

# Radios become Furniture – Advertising at Work

By Bart Lee, K6VK, CHRS Fellow, AWA Fellow

The prosperity of the 1920s enabled the purchase of many a radio. In the early 20s, only an engineer (or hobbyist) could love 'em: black, lots of dials, outside bits, etc. Yet it was the ladies of the American households who listened to radio, during the day. Hence the “soap opera.” But an ugly old radio could wreck a carefully curated interior design.

In 1927, one manufacturer wrote:

“WHEN beauty came to grace radio cabinet design, radio acceptance turned to radio demand. For there is always a demand for the beautiful. By the same token ugliness became an immediate outlaw.”

He titled his article: “Artistry in Radio Design Has Widened Market” and noted that

“Blending of the Artistic With the Design of the Engineer [is the] Most Important Advance in Radio.”



Newspaper advertising drove commerce in the 1920s. The newspaper publishers set type on linotype machines. They inserted graphics by means of engraved metal block reversed images, known as cuts:

“Another form of metalcut, ... is relief etching. This form of relief printing produces metal plates by etching away the negative parts of the subject, the design being drawn to the surface with a varnish that would resist the acid. William Blake (1757-1827), a British engraver who used the process, called it ‘woodcut on copper’....” (<https://printingillustrated.wordpress.com/category/relief-hoogdruk/metalcut/>)

One such cut appeared in the CHRS surplus piles:



This cut is the means by which this type of aftermarket radio “Hi-Boy” (=long legs) cabinet appeared in an advertisement. Its “logo” is: || 0 ||.

A typical radio advertisement featured cuts of the merchandise, surrounded by text:

The Charleston Gazette, Sunday, November 25, 1933.

**PRESENTING . . . . .**  
**The “Smart Set” of Radio**  
 The New 1934  
*Majestic*  
**RADIOS**

**Revolutionized By Duo Valve Self-Shielded Tubes**

HERE you have the “Smart Set” of Radio—the new Majestic for 1934. The best-looking set you have ever seen. With a far reaching new development—Duo Valve Self-Shielded tubes! You will see at a glance the tremendous forward step in distinguished original design—and beautiful work, handcrafted to a true paper finish. And what a difference you will love! Majestic Duo-Valve tubes add the efficiency of at least two tubes when you insert “Smart Set”.

An ordinary 6 tube radio is a 6 tube radio—that is all. But a 6 tube “Smart Set” is an 8 tube radio—21 per cent more for your money! A Majestic Duo-Valve Self-Shielded tube does the work of two ordinary tubes—sometimes twice in the circuit—and functions better.

These new Majestic definitely cleaner tones and greater detail. Best sounding, less than a year ago, three or four times as much, are still clearly understood—clear and un-perturbed in purity, in selectivity, in colorful tones. There is nothing nearly so fine in all the world of radio today.

**See and Hear Them at Your Majestic Dealers**

**All Have the New MAJESTIC DUO-VALVE Tubes!**



**\$48.95**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$51.15**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$109.45**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$96.25**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$92.95**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$43.45**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$109.45**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$87.45**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$104.95**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$85.25**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$46.75**  
12 TUBE RADIO



**\$136.95**  
12 TUBE RADIO

AURORA RADIO COMPANY, HUNTINGTON, W. VA., DISTRIBUTORS

MAJESTIC RADIOS SOLD ON EASY TERMS BY THESE DEALERS				
<b>The HADLEY Co.</b> 606 Virginia St. DIAL 20-109	<b>THE DIAMOND</b> 318-318 Capitol St. DIAL 28-111	<b>GALPERIN'S</b> 17 Capitol St. DIAL 22-168	<b>McKEE Music Co.</b> 38 Capitol St. DIAL 31-623	<b>LONDREE-CAVENDER</b> 712 Kanawha St. DIAL 27-733

Cabinets sold the radios; and even the parts:

Dec. 7, 1935

# Cunningham RADIO TUBES



*Ambassadors of Joy at Yule-tide*  
Let a set of *new* Cunningham Radio Tubes flood your home with harmony this happy Christmas season.

E. T. CUNNINGHAM, INC.  
New York      Dallas      Chicago      San Francisco  
Atlanta

A beautiful cabinet caught the eye as beautiful home furniture, furniture that could sing and talk:

**RADIO**  
MODERN RADIO SETS  
ACCESSORIES KITS AND PARTS

*Radiola Guy*

for  
**1929**

CONFIDENTIAL  
WHOLESALE  
PRICES

**ALLIED RADIO  
CORPORATION**  
711 W. LAKE ST. ✓ CHICAGO ILL.

The advertisement features a central illustration of a wooden cabinet with two doors, each decorated with a floral motif. The cabinet is supported by four ornate legs. To the right of the cabinet, a large blue flourish curves around the text 'for 1929'. Below the cabinet, a red banner contains the company name and address. A small logo consisting of three overlapping triangles (green, yellow, and red) is positioned below the 'CONFIDENTIAL WHOLESALE PRICES' text.

From <https://www.radiolaguy.com> (C.E. Clutter, AWA, his re-mastered image)

To sell a radio – or a new and more pleasing cabinet for a radio – by newspaper, magazine or catalog required an image. What the radio actually sounded like could be a mystery until acquired. In the 1920s and a considerable while thereafter, to insert an image in an ad required a “cut,” like that above. Such radio-related and printing-related objects are truly ephemera, albeit metal ephemera – here today and gone tomorrow. CHRS is glad at least one survived for the radio museum and archives.

The late radio curmudgeon, D.H. Moore (CHRS “Doc” Herrold Award, 1988) had something to say about radios becoming furniture (and most other things antique radio):

#### “RADIO CABINETS AS FURNITURE

“In the beginning of the move to “furniturize” radio cabinets, there was the usual editorial controversy (controversy immediately attached itself to any new claim or discovery) of breadboards vs. panels vs. enclosures. Like most controversies, it died aborning. — —

“The majority of cabinet designs were acceptable, with Fritt and Corbett probably offering the most aesthetically satisfying models. There were some elegant consoles towards the end of the Twenties, which quickly disappeared in The Depression. The most unappealing cabinets in terms of eye-response had to be those effected by DeForest and Federal.

“They were downright repulsive. \*\*\*

“Actually, there were about three dozen radio cabinet makers in the Twenties. Some were opportunists, as would be expected; other made distinctive contributions. The cheapest models were offered by Southern Toy Company, as low as \$3; with ‘Excello’ offering the most expensive - save, perhaps, those massive consoles made for Scott.

“A listing of most of the cabinet-makers is appended, with those “captive” cabinet-makers to corporate manufacturers omitted, for obvious reasons.

“All manner of woods were used to make radio cabinets, ranging from soft pine to mahogany, walnut, rosewood, and a multiplicity of veneers, some of which were quite striking. The unhappy advent of plastics in the early Thirties and pricing of superior cabinet-work made the continuation of ‘furniture’ cabinets economically unfeasible. The Great Depression also affected lumber-mills,

obviously, and the traditional cabinet-maker became a dying breed. \*\*\*

“Panel material evolved from hard rubber to Formica to Bakelite to a composition known as Lignole - a most striking panel.

“MAJOR RADIO CABINET MAKERS [—] Listed below are the names of major radio cabinet manufacturers. Several reflected the love of the designers and craftsmen involved, some added flair to the "furniturization" of radio cabinets.

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1. EXCELLO, Cicero, Illinois.
2. CHARLOTTE FURNITURE CO., Charlotte, Michigan.
3. STANDARD RADIO CABINET CO., Chicago.
4. SOUTHERN TOY CO., Hickory, North Carolina
5. D.H.FRITTS, Chicago.
6. CORBETT CABINET CO., St. Mary's, Penna.
7. STANDARD PIANO BENCH CO., Chicago.
8. RADIO CABINET CO., Indianapolis.
9. UNITED RADIO CABINET WORKS, Chicago.
10. CONNER RADIO CABINETS, New Albany, Indiana.
11. I.A.LUND CABINET CORP., Chicago.
12. SUPERIOR CABINET CO., New York City.
13. ASTON CABINET MFGRS., Chicago.
14. UTILITY CABINET CO., Waukesha, Wisconsin.
15. KUND & EIBEN, Pittsburg.
16. PERKINS PHONOGRAPH CO., Chicago.
17. PERKINS-CM1PBELL, Cincinnati.
18. NATIONAL CABINET CO., Dayton.

19. DONAHUE LUMBER CO., Perth Amboy, N.J.
20. WIRTHMORE CO., Rockford, Illinois.
21. WINDSOR FURNITURE CO., Chicago.
22. BERNARD FURNITURE CO., Philadelphia.
23. BERLEY & GAY, North Chicago.
24. CHILLICOTTI RADIO CABINETS, Missouri.
25. IDEAL RADIO CABINET CO., Blue Island, Ill.
26. SIGNAL CABINET CO., Menominee,
27. A-I WOOD-WORKING CO., Los Angeles.
28. BLANDIN PHOTOGRAPH CO., Racine, Wisconsin.
29. DETROIT WOODCRAFT CO., Detroit.
30. LUD RADIV CABINET CO., Chicago.
31. M.B.G. EXPRESS BODY CO., Crystal Lake, Ill.
32. EHLERT CABINET CO., Chicago.”

(D.H. Moore, VINTAGE RADIO IDENTIFICATION SKETCH BOOKS, (1984) Vol. I, at pages 79 & 85).

(de K6VK) ##