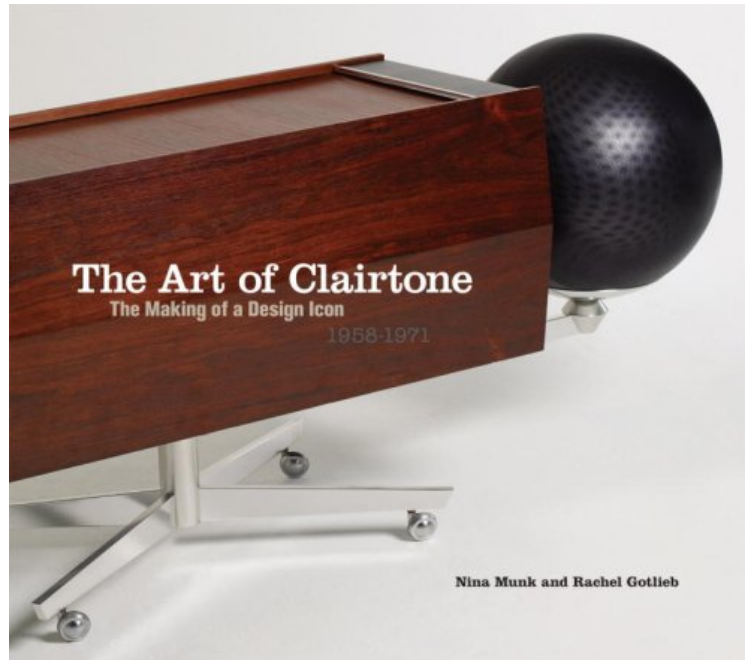


[Free] The Art of Clairtone: The Making of a Design Icon, 1958-1971

The Art of Clairtone: The Making of a Design Icon, 1958-1971

Nina Munk, Rachel Gotlieb

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Nina Munk, Rachel Gotlieb : The Art of Clairtone: The Making of a Design Icon, 1958-1971 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Art of Clairtone: The Making of a Design Icon, 1958-1971:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A really good readBy Jim BlaineThis book is approximately 10" x 9" in size with an attractive dust jacket and 177 pages, co-written by the daughter of one of the two founders of the Company. It is filled with photographs (some full page) and lucid commentary. Also included are copies of hand-written initial design and specification sheets along with internal memos and advertising layouts. Most of the book is dedicated to the "Project G" which is one of, if not the most, innovative console stereos of the period and certainly the most famous of the Company's products. I lusted after this magnificent collection of components and cabinetry when I was young, but the \$1,600 price tag was well beyond my means. The overall system engineering was first-rate and the sound was amazing for it's time. Another reason to purchase the product was use of well-known components such as DUAL, ELAC-MIRACORD and GARRARD record changers. The only small complaint I have is not including pictures of the entire product line. Even if you have never heard of this Company or it's products, you will be entertained by reading about a business that had a great impact within it's product niche but was ultimately driven into the ground by it's founders too-grandiose dreams: what a loss!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Purchased two!By Professional Ed ResourceRare look into one of the true icons of early upscale sound systems with heavy design effect. The last time I saw one for sale was in Palm Springs, Ca. at nearly \$13,000! Solid and wonderfully researched.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Gorgeous photo study of a design icon!By Matthew OgdenFascinating behind the scenes look at the rise and fall of a Canadian company way ahead of its time. LOVE the treasure of photographs.

A fully illustrated, stylish look back at the story behind a Canadian design icon. For a decade, in the 1960s, Clairtone Sound Corporation captured the spirit of the times: sophisticated, cosmopolitan, liberated. From its modern oiled-walnut and teak stereos to its minimalist logos and promotional materials, Clairtone produced a powerful and enduring body of design work. Founded in 1958 by two young Canadians, Peter Munk and David Gilmour, Clairtone quickly became known for its iconic designs and masterful advertising campaigns. Its acclaimed Project G stereo, with its space-age styling, epitomized the Swinging Sixties. Famously, Hugh Hefner owned a Project G. So did Frank Sinatra. Oscar Peterson affirmed that his music sounded as good on a G as it did live. In 1967, suggesting how deeply Clairtones G series had come to be identified with popular culture, the G2 appeared in *The Graduate* with Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft. With 250 illustrations, including previously unpublished drawings, rare film stills, confidential memorandums, and original photography, *The Art of Clairtone* is a candid and in-depth look at the companys skyrocketing success and sensational collapse. Through the recollections of those who knew Clairtone best, from its founders to its designers, engineers, and salesmen, and with comments from Karim Rashid, Douglas Coupland, Tyler Brl, and Bruce Mau, among others, this elegant book, published on the 50th anniversary of Clairtones launch, celebrates an iconoclastic company that once seemed to represent the promise of Canada.

About the Author Based in New York City, Nina Munk is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair* and the author of *Fools Rush In: Steve Case, Jerry Levin, and the Unmaking of AOL Time Warner*. Her work has appeared in *Vanity Fair*, the *New York Times Magazine*, the *New Yorker*, *Fortune*, and the *New York Times*. A leading expert on Canadian design, Rachel Gotlieb has curated exhibits for the Gardiner Museum, the Textile Museum of Canada, and the Design Exchange. The author of *Design in Canada: Fifty Years from Teakettles to Task Chairs*, she writes on design for the *Globe and Mail* and other publications. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. I was born under a falling star, in 1967, the year Clairtone Sound Corporation collapsed. My father remembers it as the worst year of his life. Clairtone was his first company, his first love, he once called it nostalgically. Measured coldly in dollars and cents, it was his smallest and least-successful company; yet nothing my father has done since then has affected him the way Clairtone did. A few years ago, long after making a name for himself in the gold business, and decades after Clairtone had become little more than a quirky footnote in his career, he confessed to the *New York Times*: Clairtone was the single most formative experience in my life because it was so traumatic. But Im getting ahead of myself. Once upon a time, for a short time, Clairtone Sound Corporation was one of Canadas most dazzling, most admired companies. It started in 1958 with four employees, \$3,000, and a cramped, makeshift factory at 26 Sable Street in a Toronto suburb. The initial idea was simple: to merge contemporary Scandinavian furniture design with the latest in high-fidelity equipment. My father, then 30 and an electrical engineer, made custom hi-fi sets for wealthy clients. His friend and partner, David Harrison Gilmour, 26, had a small business importing Scandinavian flatware, ceramics, and glass. Together, and inspired by a basic 1950s Danish sideboard, they came up with their first hi-fi model a long, low cabinet in oiled teak with sliding doors and tapered legs. It was good-looking and functional, and it was unlike anything being made in Canada back then. Fitted inside the wooden cabinet were a Dual 1004 turntable, a Granco tube chassis, and a pair of Coral speakers hidden behind plain, wheat-coloured broadcloth from Knoll International. In March 1959, less than four months after it was put into production, that first model, the 100-S, won a Design Award from the National Industrial Design Council. Other models followed, including the entry-level 400-S (the Princess) and the luxurious 1000-S (the Signature) with its wireless remote control. Then, almost overnight, it seemed, Clairtones stereo consoles were everywhere. Everybody knew about Clairtone, my father would later boast to the columnist Joan Sutton. The Prime Minister had one, and if the local truck driver didnt have one, he wanted one. Oscar Peterson, the legendary Canadian jazz pianist, officially endorsed Clairtone. Dizzy Gillespie and Frank Sinatra were avid fans. Listen to Sinatra on Clairtone stereo. Sinatra does, was one of the companys most memorable tag lines. During the companys first five years, between 1958 and 1963, production soared from 350 units a year to 25,000 units. The pace was incredible. That year, 1963, Clairtone was listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. And nothing, nothing at all thrilled my father so much as seeing his upstart company listed alongside Canadas old guard, the Establishment: Massey-Ferguson, Algoma Steel, Canadian Pacific Railway, Abitibi Power Paper, Falconbridge Nickel, Walker-Gooderham Worts. In those days, the TSE was as WASP a club as you can get it was, my father reminded me. I was not only not WASP I was Jewish, I was an immigrant, and I had an accent. So great was demand for the companys products in the early 1960s that, for a time, at Simpsons department store in Toronto, one Clairtone hi-fi was sold every three hours. In those years, throughout the December rush, Clairtones factory stayed open around the clock, with cabinetmakers and assembly line workers pushing out stereo consoles in time for Christmas. Keeping up with the orders was exhausting and exhilarating. I worked seventy- and eighty-hour weeks, the companys former comptroller, David Pols, told me with pride, echoing other Clairtone employees I interviewed. Sometimes, I recall, I worked all night. Remarkably, back in the day when about the only things Canada exported were natural resources and tractors, half of Clairtones stereos were being sold in the U.S., at prestige accounts like Abraham Straus and Bloomingdales in New York, Marshall Fields in Chicago, Halle Brothers in Cleveland, and J.L. Hudsons in Detroit. For a Canadian consumer product to be featured in the windows of Bloomingdales was almost unimaginable and yet, there it was. In

1959, when fashionable men, including my father and David Gilmour, still wore three-piece suits, an article in the Globe and Mail trumpeted Clairtones success in the U.S. market: Canadians would have popped a few buttons on their vests last week if they had attended the American Music Show in New York. A stereophonic set designed and manufactured by a Canadian company founded less than a year ago by two young Canadians was the centre of attraction. This is perhaps the first time a piece of Canadian consumer-electronic equipment has aroused such enthusiasm in the U.S. As for my father and David, they were hailed as visionaries. They were everybodys darlings, in the words of the journalist Alexander Sandy Ross. They were treated as movie magazines treated Rock Hudson, with awestruck approval, another journalist recalled. Peter Munk was probably one of the most admired young men in Canada, the closest thing to a hero the Canadian business community has produced in this generation, continued Ross. Just contemplating the Clairtone phenomenon made us all feel smart and groovy and efficient, like the Scandinavians almost. Even my father seemed awe-struck by his own success. There was a year when I had thirty-four speaking engagements, he recalled wide-eyed on CBCs the fifth estate in 1978. I stood there, at the age of 30, lecturing the stalwart, establishment members of the Canadian business community. I used to go home and pinch myself.