

VINTAGE RADIO

By JOHN HILL



The inaugural vintage radio swap meet

This month, we begin by taking a look at the Inaugural Vintage Radio Swap Meet. We then review a new & interesting book on crystal sets by Australian author, Bob Young.

Swap meets are common these days and one of the biggest and longest running is the Bendigo Swap Meet, which is held annually in mid-November. While the Bendigo Swap Meet is predominantly a vintage car meeting, the Historical Radio Society of Australia (HRSA) has a site there each year and encourages members who wish to sell their wares to come along.

Dick Howarth is a Bendigo radio collector who has somewhat more go than most. He has just organised Australia's first Vintage Radio Swap Meet which was held on 23rd October 1994 at the Glenroy Technical School Assembly Hall in Melbourne.

The meet was not confined to vintage radio. It was more of a vintage sound affair and included phonographs and some amateur radio equipment as well, although most of the items offered were vintage radio receivers.

Dick is a relative newcomer to radio collecting. He is a fairly impatient type who wants his repairs done yesterday, works on his radio cabinets until 2am, and is prepared to travel interstate on the off-chance of finding an interesting old radio. He always seems to be thinking about vintage radio and he probably dreams vintage radio as well.

Anyway, things weren't happening fast enough for Dick and he felt that more could be done to promote interest in vintage radio. A radio swap meet seemed like a good idea and he set the wheels in motion some six months before the actual meeting. Dick always does what he says he is going to do and he is prepared to put his money where his mouth is.

The highly successful Inaugural Vintage Radio Swap Meet was a good example of Dick Howarth doing what he said he would do. What's more, the meet was well organised, properly run, and a credit to Dick and his wife Raeleene, who put as much work into the day as anyone.

The HRSA were approached and they added their support to the project. Some of the Melbourne members arranged a display of vintage equipment which was neatly laid out on the stage of the hall. Dick added to the stage display by including some of his console radios. Only a console with turned legs will attract Dick's attention and his radios are really first class. Dick does his own cabinet refurbishing and few, if any, could do a better job.

Unwanted items

Unfortunately, driving to Melbourne is something I loathe and will do just about anything to avoid. But as Glenroy is on the right side of Melbourne for me, I decided to take a site at the meet to help off-load some of my unwanted bits and pieces, and to support Dick's venture.

Apart from being a profitable day, the swap allowed me to catch up with some old friends and meet a few new ones. My wife and I took turns at our site while the other walked around, looking and talking. I suspect I may have scored the better deal there, as I knew a lot more people to talk to.



HRSA President Bruce DeLacy with some of the HRSA receivers on display. These are, from left: a Dutch Philips multi-band radio, a mid-1930s Radiolette, a Healing mantel model, a Little Nipper all transistor radio, & the top of a late 1930s Airzone console.



This site had a large range of early radios, radiograms & phonographs. The STC console radio (centre) was priced at \$645.



Pride of place on this table was taken by a fully-restored Edison "Fireside" cylindrical phonograph. Immediately behind it are an Airzone mantel radio & a Celestion loudspeaker. According to some old advertisements, the tone of a Celestion loudspeaker improved with age!

The difference in prices from site to site was considerable and one example was lightning arresters. Mine were priced at \$5 while those at another site were \$15. Neither of us sold any!

Items for sale

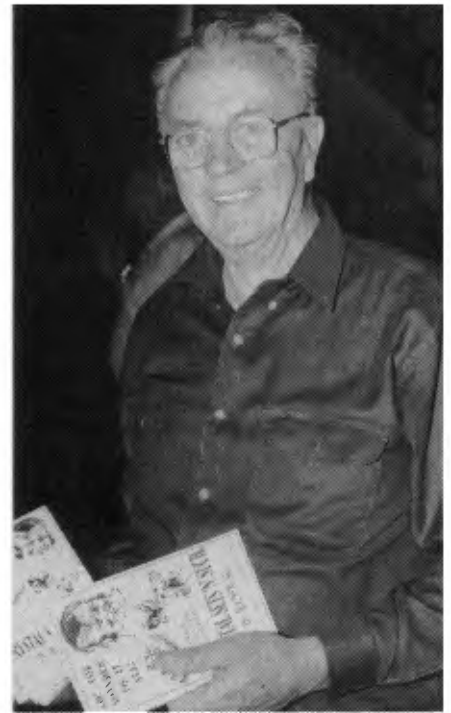
As the accompanying photographs show, there were a lot more items for sale apart from lightning arresters. There was an impressive array of vintage equipment and just about everyone who came to the meet went away with something they wanted or could use.

At the end of the day, my trading

table was just about bare. Four 807 valves, two 1950s mantel receivers, two books, a valve tester and the lightning arresters were the only things left. If prices are realistic, just about any item will sell. In most instances, people were happy to pay the marked price. Only a few haggled for a better deal.

Looking back on the day, I'm glad I decided to take a site at the swap meet. Fortunately, this year's site holders have first preference for next year and I have already indicated my intention to be there.

One different aspect to the swap



Author Bob Young spent more than 12 months on his book "Crystal Sets 'n' Such". The book is a remarkably informative publication & should be of interest to most vintage radio enthusiasts.

meet was the launching of a new book. As mentioned in my October 1994 column, Bob Young (no, not Remote Control's Bob Young) has been writing a book on crystal sets and now it has finally reached completion.

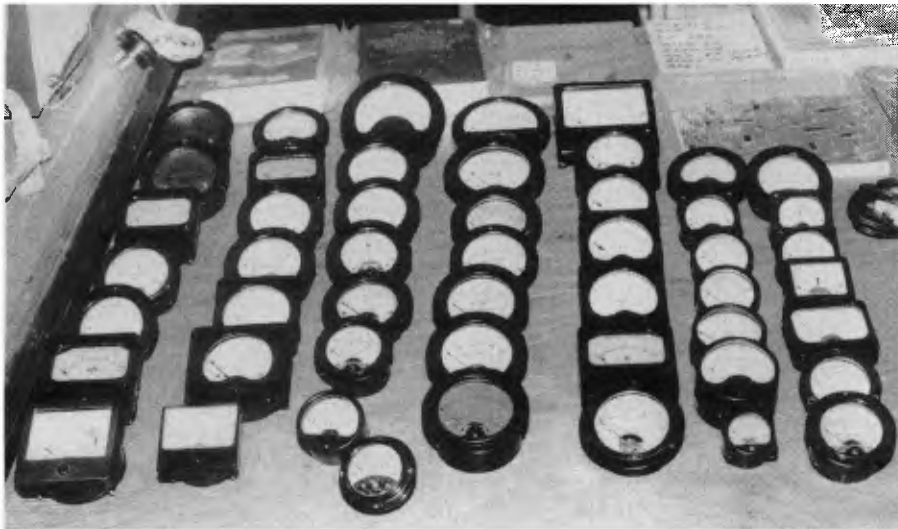
It was my pleasure to help launch the book at the swap meet. Of course, this is a difficult task when one is presented with the book only a couple of hours beforehand, with no time to read it. I'm sure that the ink was still wet!

Fortunately, I had previously read some of the earlier chapters and had a good idea of the direction Bob's book was heading.

In my opinion, "Crystal Sets 'n' Such" is a brilliant piece of work! It is in all probability the first really complete work on crystal sets that has been written and it should be of interest to any vintage radio enthusiast, whether he is a new recruit or someone who thinks he knows it all. There is something in it for just about everyone. A number of the early chapters are interesting from a historical viewpoint alone.

Keep it simple

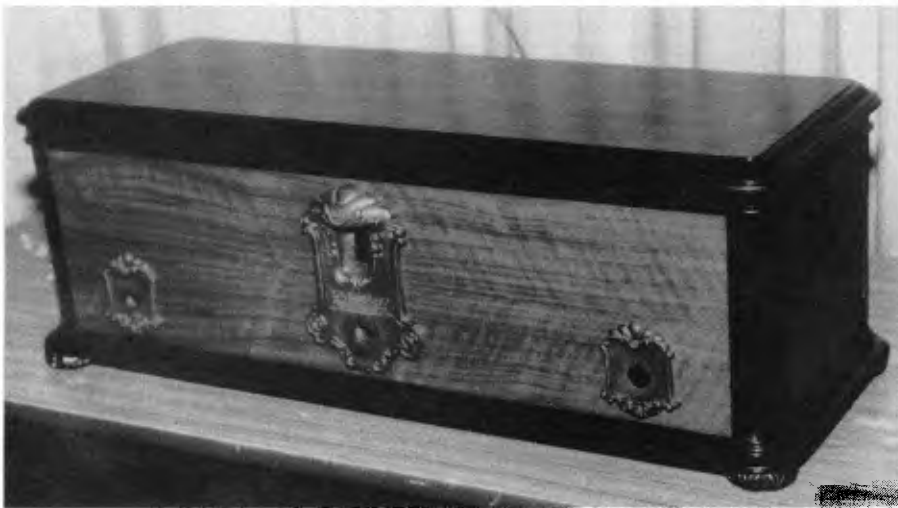
The secret to good technical writ-



Pick a meter, any meter – there's lots to choose from amongst this collection! As far as a vintage radio enthusiast is concerned, there's no such thing as a digital meter.



Just about every site had vintage radios on display. In the front row here, from left, are two Philips receivers & a Mullard, while in the back row are a Breville, an Aristone, a "don't know", & a Stromberg-Carlson.



This RCA Model 60 cabinet (circa 1928) was refurbished by Dick Howarth. It was just about a total wreck before he started & has been restored to "better-than-new" condition.

ing is to keep things as elementary as possible and never assume that your reader knows everything about the subject being covered. If this basic rule is ignored, then the text may become quite meaningless to many readers and they will soon lose interest and look for something else to read.

That's not the case with "Crystal Sets 'n' Such". Every concept presented to the reader is carefully explained in simple terms, along with the appropriate illustrations, charts, diagrams and analogies. It is a very informative book and is directed at those with an interest in radio and particularly those who like to dabble around building their own receivers.

Crystal detectors

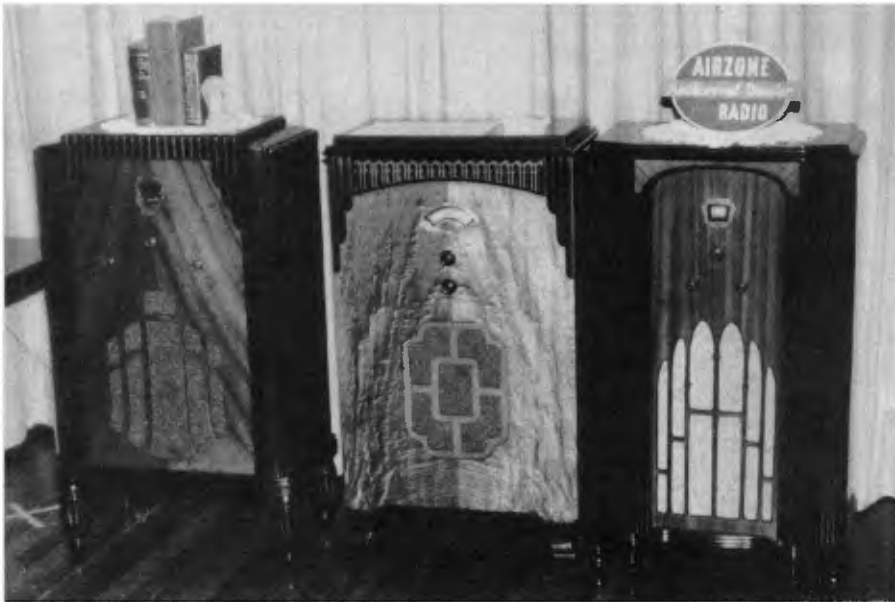
The chapter on crystal detectors is interesting and delves into the many and varied types that have been used over the years. A comparison between the various detectors is very well dealt with. This comparison is not done using a headphone performance test but on an oscilloscope screen. There are also instructions for setting up similar tests if you wish to do so yourself.

This book on crystal sets is a whole new approach to building these simple receivers and the theories and practices involved.

"Crystal Sets 'n' Such" includes, as one would expect, a wide range of crystal set circuits. These cover everything from basic single-coil types to several three-coil sets which are quite elaborate affairs for a supposedly simple radio receiver. When a crystal set ends up with half a dozen or more controls (which all interact with each other), it is starting to get fairly complicated – for a crystal set, that is!

I was particularly pleased to see my "Classic Crystal Set" (Vintage Radio, September 1994) amongst the more complex designs (circuit number 7). It is a very good performer – not that I can lay claim to its good design.

The chapter on coil winding is also well covered. The "Q" factor of a tuned circuit makes interesting reading when it is presented simply with explanations and appropriate diagrams. Although a mathematical formula is given relating to the Q factor, complex calculations do not enter into the text of the book to any great extent. But the odd formula is there for those who may require them.



These three consoles are from the Dick Howarth's collection. They are, from left, a 1932 AWA 55E, a 1932 Raycophone, & a 1934 Airzone. Dick mostly collects console receivers with legs.



This table carried an old Palec valve tester & what appears to be an early Stromberg-Carlson communications receiver.

A "Resonant Circuit Component Value Calculator" is also included in the book and this could be of some assistance when coil winding. The calculator is a chart with three scales: (1) inductance in microhenries; (2) frequency in kilohertz; and (3) capacitance in picofarads. By placing a straight edge through any two known quantities, the unknown value can be read off the third scale.

Perhaps the most refreshing aspect of "Crystal Sets 'n' Such" is the way in which it is written. Bob Young's sense of humour really shows through and his book is a fun thing to read. He has a way of expressing himself that

is, at times, quite light-hearted, which is one of the best ways there is of getting a message across.

"Crystal Sets 'n' Such" is a good book. It covers the subject well, I enjoyed reading it and I learnt from it too! It is available from: Mr R. Young, RMB 1561, Benalla, 3673. Phone (057) 68 2418. Fax (057) 68 2508. The cost is \$19.95, including postage.

Yes, the Inaugural Vintage Radio Swap Meet (including the book launch) was a great day and was enjoyed by all who attended. I for one will be there again next year for what will, no doubt, be an even bigger and better event. SC