

ROUNDING UP COLTS

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The Bell Colt must be the best known of all New Zealand made receivers and John Stokes covers them well in his "Radio in the Home" books. With production extending over 20 years or more, to obtain the full range of combinations of cabinet colours, chassis types, valve lineups and dial patterns would make a very large and unique collection. They were always popular for bedrooms, flats, kitchens, workshops etc. but with the advent of F.M. demand has fallen off somewhat and it is now possible to pick Colts up from second hand shops for a few dollars.

Some collectors, including the writer, have, in the past regarded the Colt as a bit lightweight, but it is worth consideration, even if only as a significant part of the New Zealand radio industry's history. Decidedly a budget priced little receiver, it was a bit of a paradox. Although the wiring was somewhat "utilitarian" good grade components such Beacon power transformers were used. The earlier models were produced at a time when about the only paper capacitors readily available were New Zealand made Ducon - a type notorious for leakage. Bell avoided this problem by using ceramic types for the critical audio grid coupling capacitors. Again, rather than cheap wafer types, good quality valve sockets were used. Another wise move was to use block multiple filter capacitors well sealed in aluminium cans. These have proved to be very reliable. However, the capacitor mounting position on the chassis prevents a speaker any larger than a Rola 5C being used as a replacement.

Because of the generally good quality components and its simplicity, the Colt has proved to be pretty reliable, but invariably, failures will occur. If the set is completely dead, look first at the speaker transformer. Chances are that the primary winding will be open. Check the 1k and 2.2k resistors situated around the filter block. If they are carbon types, they can go high, as do the 22k I.F. screen and mixer dropping resistor and the 150k audio anode resistor. There is one paper capacitor that I replace as a matter of course. This is the A.G.C. line 0.05mfd bypass connected to the 1st I.F. transformer.

Valves, with the exception of the EBC41 or EBC81 diode triodes, don't give much trouble. For some reason these two can be a problem. The EBC41 appears to be operating satisfactorarily, but is sometimes the source of audio distortion. This is not such a problem with EBC81 valves, but these do at times seem to lose emission.

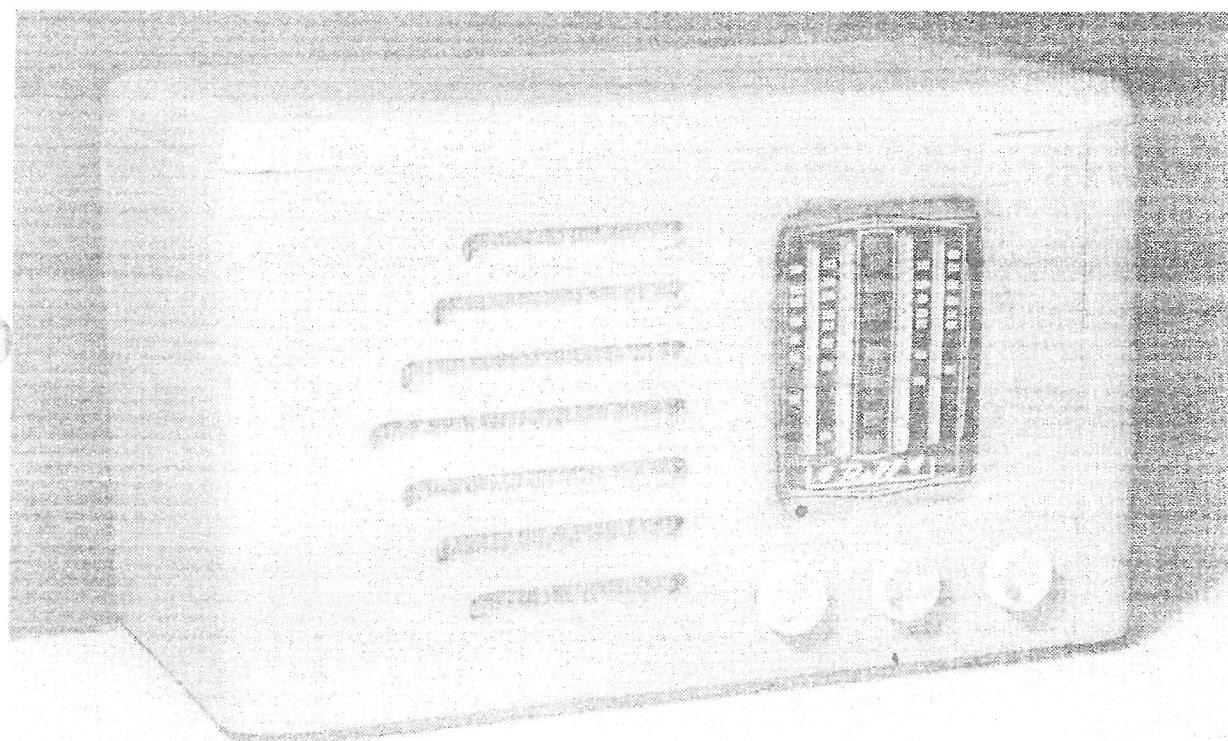
The photographs show three of the less common examples of the Colt. The wooden case was an optional extra for a while and the set illustrated uses the Rimlock series of valves except for the mixer which is the later - and excellent - Noval based ECH81.

At first glance, the second receiver looks like a standard vanilla flavoured Colt, but on a close inspection, the label is seen to be not Bell but ROLAX. John Stokes lists the Rolax brand name as being that of the firm of Saddeley, Wells Ltd. who in this instance must have contracted Bell to make a production run. Valves used are all Rimlocks, indicating that it dates from the 1950's.

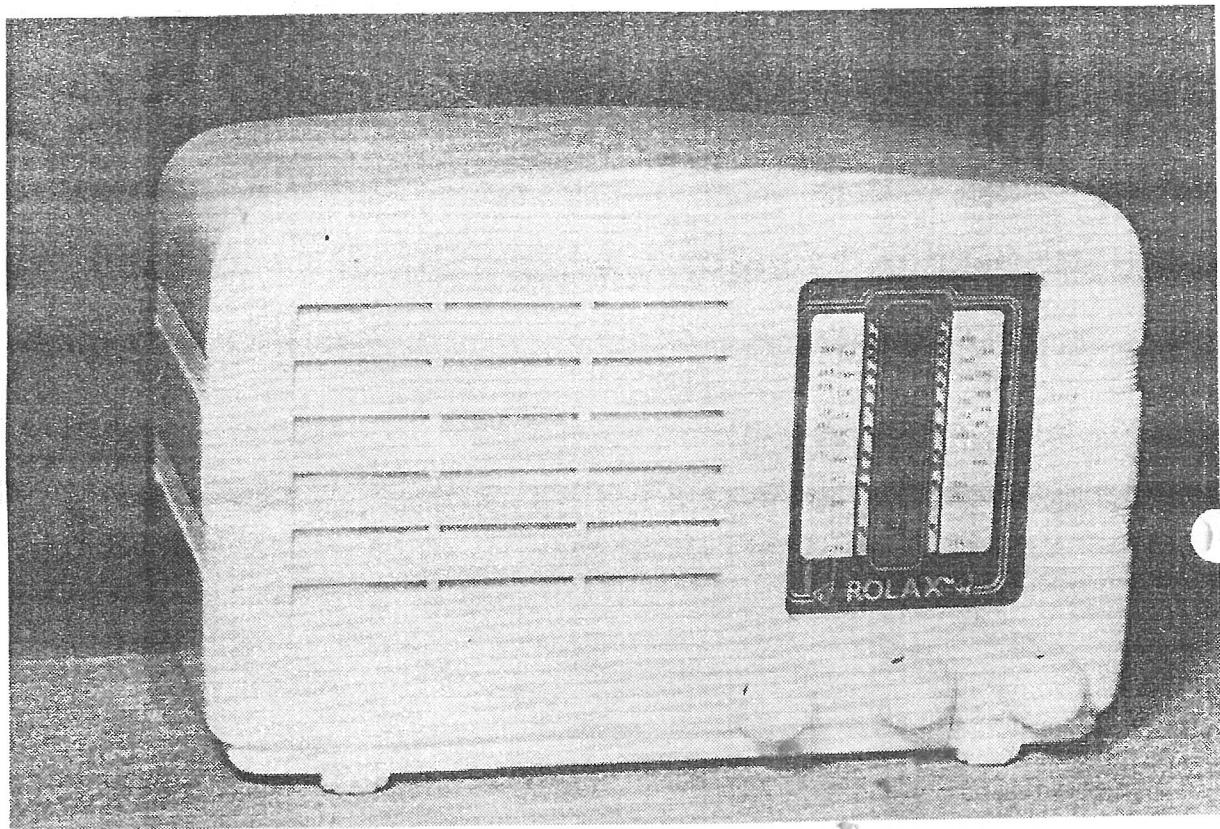
The third example is of a later generation with only three valves, all dual function, plus a selenium rectifier, and uses permeability tuning, rather than a tuning capacitor. This type of tuning, controlled by varying the positions of ferrite slugs in the coils, was popular in car radios, but less common in domestic receivers. I seem to recall these tuners being advertised by Philips in the late 1960's.

Another collectable Colt, but not illustrated, is the final, transistorised version. These are readily recognised by both their lightness and their being fitted with a fibreboard back.

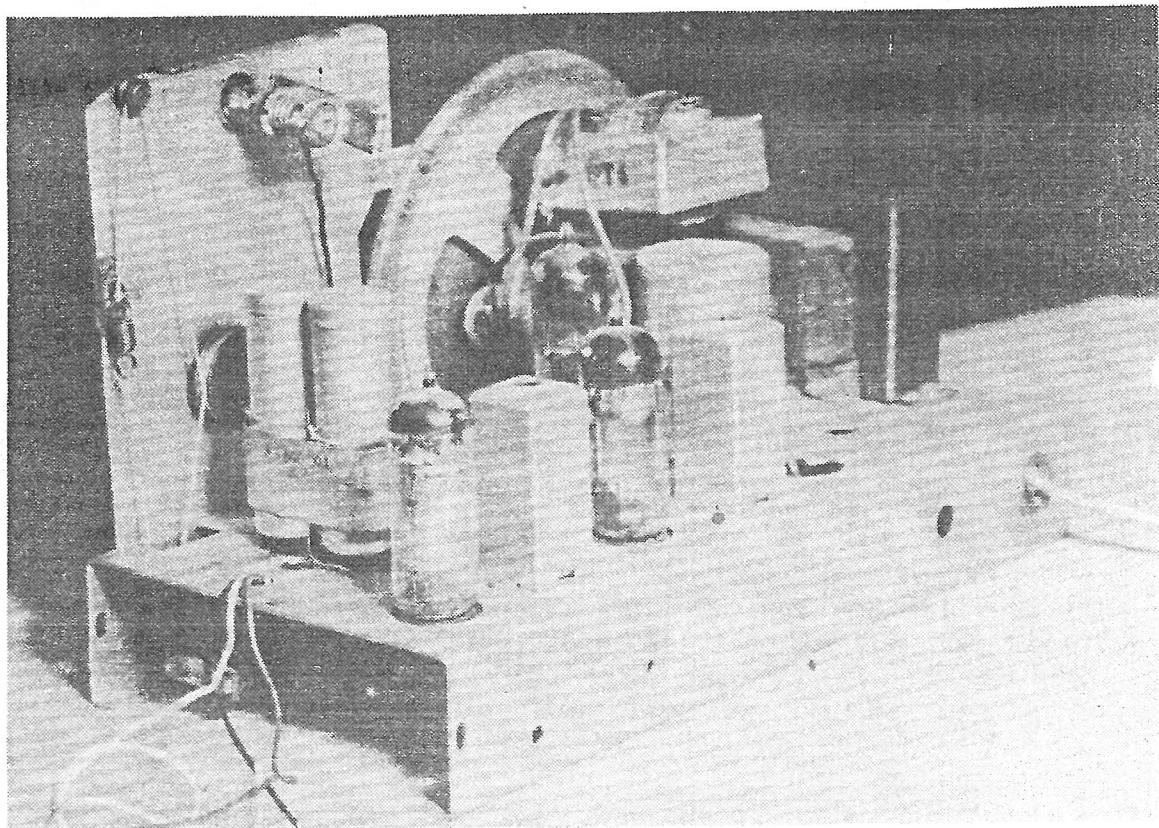
Finally, when Colt hunting, be alert for out of sight cracks in cabinets which are brittle and don't always survive a fall unscathed. And another possible trap which can be the result of cabinet damage, is to find Colt chassis in DRECO'S LA GLORIA and PHILCO plastic cabinets, which they fit perfectly.



1/ The oak cabinet option was unusual in that it was made of solid timber rather than veneered plywood.



2/ When a Bell is not a Bell. This version was standard except for the Rolax label on the dial.



3/ Wot, no tuning capacitor? Externally, this 3 valve late model Colt is standard, but it uses permeability tuning.

THE COLT CIRCUIT.

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