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Subject: TV Test Pattern - A Blast from the Past  
Posted by [Paul C.](#) on Tue, 17 Jun 2008 03:22:07 GMT  
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Wayne urged me to post this. I saw this used as an avatar on another audio website, and it brought back a lot of memories. [http://www.AudioRoundTable.com/images/RCA\\_Test\\_Pattern.jpg](http://www.AudioRoundTable.com/images/RCA_Test_Pattern.jpg) That was the classic TV test pattern from the late 30's until well into the 1960's. I remember that from when I was a kid. One station (we had them all ... all 3... KATC Ch 3 ABC, KPLC Ch 7 NBC, and KLFY Ch 10, CBS) the test pattern would come on right after midnight when the regular programming went off, right after the Star Spangled Banner with a picture of the flag waving. The test pattern would stay on 30 or 40 min and go off, then snow until daybreak. There was also a sine wave test tone transmitted that would drive you bonkers. Another station ran it all night, then back to regular programming at daybreak. Back in the early 60's we only had two channels, KLFY Ch 10, CBS in Lafayette, LA, and KPLC Ch 7, NBC in Lake Charles, LA. Remember, no digital tuning, it was a dial, click, click, click. We were so used to just clicking three clicks back and forth from 10 to 7 to 10 to 7, that we never looked around the rest of the dial. I was at school, and some other kids were talking about some cartoon I never saw. When does that come on?, I asked. They told me. No, I said, such and such comes on then. They said, no, it's on that new channel, Channel 3. NEW channel? Channel 3???? Heck, nobody told me!!! I rushed home that afternoon, clicked around to the opposite side of the dial, and Voila! Channel 3! It was a whole new world! BTW, I was a teenager before I had seen my first color TV, and that was at someone else's house. I didn't know until then that the Wizard of Oz was in black and white until just after the tornado, and when Dorothy wakes up in the Land of Oz everything was in color. It all looked the same on a B&W TV... who knew???? The purpose of the test pattern was to adjust the cameras. The patterns in the corners to adjust pincushion, fill the screen. The Indian Chief, if you will notice, is shaded. They would put a poster on an easel in front of the camera and adjust it to look like the monitor. From my reading, the monitor would be fed a signal with the test pattern that was etched on a cathode ray tube. They would switch the monitor back and forth from the CRT with test image to the camera image of the poster until they had the camera exactly matching the CRT image. The Chief was to get the contrast and brightness correct. The stuff in the corners to get the image square and filled out all over the screen. I suppose the test pattern was left up until the studio cameras were just right, and being tube gear, I am sure they left the cameras hot until the morning news. Then the test pattern was back on early in the morning I would think as a final check. Back then all the TV channels had early morning local news, farm reports, weather. Ch 10 KLFY in Lafayette had Passe Partout, which was a morning show in French, news in French, etc. I think they still have it. <http://video.aol.com/video-detail/a-taste-of-success-on-klfy-tv-10s-passe-partout/1734343797> They would have some Cajun music, too. When I was a kid, Passe Partout came on 0600-0700 I think, then the national news in English. Anyway, that was live from the studio, so the cameras had to be ready to go first thing. The rest of the day was mostly CBS shows, and then local news and such at noon. Then the afternoon soaps, etc. Dialing for Dollars after the soaps... remember Janice Joplin's "Lord, won't you buy me... a color TV. Dialing for Dollars is trying to reach me." That was an afternoon fad, they showed some classic movie, which I am sure Ted Turner owns now, and at the commercial breaks they called people, and if they answered some question correctly, they won money. Well, that was TV before color, before cable, in rural America. But we

had it all... all three channels. I'm not sure that now, with 500 channels, we have any better programming. You can still flip through them all and not find anything worth watching. Maybe if they had Dialing for Dollars again? Paul

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