Televisión a través de los Decenarios y las maneras en que cambió nuestro mundo


Por Erin Monaghan

Arguably, the greatest and most influential invention of the 20th century, perhaps with the exception of the Internet, the television began with humble beginnings and was met with skepticism. However, since its inception almost 75 years ago, the United States has been captivated. Now, according to USA Today and Nielson Media Research, the average American home has 2.71 televisions and 2.55 people. There are more TVs in the average home than there are people.

At the turn of the century, the TV as we know it today was only a dream in the eyes of inventors. Many believed they could take the basic concepts applied to the transmission of sound and apply them to the transmission of pictures. It would be unfair to say the invention of the television is attributed to one person. Philo T. Farnsworth, Vladimir Zworykin, Charles Jenkins and John Baird all attributed greatly to the invention of the modern television each supplying their own piece of the puzzle. Zworykin especially, when he used a small piece of technology called cathode ray tube (CRT) in the receiver. Although seen as primitive compared to modern television advancements like Plasma and LCD, the CRT is still used in TV sets today.

Since its inception in the early 1930’s and commercial availability in the late 1930’s, the evolution of the television is interesting. Although it seems like a world away, it has only been in recent years that the technology has changed drastically. Here is a time line to demonstrate the look, feel and uses of the TV over the decades.
1930s

After its formal introduction at the 1939 World’s Fair, the first real commercial televisions became widely available. However, many networks like NBC and CBS had already been broadcasting for several years. Radio networks were quickly adjusting their studios to accommodate the new medium.

Sets were large pieces of equipment with about 12 inch screens. They cost about $400 to $500 and the average household income was about $1300 a year.

Programming was sparse. There was no “must see TV,” networks broadcasted specials like the 1932 presidential election, boxing matches and news reports.

One of the most recognized images from this early era includes the 1936 Olympics from Berlin in which Hitler announced the opening of the ceremonies.
1940s

Much of the hype surrounding televisions in the 1940’s was swept under the rug with the onset of WWII. Although in the earlier portion of the decade, the United States wasn’t involved with the war, production of televisions stopped so the U.S. could put their efforts toward developing radar technology.

Even though the production of televisions stopped, the innovation persisted and color was introduced at the early part of the decade. This is also when the television commercial was invented.

During the war, the television was used as a small propaganda machine. Encouraging people to buy bonds and support the effort.

The post-war economy was strong and the late 40’s saw a boom in television production. Two types of models surface the tabletop and console. People like Milton Berle, Ed Sullivan and Howdy Doody become some of TV’s first stars.
1950s

Often the 1950’s have been seen as the hay day of the economical boom in the United States and the Golden Age of television.

More people are buying consumer electronics, by the end of 1951 and there are more than 8,000,000 TVs in the United States.

I Love Lucy, The Honeymooners, Father Knows Best and the Lone Ranger are some of the most watched programs. The TV Guide is the #1 magazine in the country.

Color becomes the wave of the future and the Remote Control is invented. Although most people had neither.

The “tube” becomes an advertiser’s dream come true. Products are marketed directly to the consumer by sponsorships. The “soap opera” is thus named for the cleaning products that sponsored the daytime dramas targeted directly at women.

The family dinner is revolutionized with the introduction of the TV dinner. Family meals will never be the same.

By the end of the decade, a 21-inch black and white set was about $200 and the average 21-inch color set was almost $500.
1960s

Often the 60’s are seen as the end of an era. An age of innocence seen in the 1950s died and would never be seen again in the United States. After the assignation of President Kennedy, families gathered around to watch the news depicting a changing social climate and growing hostility toward an oppressive government. Americans begin to get more news from the television than the newspaper.

The United States became obsessed with space travel. Everything sold had a space age edge, especially televisions. Everyone gathered to watch shuttle launches and moon landings. Televisions became more portable and affordable.

It is estimated 75 million people watched the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show.

The Vietnam War is the first conflict to be televised.

Doctors legally advertised cigarettes.

By the end of the decade there were approximately 78 million television sets in homes across the United States; 200 million around the world.
1970s

Sesame Street debuts to children across the country. The show is still on the air after over 45 years.

Nighttime broadcasts broke the traditional molds. Couples were now sleeping in the same beds, actresses could show their belly buttons and “All in the Family” and “MASH” are two of the most popular evening programs.

Although it wasn’t the first home video game, Pong became the most popular.

The average salary is $7,500 a year and the average price for a TV was between $400 and $700 dollars.

The first direct to broadcast satellite television was launched in 1972.

1978 was the last year large Black and White consoles were manufactured.
1980s

The 80’s saw little innovation with the television specifically; however, there became a growing number of television accessories like the VCR and home game consoles like Nintendo.

Although cable had been around since the 50’s, cable television saw a significant boom during the 80’s.

Sitcoms were more popular than ever. The 80’s spawned programs like “Rosanne,” “The Cosby Show” and “Married with Children.”

The VCR took the United States by storm. Although introduced in the late 70’s, the VCR didn’t become a staple in the American home until the mid 1980s. Now, people could watch movies in the comfort of their own home and record and watch their favorite programs on their own timetable.
1990s

The 90’s saw big changes in technology all together. One can arguably say the 1990s was an age of technological change, thanks largely to the Internet. The personal computer became affordable enough for average people to own, the Internet was available through dial-up ISPs like Prodigy and AOL, and information was seemingly at our fingertips.

Television programming became more risqué, pushing the FCC’s buttons and spawned some of the most loved shows of all time including “Friends,” “Seinfeld,” “Twin Peaks” and “The Simpsons.”

Johnny Carson left the Tonight Show in 1993 after more than 30 years on the air.

Cable television programming saw a large boom at the end of the decade with shows like “The Sopranos.” Broadcast on HBO, series like this were exempt from standard FCC regulations and frequently depicted scenes with graphic violence and foul language. Audiences and critics loved it.

Various TV technologies like Plasma and LCD are in experimental stages. Standard CRT televisions still lead the market. However, televisions now include additional features like picture in picture, sleep timers and parental controls.
2000s

DVD players take over the home theater experience. Much like the VCR, DVD players were introduced a decade earlier, but took some time to gain momentum. At the beginning of the decade, DVD players were in approximately seven percent of homes; in less than 10 years, more than 80 percent of homes had a DVD player.

Thin is in. Advances in LCD and Plasma technology enable television manufacturers to produce a better picture, larger screen sizes and save space.

The “home theater” experience was in the forefront of manufacture’s minds providing bigger and better quality to the consumer.

TiVo revolutionized the way we watch television. TiVo had the ability to pause live broadcasts and record several programs at once, even while the television was on another channel. TiVo can schedule recordings based on time, channel, title or celebrity. No longer were people tethered to their couches living by the network’s times. They were free to watch what they wanted when they wanted.

Reality shows take over the airwaves and TV becomes interactive. With the introduction of “American Idol” home viewing audiences became part of the competition. Encouraging the public to “vote” for their favorite performer, the programs enabled audiences to take an active part in the show’s outcome. Now, a 30-second ad during “American Idol” costs about $750,000.

Television goes all digital. In 2009, all analog televisions go black. Networks now only produce a digital signal.

Less than 10 years after the DVD player’s introduction, the second wave of video players were introduced touting better quality and longer run times. HD DVD and Blu-ray enter a battle for high definition supremacy, which is reminiscent of the VCR and Betamax war 30 years prior.

TV goes online. With the introduction of high speed Internet, video streaming and digital recording enter the scene. Many are posting their favorite programs and commercials online without the permission of the broadcasters. This has led to many networks making their programs available online.

Over seventy-five years ago, the television was introduced with skepticism and awe. No one truly believed it would change the way we view the world. Now, people are more attached to their televisions than ever, including programming on computers, tablets, and cell phones; and manufacturers, broadcasters and producers are continually finding new ways to bring big entertainment to the small screen.