

## CONVENTION

# Decoded discs show earliest TV images

By Dean Narciso

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The Early Television Museum in Hilliard has ancient examples of TV sets — some with spinning wheels, others with tiny fisheye screens.

Nothing there, however, is as old as the images that Don McLean, visiting from England, will show today during the Early Television Convention.

McLean found a way to convert images recorded on wax discs by a BBC engineer in the 1920s — images that no one had viewed since the day they were made.

Not even the scientist and inventor who recorded them was sure he had captured them.

With a computer, McLean translated them into moving pictures of a man

See DISCS Page B4



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Don McLean — with a “Televisor” mechanical TV set, circa 1930, produced in the United Kingdom — at the Early Television Museum in Hilliard

## DISCS

FROM PAGE B1

wearing a derby and a woman thought to be holding a cigarette.

The physics graduate of the University of Glasgow in Scotland left school with a raging curiosity about electronics.

At a library in 1982, he found an LP of the sound from a video recording by John Logie Baird.

The recording had been done in 1926 on a wax disc in a London flat, using an apparatus resembling something out of Frankenstein's lab.

It was handmade of wood, with 30 lenses attached to a 5-foot wheel.

Baird lacked a machine on which to play the images he thought he had made.

So, until McLean used a computer to decode the discs, no

► The Early Television Convention will take place through Sunday at the Early Television Museum, 5396 Franklin St., Hilliard. Tickets cost \$25. To see clips of the earliest-known TV recordings, visit [tvdawn.com](http://tvdawn.com).

one had actually seen them.

“It was considered a failed experiment,” McLean said.

After his decoding, he realized he had watched some of the first recorded TV images.

McLean shared his news.

Soon, other people with a love of history and television offered him other wax discs.

He converted each one — including a burlesque dance line — into a three-minute video.

Today, McLean watches the BBC and other European television with a different focus.

“When people think of TV, they look at the content,” he said. “I look at the quality of the picture.

“It just fascinated me that you could get, via electricity, pictures transmitted from one place to another. And I’ve never lost that fascination.”

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