

# Vintage Radio

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## John de Haas and his Philips collection



This month, we take a look at a vintage radio collection belonging to enthusiast John de Haas. Philips receivers made in both Europe and Australia feature prominently in his collection and although some models look identical, the chassis used can be quite different.

IT'S ALWAYS INTERESTING to find out how fellow vintage radio collectors became involved in the hobby and started their collections. In some cases, it's because they worked in radio or electronics as technicians and adopted the hobby as a natural extension of their professional expertise. On the other hand, many collectors had no interest in vintage radio until some incident sparked their curiosity.

In my case, it began when I was invited to a meeting of vintage radio enthusiasts, which I reluctantly agreed to attend. My interest at that stage was only lukewarm and I was really only interested in portable WWII military equipment. In short, I only wanted to deal with "real" radios such as complex military radio transceivers but after a few meetings, I very quickly became interested in collecting and

restoring domestic radios.

One fellow enthusiast, John de Haas, has some rather special Philips receivers among his collection, many of them originating from Europe. His background is equally as interesting.

John's introduction to vintage radio occurred back in 2003 when he was involved in winding up his late mother's estate in Holland. Amongst the items left to him was a rather nice-looking



This view shows the three-part aluminium and Bakelite chassis of a Sierra 159X receiver which is currently undergoing restoration on John's workbench.

Philips BX480A table receiver which was manufactured in 1939 (it's shown in one of the photos). The receiver had a lot of appeal and a great deal of sentimental value, so he decided to bring it back to Australia.

John carefully packed the set so that it would not be damaged on the long journey but when it arrived, the cabinet had shattered into many pieces, the chassis was bent and several valves had broken. It was a huge disappointment and an indictment of the care taken by freight agents.

After getting over his initial shock, John resolved that he would completely rebuild the receiver. And so the box of pieces was left on a shelf in the garage for a year until he eventually mustered the enthusiasm to start the mammoth job.

The challenge now was to turn the broken parts back into a recognisable receiver. John started with the cabinet and over the next four months, carefully glued the various pieces back together using two-part Araldite. These pieces were held together while the glue dried using Glad-Wrap covered boards and C-clamps, to ensure flat surfaces.



Despite being badly damaged in transit, this 1939 Philips BX480A has now been restored to full working order. The restoration included extensive cabinet repairs and the manufacture of a new glass dial-scale.

Eventually, the Bakelite cabinet was back in one piece but the glued joints looked terrible so it needed painting. And so, after a thorough sanding, the cabinet was spray painted good old Mission Brown. As John points out, it now looks OK but it's no longer

original which is a pity.

The dial scale was broken into many pieces too and it took John many hours of patient work to make a new one. In fact, repairing and making dial-scales is a task that John has well and truly mastered. He has since reproduced



The Philips Sierra model H283 (left) and its Australian Philips equivalent. The cabinets are identical, although different dial scales are used to suit the intended market.



Another set of Philips twins, this time showing the Dutch model 209U and the visually identical Australian model 112 at right. Note the "pop-up" dial scales.



Also in John's collection is this magnificent Graetz Sinfonia Model 422 5-band table receiver. The 30cm ruler at the left gives an indication of the set's size.

dial scales for several of his other sets and they are virtually indistinguishable from the original items.

In fact, his technique for reproducing dial-scales may form part of an article later on. His method is quite practical but like many such undertakings, it does take time to do.

### Restoring the circuit

Apart from the broken valves, the electronic components were largely unaffected by the rough treatment during the set's trip to Australia. However, quite a lot of work was required to restore the chassis. For example, in order to straighten the chassis, all items attached to it had to be first removed before it could be hammered back into shape. The various parts were then refitted.

This was quite a job and the set now looks quite good from the outside. However, it still bears the scars of its mistreatment inside the cabinet and under the chassis.

John's restoration of his mother's set back in 2003 kick-started his interest in vintage radio. And because John has connections with both Europe and Australia, it was logical that he would collect radios from both regions.

Because of his Dutch background, John has a liking for Philips receivers and these feature prominently in his collection. One particular feature of his collection are several Dutch and Australian Philips designs which have identical cabinets but different chassis.

### John's background

John's parents were with the Colonial Service of the Dutch Government. He was born in Indonesia in 1935 and subsequently migrated to Australia from Holland in 1957 at the age of 22. Both he and his wife Harriet now regularly travel back to Holland to visit friends and relatives.

While there, he often visits the various vintage radio groups (John is a member of the NVHR, the Dutch equivalent of our HRSA). During these visits, he sometimes finds a vintage European set that catches his eye and brings it back to Australia.

John tells me that in a previous life, before retirement, he worked as a mechanical engineer in mining and construction. He retired from BHP in 1992 and then worked as a freelance Maintenance Management Consultant



This photo shows the Dutch Philips BX462A at left and the Australian Philips 115 at right. Although visually identical apart from the pop-up dial scales, their chassis are quite different as the photo below shows.

in Australia, India and Indonesia up until 2000.

His interest in valve radios actually dates back to his younger days in Holland. He built radios and amplifiers as a hobby during the immediate post-war years but subsequently lost interest in the 1960s with the advent of the transistor and integrated circuit technology. As stated, it was the restoration of his mother's old radio that rekindled his interest in valve technology.

As well as being a member of the HRSA and the NVHR, John is also a member of the South East Queensland Vintage Radio Club and the Vintage Radio Club of North East Victoria. In fact, he joined these organisations not long after the successful restoration of his mother's set. Club membership is important to vintage radio collectors, particularly when it comes technical advice and backup and help with obtaining hard-to-get parts.

### John's collection

During the last nine years, John has restored many quite elaborate European radios, particularly Philips sets. He has also restored a number of Australian sets, along with one Canadian receiver and a mantel receiver from New Zealand. At last count, there were over 50 restored radios in his collection, so he has added about of six receivers to his collection each



The Australian Philips 115 and the Dutch Philips BX462A from the rear, with their backs removed. The differences between the two chassis are quite marked.

year. Most of these sets are in full working order.

In all, there are about 30 European sets in the collection. These range from quite simple four and 5-valve AC/DC mantel receivers to quite elaborate receivers boasting long wave, medium wave and one or more shortwave bands plus the 88-108MHz FM band. Some of these receivers feature upwards of 12 valves.

The Australian sets are standard mantel and table-model receivers, many of which have been described in Vintage Radio over the years. The lone New Zealand set is a Philco, while the Canadian set is a Motorola.

The top-of-the-line receivers all have attractive, large wooden cabinets, while those a little further down the pecking order have large, good-quality Bakelite cabinets. The simpler, cheaper models either have small Bakelite or plastic cabinets.

John's collection is neatly arranged along a number of shelves in his garage, with one of his vehicles relegated to a spot outside. The sets are all permanently connected to power and are each fitted with a short antenna so that they can be operated on a regular basis.

One interesting aspect of the collection is a group of eight Philips receivers arranged in four pairs of apparently



More Philips "twins" – the Australian model 138 is shown at top, while below it is the almost visually-identical Dutch BX221U.

identical units. However, on close inspection, the pairs of receivers are not identical at all. In each case, one receiver is of Dutch manufacture and the other is Australian made.

Apparently, copies of the respective cabinet moulds were sent to Australia

from the Philips parent company in Eindhoven, Holland. The resulting locally-produced cabinets were then each used to house different Australian-designed chassis. It will be interesting to compare the circuits, performance, layout and facilities of



John's NZ-made La Gloria Philco mantel receiver.

each of these pairs at a later date.

John's large table radios, such as the Graetz Sinfonia 422 5-band receiver and the Philips BX653A 5-band 12-valve receiver, are big, powerful units with impressive performance. But although these are magnificent receivers, they are far from easy to service and a service manual and plenty of time are needed to ensure a successful restoration.

The mantel receivers in the display were made by most of the major manufacturers in Australia, with a sprinkling of overseas brands. These are receivers that Australian collectors are more familiar with, particularly when it comes to fault-finding and restoration.

### John's workshop

John has a spacious workbench for doing electronic and basic mechanical work on his radios. Alignment and sensitivity adjustments are carried out with the aid of a Philips GM2883 signal generator. This is a step up from a basic signal generator such as the Leader LSG10 and LSG11. A Philips GM6001 valve voltmeter is used for voltage and current measurements, along with a digital multimeter.

Also included in the test-gear lineup are two variable power supplies which can substitute for the internal power supplies of most receivers. In addition, a Variac is used to test the performance of receivers across the normal mains voltage range. This is a very handy test which will often bring to light voltage-sensitive faults.

Other equipment includes an adjustable lampholder plus a supply of jumper leads which are stored at the back of the workbench. These leads make it easy to attach meters to a circuit so that various operating conditions can be observed, eg, while alignment adjustments are made.

Another workbench is used for some of the larger mechanical work. During my visit, a speaker cloth was being glued to a frame and this was held in place with several clamps. And talking about speaker cloth, John's wife Harriet hand-wove open-mesh speaker cloth for several of the receivers in his collection.

A number of small trays and drawers containing various components are mounted behind the main workbench, while larger parts are stored against one of the garage walls. John also has



The 3-band Philips BX373A receiver features a dial that's styled to look like a compass.

a good supply of valves, which are used as necessary. However, according to John, many of the old radios he has restored didn't require replacement valves and only rarely was more than one required.

### Some useful tips

Based on their experience, most vintage radio collectors come up with ideas to help make restoration jobs easier and John is certainly no different in this regard.

One of his useful tips is to use aluminium foil patty pans (available from supermarkets) to keep components together when a set is dismantled. These are ideal for storing the many nuts, bolts, screws, knobs and other parts that may be removed from a receiver during restoration.

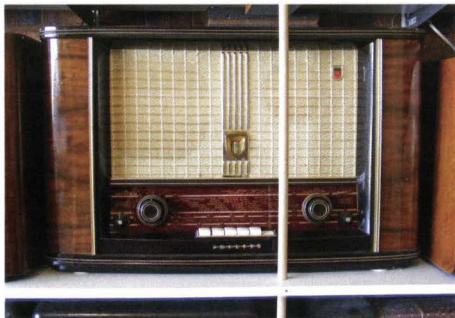
Good organisation is important when it comes to restoring a vintage radio. There is nothing worse than not keeping the bits and pieces together and then finding that some vital item is missing somewhere in the workshop.

Restranging dial-drive systems is something that many vintage radio restorers would rather not have to do. The larger European sets in particular often have extremely complex dial-drives and other remote control mechanisms. As a result, it's important to try to obtain a diagram of the layout, as some are quite difficult to figure out from scratch.

John therefore tries to obtain a manual for any set that's being worked on and he photographs the dial-drive system before he working on it. This approach is particularly important with the more complex receivers such as the Graetz Sinfonia 422, the Philips BX653A and sets like the AWA 7-band



John de Hass with his vintage radio receiver collection. He's been collecting and restoring vintage receivers for around nine years.



The Philips BX653A 5-band twin-amplifier table receiver is a large, powerful unit with no less than 12 valves. A service manual and plenty of time were necessary to complete the restoration of this magnificent receiver.

series of radios. Conversely, sets using handspan dials are so simple that no diagram is necessary.

### Summary

As can be seen, John has quite a wide variety of receivers from both Europe and elsewhere and he has done an excellent job restoring them to full working order. This is particularly evident with the larger European models. The workshop is very functional and

most problems can be diagnosed and fixed using his existing equipment and spare parts.

As to which sets John prefers, the Dutch Philips receivers are favourites, particularly when it comes to appearance. However, he also says that the European sets are more difficult to service, with bits and pieces scattered everywhere inside them. So for ease of service, he definitely prefers the Australian sets. **SC**