

Analyses of Streamlined Irons

GLOSSARY

The words below refer to specific parts of the iron and are frequently used in the analyses text:

Handle portion of the iron that is gripped by the hand of the user

Supports parts, or sections, that raise the handle above the rest of the iron

Sole plate bottom piece of the iron that is heated and comes in contact with the fabric

Body main portion of the iron, which does not include the handle and its supports, or the sole plate

Deck area of the body that faces upward, away from the ironing surface

Control knob that which controls the temperature of the iron and typically sits on the deck, under the handle

Receptacle contained area where a detachable cord is connected

Empty space area below the handle and above the body

Bakelite an early plastic, a phenolic resin. After Bakelite, other phenolic resins were developed. Here, *Bakelite* is used to describe any phenolic resin, or any similar plastic.



Steemette 700

Elements The body is not a teardrop. There is a soft curve up front and a slanted flat deck, which drops off precipitously at the rear. The deck is bi-level. The handle widens near its end. The sole support has a wide base, which narrows as it curves up to the handle. The receptacle is built into the rear: The top of two prongs can be seen. The top of the water fill-cap just appears above the deck. The empty space is a simple shape, which follows a radius at the front.

Analysis This iron arrived after the streamlined period was over and reflects the post-war modern design then in vogue: Forms were as simple and unadorned as possible, with more straight lines than curves. Nevertheless, the iron does convey lightness in mass and suggest forward movement (the handle is like smoke trailing a locomotive and the empty space works to push the handle forward). It is distinguished by compactness and economy of means.



Weinco PS197

Elements The body is a squared-off teardrop. The leading edge is nearly straight, the deck is large and flat, and the tail is short. The receptacle is a box, has a bar attached and doubles as the rear support. The front support is two bands of metal, each following a slightly different curve. The handle drips at both ends. The empty space is roughly rectangular, interrupted by the handle's "drips," and about equal in height to the body.

Analysis This iron suggests forward movement. The curved front support is the primary source of that sensation, aided by the slanted deck and those "drips," which suggest fluidity. In spite of falling short of most other streamlined criteria, it does offer a coherence of visual elements: There is a balance between the lines and the curves, and its proportions are harmonious. This iron is far from its streamlined roots yet retains the signature of simplicity. The character of sturdiness makes it stand out from the others.



Knapp-Monarch "Steam King" 475R

Elements The body, based on the teardrop, is cast aluminum finished in a rough surface. The long and nearly flat deck terminates in a tail. There is a "nose" at the top front of the body. The arch of the handle echoes the arc on the body and becomes the rear support. Stacked metal leaves form the base of both supports. The area under the handle is a clean, upright space.

Analysis Its teardrop origins are seen in the polished line that arcs across the side. It is taller than all other streamlined irons. Though it expresses forward movement, it would move at an unhurried speed. For a massive object, it still has lightness. The metal discs, the polished lines, the roughly pebbled finish and the precise crafting of the handle all lead this iron to express "machine" more than any other. This iron's essential character—the elegant machine—is found in all its elements, none vestigial.



Steam-O-Matic A

Elements The body is not a teardrop, but a nearly even arc from tip to toe. It is cast aluminum and has a "hammered" finish. The deck is flat and slightly curved. The handle is almost straight on its upper edge, with two concave areas in the lower edge. The stands are simple uprights: the front one is substantial, but the rear one not. The receptacle is formed by an even more insubstantial upright. The area below the handle is simple and symmetrical. The "knob" is a cap for the water reservoir, and it has two ears.

Analysis This iron manages to be both stiff and curvaceous: stiff in the upper half, curvaceous in the lower. At their juncture on the deck, the ears of the cap plays off the depressions in the underside of the handle. The exaggerated elements (the arc, the uprights and the ears) and drama of the stiff versus the curvaceous make this a candidate to be a cartoon character iron.



Westinghouse ID-74

Elements The body is made of two parts—one Bakelite, the other chromed steel. The sole plate is a twin to the chrome layer just above it. The handle is a complex shape, with a teardrop curve forming the top edge. The supports cannot be distinguished from the handle. The teardrop shape of the body is lost inside, where the body merges with the handle/supports. The control knob is submerged into the handle. The empty space is the shape of a dried bean.

Analysis This is not a classic streamlined profile, yet it still has the character of a streamlined iron. The Bakelite of the handle continues into the body, softening the boundary and enhancing the streamlined identity. The parallel lines between the Bakelite and the chrome band, and the chrome band and the sole plate, direct the eye forward, yet this elegant shape is heavy and seems to squat, both decidedly nonstreamlined qualities.



Novex-Siebert "Ultramatic"

Elements The profile of the body is a teardrop that has been softened so the curve sweeps from front to back. The body is sculpted so that streamlines appear and terminate in a well-defined tail. The handle is composed of tighter curves than the body, and a small tail appears at the back of it as well. The control knob is contrasted by color and submerged into the deck. The empty space is, like the Westinghouse model, the shape of a dried bean.

Analysis Because of the body, this profile minimizes drag to perfection and conveys forward movement, though the burgundy color limits how light it can feel. However, this iron succeeds because of its bravado. It is not modest. If an iron can be a cartoon character (see Steam-O-Matic A), this iron is a sexy, sumptuous cartoon character.