

# “THE DUCT-FREE ZONE”

By Gerry Wagner, Vice President HVAC Technical Training  
Tradewinds Climate Systems



**The history of the mini split:** Prior to my time at Tradewinds Climate Systems, I did some contract work for Heat Controller, Inc. out of Jackson, MI. You know them by the brand name Comfort-Aire.

I had the pleasure of learning the history of the mini split from a man who lived it, Mr. Don Peck, the CEO of Heat Controller at that time and an employee there for over 50 years. Don was always proud to tell me that the FIRST mini split was developed by Heat Controller... here are his exact words...

“The first introduction in 1965 was the **Comfort Aire Twin** which was a window air conditioner with a split cabinet design that allowed the window to close into the center of the unit with the compressor and the condenser fan on the outside of the window and the indoor fan on the inside making for a very quiet application.

**Comfort-Aire TWIN ROOM AIR CONDITIONERS**

Advanced Design obsoletes other conventional Room Air Conditioners. This new concept delivers cool, dehumidified, filtered air quietly. Never intrudes on your activities with its operation noise. You never heard it so quiet!

**THE TWIN INSIDE-OUTSIDE STORY**

Your closed locked window is a **Sound Barrier**. Outdoor cabinet contains compressor fan and motor, street noises are locked out too. Indoors, the cool dehumidified air is softly distributed room wide by the whisper engineered inside fan and motor. The Comfort-Aire Twin lets in natural light, and allows you to clean your window.

The **Twin Pac**, the first mini split, was an offshoot of the **Twin** and was originally developed for Sears in 1969 and went by the name “Sears Modular Central Air Conditioning System”. They offered two sizes, a 6000 (115 V) and 16000 (230 V). The original units had only 8’ of refrigerant lines and were quick connect and included a double wrench kit for making the connection. In 1971 the **Twin Pac** were made available under the Comfort Aire label. Three sizes were then offered, (6000, 11000 and 16000). The line set

accessories were also changed to allow for up to 19’ between the indoor and outdoor units. *WW Grainger and Harry Alter Co* were probably the largest wholesale customers. The product went away when the federal government instituted the first EER rating of 8.0, in the late 1980’s as the product was classified as a split system rather than a room unit.”



Here is an actual piece of literature for the Comfort-Aire Twin Pac... Look at the indoor unit... seems like EVERYTHING was woodgrain back in the 70’s!

Don always made a point to say that in 1974, the Comfort-Aire Twin Pac won the product of the year award in the state of Michigan... it beat out the 1974 Ford Mustang. Now, you might say that just about anything should have beaten this car...



...but those of us who are old enough to remember know that Ford sold a bunch of these cars and for any non-automotive product to win in Michigan was unheard of at the time!

Now, let’s climb into the 1982 DeLorean DMC-12

and set the flux capacitor to 2021...52 years forward from the introduction of the first mini split in North America. In those 52 years we went from the lunar module to the space shuttle to Space-X.

We went from the 1969 Ford Mustang Mach 1 with a 390 cu.in. 6.4 litre V8 motor to the 1974 Mustang II with a 2.3 litre 4 cylinder motor to the 2021 Mustang Shelby GT500 with a supercharged 5.2 litre V8 producing 760 HP.

...and we went from the Comfort-Aire Twin Pac in 1969 with an EER of something less than 8 to the GREE Sapphire ...



Here we have the GREE Sapphire high wall mount unit...

A 12K Sapphire IDU is just 39.9” long X 12.1” high X 8.7” deep. No funky woodgrain but rather a simple, discrete clean appearance.

The Comfort-Aire Twin Pac of the early 1980’s left the market because it could not meet the EER of 8 required back in the day...the Sapphire? The 12K Sapphire has an EER of 15.3 and a SEER of 30.5 (the 9K Sapphire has an EER of 16.7 and a SEER of 38).

Oh yeah...and the Comfort-Aire Twin Pac had a maximum lineset length of 19’, well the GREE Sapphire SAP24HP230V1A has a maximum lineset length of 164’...no that’s progress!

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Gerry Wagner is the Vice President of HVAC Technical Training for Tradewinds Climate Systems. He has 41 years in the HVACR industry working in manufacturing, contracting and now training. You can contact Gerry by email: gwagner@twclimate.com and also please visit our website: www.twclimate.com

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