

# Magnavox still magnificent after all these years

By Esther Baird

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My husband wants a flat-screen TV. Apparently without one we are at risk of falling into a cultural black hole. We may soon become way out of touch with how crisp and life-like televised America really is. Looking out my window to see the actual world with actual crispness and actual life just isn't the same as this fabled bit of technological wonder for our wall.

There is just one problem with getting such a marvel of broadcasting goodness: We already have a perfectly good, perfectly functional television. It's a Magnavox and it's been a part of our family for 11, happy, televised years. Our TV is living the appliance's dream. It's humming along well past the manufacture's point of planned obsolescence and it still provides good sound and good color. It also provides, best I can tell, a pretty crisp image. For example, I've never mistaken Matt Lauer for a nebulous blob of fuzzy dots or Big Bird for a hazy cloud of pixels.

The Magnavox is loyal to us, and in return I am loyal to it.

When we were first married, I inherited a small color TV. We used it for about half a year until it began making loud aggressive noises any time the color white appeared. Linen commercials were unbearable and winter sports were beyond viewable. So we decided to make our first major appliance purchase — enter the faithful Magnavox. At the time it seemed modern and big: It had a 24-inch diagonal screen that my husband claims is wildly microscopic by today's Jumbotron standards. It was great — and it's still great — and my husband can't believe it won't die already.

It's not like we've even taken especially good care of it. About six months after we bought it, we moved to Chicago. In the process of moving, it fell off our couch and onto the hard floor. Face first. But rather than shattering, or breaking, as any other lesser TV might have done, it simply sustained a small dent in the upper corner with not a single operational complaint. It has lasted through six moves across four states. It has survived two children and it has endured countless Yankee Candles falling down its back. This brave, sturdy, uncomplaining television is what we are supposed to trade in for a flat screen? It is just too heartless for words.

I realize that the world is moving on — both of our parents now have flat screens. One has a plasma and one has an LCD and I have no idea what that even means. What I do know is that my husband is close to dumping water down the back of our Magnavox while simultaneously running an electrical current into its speakers to prevent being The. Last. Person. On. The. Planet. To. Get. A. Flat. Screen.

But I say history counts for something.

Over these 11 years our Magnavox has covered everything from Princess Diana's funeral to September 11th, from the 2004 Olympics and Presidential election, which I watched while stunned to find myself a new mother, to Hurricane Katrina. We've seen more hours of Sesame Street and Wiggles on this TV than I ever dreamed possible, not to even begin to mention the sporting events my husband has managed to watch despite the lack of high definition fabulousness he longs for.

Finally, there is the space issue.

"Where would we put a flat screen?" I ask my husband occasionally. "We can't hang it on these walls – we'd all inhale a pound of plaster and start finding horse hair in our food."

This may be the only time in recorded history that I am happy to have horsehair plaster walls.

I push the point further: "I mean we can't demo the living room just for the sake of hanging a flat screen."

But, I think that's exactly what my husband believes would be appropriate. And even if we agreed the walls should remain intact, we'd then need some new bit of high-tech furniture to place the flat screen on. What next? New couches to better triangulate the picture with? Laser beams to illuminate our viewing area? A hovercraft to quickly jet us into the kitchen for a snack? I'm just saying.

Our Magnavox will putter out eventually. In the mean time, we aren't even big TV people. We don't have a TIVO. We don't get HBO and we all agree — begrudgingly at times — that we only need one television in our house. But what TV we do watch, we do so on this one. This Magnavox. This 11-year-old, aged-to-perfection television. Some day it will go off to that great appliance junkyard in the sky. Until then I say, "Soldier on Magnavox. Soldier on!"

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