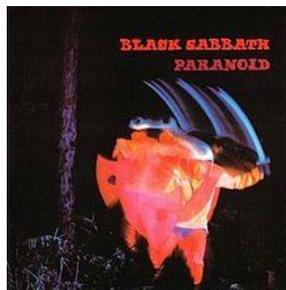
Do you remember your first stereo system? I recently gave it some thought and through research on the internet was able to piece together the system, some model numbers and even a few pictures. Before I get started down the equipment path, let me tell you about my exposure to music.

I grew up in Kentucky. Not exactly what you would call a happening place although I did grow up in a college town. Eastern Kentucky University was a school of 8 to 10 thousand students and was subject to the hippie movement in the late 60's. Food for thought, what do you get when you combine a Hippie and a Hillbilly? Oh never mind! Over time, I was exposed to more and more music from my generation. My main source for listening was AM and FM radio and I had it going quite a bit. My parents had one of those all in one large wood consoles with turntable and sliding doors on top. It was used rarely in our house but when it was it was mostly me playing around with the phonograph.

As I was exposed to more music through my friends, I took an interest in playing some music on something better than a portable FM radio and away from my parents console since I could only listen to some music and not very loud. My parents had an old 1959 Arvin Model 3586 9 Tube 2 Speaker Antique Electric Radio. The Manufacturer of the Arvin was Noblitt-Sparks Industries, Columbus, IN. It was not



much but I loved the sound of music on that system. Iron Man from Black Sabbath, Demons & Wizards from Uriah Heep and Abraxas from Santana were something special. Yes, my expectations were low concerning quality of equipment and high concerning new music.



The Arvin wasn't being used and sitting in the basement. This model had two speakers. The one built into the main player and another in the same basic box but without any controls. This was essentially an auxiliary speaker to match the look and size of the original cabinet. I don't believe it was stereo but mono from two different speakers. Somewhere in the 1960's I was introduced to music on a cassette tape. I wanted to get a portable cassette player so I could hear what was on the tapes.

I don't remember the circumstances but ended getting a Bell & Howell Filmosound Cassette Player Recorder that could plug into the back of the Arvin and let me hear music. It wasn't much but it exposed me to better HiFi sound than I had ever heard or experienced. Trust me, it was HiFi compared to a portable AM/FM radio. It even said HiFi on the front of the radio so I knew had arrived!



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I have memories of multiple musical artists that I listened to. The list is varied but I remember some more than others. Although far from comprehensive, this gives you some idea of what I was listening to and exploring musically:

Beatles	The Monkeys	The Who
Santana	Uriah Heep	Black Sabbath
Credence Clearwater Revival	The Grassroots	Carol King
Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass	Crosby Stills Nash and Young	Neil Diamond
Flip Wilson (my father liked comedy)	remember Geraldine and the Devil Made Me Buy That Dress?	

I guess looking back it was pretty abysmal sonically but it made music and made it better than anything else I had heard. I really enjoyed the music and found that it was a blast compared to the AM/FM radio I was used to. It got reasonably loud and let me experience the music in ways that an AM/FM radio could not even begin to approach. I guess in the end it was this stereo that started my journey to better sound. I loved the music but found a good stereo just made it that much more real and engaging. I am still on this journey today and love music more than ever. At least now my hardware is not abysmal!

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