

Western Electric 522W speaker

AUTHOR

TIME AND PLACE OF CREATION

Time:

1918

TECHNICAL DATA

Dimensions:

height: 108 mm, width: 108 mm, length: 210 mm

OTHER

MIM 994/V/250

KEYWORDS

prąd, odtwarzanie dźwięku, nośnik,
nagłośnienie, międzywojnie, komunikacja,
fonografia, dźwięk, czas wolny, analogowy

DESCRIPTION

The 522W speaker was manufactured by the Western Electric Corporation of the USA in the 1920s. The company, whose origins go back to 1856, specialised in the production and sales of telecommunications and cinema audio equipment and in the provision of telegraph, and later telecommunications, services. In the late 1870s, the co-owner of Western Electric, inventor and engineer Elisha Gray, fought a losing battle with Alexander Bell for the patent for the invention of the telephone. Ironically, several years later Western Electric was acquired by the Bell Telephone Company, which allowed the consolidation and monopolisation of the telecommunications market to take place in the United States. At the break of the first and second decade of the 20th century the radio industry was still in its nascent stage, and radio as a medium was only beginning to be promoted to the public. The first complete radio receivers were yet to be made, but before that happened, other solutions, accessible to potential recipients, were sought. Radio signals were usually received using a receiver of a simple design (sometimes equipped with an amplifier) that was enclosed in a wooden or Bakelite box to which different attachments were connected,



e.g., antenna, speaker, or ground wire. The 522W speaker was an add-on to the radio receiver that allowed the device to be used. The modular design was economical, enabling the use of equipment that was already owned. In terms of design, the 522W speaker is a slightly enlarged telephone receiver. The membrane and acoustic transducer were enclosed in a metal can. Connection with the receiver was provided by a cable sheathed in cotton and ending with an additional ribbon that was tied to the housing to protect the plugs from accidental disconnection. In order for the sound from the speaker to be audible, a resonating cone had to be installed, so the 522W speaker was equipped with a cylindrical ending of the speaker opening. This allowed a horn to be installed on it, as used in Victrola phonographs that were popular in the United States at the time. In 1922 the speaker cost 12 dollars, making it cheaper than the horn. The black conical horn installed on the speaker is made of plastic and is not an original item of the era. It is probably the addition of a later user, intended to amplify the sound. Authors: Filip Wróblewski