

# City Beat

*There are eight million stories in my albums. This is one of them...*

Philco was founded in 1892 as Helios Electric Company. From its inception until 1904, the company manufactured carbon-arc lamps. As this line of business slowly foundered, the firm experienced increasingly difficult times. As the Philadelphia Storage Battery Company, in 1906 it began making batteries for electric vehicles. They later supplied home charging batteries to the infant radio industry. The Philco brand name appeared in 1919. From 1920 to 1927, all radios were powered by storage batteries which were fairly expensive and often messy in the home.

In 1926, Philco decided to begin making radios. The first Philco radios were introduced in mid-1928, and 96,000 were produced that year, making Philco radios 26th in the nation in production volume. Up to that time most radios were handmade and priced for relatively wealthy consumers.

Philco radios were notable for their economy of design without sacrificing quality or durability. Philco also made battery-powered radios which were by then called "farm radios". The Philco "Baby Grand" sold a total of over two million from 1930 to 1938; many of them exist today in collections.

Philco began marketing car radios in 1930 and later expanded into other areas including air conditioners (1938), refrigerators (1939), home freezers (1946), consumer televisions (1947), electric ranges (1949), home laundry washers and dryers (1954), and home entertainment products. Their first consumer television set, the 1948 table Model 48-1000, had a 10 in (25 cm) screen and sold for US\$395.

By 1954, Philco had led the radio industry in volume sales for 24 straight years, selling over 30 million radios. Philco was also a pioneer in television broadcasting, launching experimental station W3XE in 1932. In 1941 the station became the third commercially licensed TV operation in the United States as WPTZ. It was sold to Westinghouse Broadcasting in 1953 and operates today as KYW-TV. In 1955, Philco developed and produced the world's first all-transistor phonograph models TPA-1 and TPA-2. In 1959, Philco developed and produced the world's first battery-powered portable transistorized TV.

In 1961, Ford Motor Company purchased Philco. In 1974, Ford sold Philco to GTE, which also owned Sylvania Electric Products. The company (as well as the Sylvania brand name) was acquired from GTE by Philips in 1981. The brand name is still used abroad.

