

Resurrected radios that are Not Quite Right.

Graham Parslow

Most radios of my collection are original complete radios, but some just look the part. Some of them sound the part too, but not with original components. I have encountered many radios of interest that can be brought back to some semblance of originality by making assumptions and compromises. The compromises are largely determined for me by what is on the spare-parts shelf. A sad unrestored radio is seldom an object of pleasure and I am willing to make leaps of presumption to gain a presentable radio.

I have made mistakes in part selections, but at least by making a start I have found that other HRSA members are keen to correct my waywardness. Sometimes I have been remarkably prescient when choices needed to be made. I am constantly stumbling across new information and having ah-ha moments. After finding out what is truly original I have either corrected mistakes or put them on my to-do list.

For this article the examples come from my early year radios. There are many more spanning the years that may get to feature another time. Perhaps some readers will be motivated to revisit their too-hard shelf and adopt some of the approaches illustrated here.

1928 Healing coffin radio.

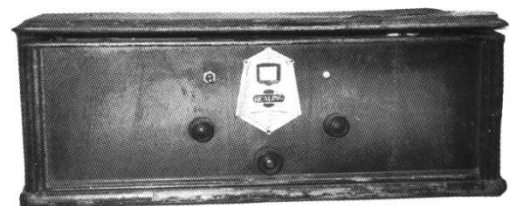


This radio was bought from eBay and I picked it up from the seller who had a magnificent

collection of floor-standing 1920's radios. He restored the case, but it had no electrical components. It looked like a box rather than a radio. This one was not a great challenge to make it resemble a radio. A fragment of a 0-100 dial was created using the drawing tools in Power Point. Some clear acetate sheet was over-layered on the paper printout to give the appearance of calibrations on printed plastic. This mock-up dial was pasted behind the escutcheon window. A piece of mdf particle board was screwed behind the front-panel holes and ¼ inch holes drilled to align with the panel. Knobs from the spare parts bin were fitted with ¼ inch dowel and poked into the holes in the mdf. With a bit of a twist the knobs freed up enough to be turned, although they did precisely nothing. There is a certain satisfaction in being able to turn a knob. The result was :



This made the "radio" presentable enough to be shelved with my other 1920 examples. After the event I found the picture below showing that my guesses were not quite right and that the top left hand side should have been a switch and all knobs should match. One day I will get back to making the correction.



1928 Healing coffin

Homemade 1932 Regenerative radio.

This example could hardly have been in poorer condition when purchased for \$20. This is the sort of challenge I like.



The only good bit of timber was the lid and this cleaned up and took polyurethane finish quite well. The rest of the timber was cracked and pitted so it was filled, sanded and painted a dark brown. The black front panel was completely replaced. The knobs for tuning and regeneration came up surprisingly well showing a marbled walnut colour. Some extra fragments of the broken right hand knob were inside the case and glued back in place. Although I have intact plain black knobs that match the one on this radio, the originals have great character that offsets the small missing section. The brass parts ended up being a great feature too after a polish.

The circuit uses a type 30 valve that could operate from 45 V. I have not restored this one electrically, but wired in a small Panasonic transistor radio that is switched on by the front panel switch. It drives a horn speaker terminated at the two connectors on the front panel. The horn speaker was acquired with no driver. However a two inch 8Ω modern speaker fitted nicely into the base and created the most Hi-fi horn you are likely to listen to. If no peeking inside is allowed the result is a nice 1932 homemade radio. Even peeking inside

shows the original components. Looking back at this one I can see that it is worth revisiting to improve the presentation of the electrical components and wiring.



1932 Mantel Tombstone.



The pictures show the two pieces of timber and the escutcheon that started this restoration. This project took a couple of years on the shelf before committing to the time needed to fabricate a new body. The story of this restoration has been published in *Silicon Chip* under the title "A vintage radio from just a front panel", September 2012. In the end it was a working radio and looked like:



The article in *Silicon Chip* resulted in feedback from a number of people who either had one of these radios or had an advertisement. In this case my choice of knobs turned out to be very close to the originals. I have included this example for two reasons. Firstly, to encourage anyone who thinks a project is too difficult to think again. After all Radio Waves has featured many challenging restorations. Secondly, if you share what you have done then people usually come forward to help advance your knowledge and the project.

Genalex 1933 Dapper 5



This radio, fabricated from plywood, represents a low point in carpentry, relative to the multi-veneer inlaid Mantel radio shown before. The beginning of this project was a battered case with escutcheon, without grille or any other fittings. Fortunately pictures from radiomuseum.org showed the way forward. The radio underwent a severe sanding and was then refinished with polyurethane. The attraction of this radio is the ornate escutcheon. The brass and enamel badge only revealed its beauty after the patina of near-black was removed by Brasso and steel wool. The cleaned surface was then protected from tarnishing with polyurethane. The dial calibrations are a reproduction created in PowerPoint that match the known original. The range of drawing and text tools in PowerPoint has allowed me to do many restorations of labels and dials. When I need more advanced image editing I use GIMP-2 (a free download package).

The dial back-light is not the original, but a part of the refitting of the case with a cut-down clock radio from General Electric (the parent of the old Genalex brand). General Electric was founded by Thomas Edison and is arguably the longest surviving radio brand name. This radio sounds excellent, but is definitely not quite right for 1933 when you take a peek at the back.



polyurethane to get a high gloss and display the wood character.



GE 1935 US tombstone hybrid



This elegant art-deco radio from the US came to me as a case in need of creativity and a lot of work. The beauty of the front veneer motivated seeing this project through. The original had been finished in tinted varnish that was removed to leave bare wood. The stripping revealed that the side panels were pine wood almost bereft of any grain character. Gloss black paint provided a way to accent the art-deco sculpting at the front and top and bury the featureless timber. The bland side panels were laminated with Meranti wood veneer and kept as wood grain. This one received careful spray painting with multiple coats of

I bought a reproduction GE radio-cassette via eBay specifically to get a round dial radio for this rebuild. Using the four original knob holes was one challenge too many so these were filled in with timber furniture plugs aligned to the grain. New holes were made to accommodate the controls that came with the reproduction radio. The size of the reproduction dial scale was wrong for this project so it was photographed and enlarged and coloured using PowerPoint. At first glance it is quite in keeping with what you might expect, until you see that half the scale is for FM tuning.



The picture above shows the radio parts before removing them from the reproduction GE box. There were a number of mechanical fitting problems to overcome, but it all came together in the end. This one is a favourite even though it is a hybrid. It sits on my study desk and is

often turned on for news reports. A bonus for the way I use it is the lack of a warm up period.

There is nothing quite like having a project, unless it is making time to enjoy previous projects and sharing them. Bill Smith (Radio Waves Editor) wants to encourage as many readers as possible to be contributors. It is highly affirming when others make positive comments about your projects, so please write them up for Bill.