

Wurlitzer Model 750-E Jukebox.

The jukebox may be one of the defining symbols of American mid-century life, as new freedoms combined with a booming economy and advancements in technology drew American culture to decadent new heights. Technology allowing patrons to cheaply and easily listen to new music radically democratized the arts industry, and the songs played over jukeboxes came to define an important era of American life. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer a **Wurlitzer Model 750-E Jukebox** (\$3/5,000) in our March Gallery Auction on Friday, March 15th.

The jukebox stands approximately four and three-quarter feet tall and two and two-thirds feet wide. It stands as a large box, with



rounded edges and an arched top. The bottom third of the jukebox is finished with a wood panel, while the top uses white plastic around the edges, with a wood panel forming an oval that surrounds the window, buttons, and coin operations system. The window is a

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half-sphere opening, within which records and a display of song titles are visible, as well as a floral wallpaper against the back of the interior. Beneath the window are the twenty-four song selection buttons, in silver metal with a light green bar visible above them. Beneath is the Wurlitzer name and coin insert slots, each marked with a price, in an art-deco flower motif which comes together to point towards the bottom of the jukebox. In the bottom third, a flower is constructed of wood and negative space in front of a sparkling gold backdrop, with woven cane evident in areas beyond the flower. Dual art-deco metal bands, included both at the top and two sides of the plastic paneling add visual dynamism to the area, further enhanced by yellow and red plastic inserts.

This design, from 1941, highlights the peak of American pre-war design.

Featuring an avant-garde Art-Deco design, with symmetrical ornamentation and sweeping floral motifs as especially obvious indicators. Also evident is the use of premium materials, including plastic, a relatively new material at the time, and fine wood veneer. These expenses and luxuries could be borne by jukebox buyers at the time due to the jukebox's popularity, which had reached new heights following the end of Prohibition.

The jukebox has a long history originating in the coin-operated self-playing pianos and music boxes popular in the 19th century. By the end of the century, these coin-operated mechanisms became attached to machines that played recordings, rather than to instruments themselves. This was realized in 1889 in San Francisco by the Edison Company M Electric Phonograph; however, it was not until

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1928's Seeburg Audiophone machine that speakers (rather than individual listening devices) were implemented. Popularity exploded with the end of Prohibition in 1933, which freed the most enduring audience for jukeboxes, bar patrons, from the underground nature of speakeasies to instead frequent public-facing establishments. Jukeboxes peaked in popularity between the 1940s and 1960s, when they were the repository for three of every four records sold in the country. However, jukebox use quickly declined as high-



fidelity audio systems became ever more affordable, eventually allowing listeners to cheaply listen to music wherever they were. This culminated in the digital revolution and its preeminent music player, the iPod, in many ways the direct descendent of jukeboxes and their forefather, the self-playing piano.

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company was founded in 1853 in Cincinnati by German immigrant Franz Rudolph Wurlitzer. The company began importing European instruments to the American market but began designing its own products after World War I limited the feasibility import operations. The company eventually relocated to New York, establishing a manufacturing plant that stands to this day. Wurlitzer began by making large organs for fairs and other carnival events, which left the company in an excellent position to produce instruments for the silent movie

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theatres which began to populate around the country following the popularization of the art form. Expanding to radios, (coin-operated) pianos, and amusement park rides, the company became very successful. Wurlitzer began manufacturing jukeboxes, achieving early success in the era of 78 rpm records. However, the company struggled to adapt to the 1940s introduction of the 45 rpm record, eventually ceasing jukebox production in the 1960s. The company continued to produce other instruments, eventually being bought by Baldwin Piano Company and later Gibson Guitar Company, before largely ending operations in 2013.

A Wurlitzer Model 750-E Jukebox (\$3/5,000) will be offered in

Michaan's Auctions March Gallery Auction on Friday, March 15th, which features many fine artworks from notable artists, in addition to excellent examples from the Jewelry and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by the Fine Art Department, which will be offering oil paintings by Frank Duveneck and a lithograph by Stow Wengenroth. Also included in the sale is a contemporary artwork by Pratchaya Charernsook, a micromosaic gold brooch, and a pair of jadeite jade, diamond earrings.

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