

# **Early (and I mean EARLY) TV Recording Technologies**

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Video recording technologies have become quite familiar: recordable DVD is now available in many amateur camcorders, and video cassette recorders became pervasive during the 1980s and 1990s. The technology of reel-to-reel video tape that became available in the 1950s is also well known. A host of other video recording technologies were demonstrated and even were available as commercial products, such as RCA's "Selectavision" in the 1970s. This provides the clue that home video recording was considered to be a "holy grail" of the television industry as early as the 1950s. However, very few people, even among those active in the imaging field, seem even to be aware that video recordings were demonstrated in the 1920s and were commercially available in the United Kingdom in the 1930s, thus preceding even studio videotape recordings by 20+ years. This recording technology was a part of a complete video system developed by John Logie Baird in the United Kingdom. Regularly scheduled broadcasts were made using this system in the early 1930s. Though the image quality was quite poor by today's standards, Baird's "Phonovision" recording technology was simple and readily enough available that amateurs were able to make some recordings "off the air". Some recordings made using Baird's "Phonovision" technology were rediscovered in the 1980s. They were analyzed and digitally processed by Don MacLean, who published a history of Baird's work and his recovery efforts in "Recovering Baird's Image" (IEE Press, 2000). The Phonovision recordings provide a fascinating glimpse into the state of video broadcasting that existed in that era. This talk provides a historical overview of "Phonovision" and will include examples of the images processed and recovered from the recordings.

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