

## Valuing old radios

Written by Bryce Ringwood

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I am often (well, sometimes) asked to put a value on a particular item of equipment. Usually, the truth hurts more than somewhat, since the “average” wooden or bakelite radio will fall somewhere between R200 and R500 in price.

As with most things these days, the internet and e-bay in particular has a guide to what collectors and enthusiasts overseas are paying for items. There have been times, however, when I would willingly have paid whatever the dealer asked, if I'd had the money. Clearly there are other collectors in this category, since my antique dealer colleagues are managing to sell some very unattractive radios at very high prices.

Most domestic radios less than 60 years old will have little value. Of course, there are exceptions, such as Champion Electric's 'Venus Globes' and some of the collectable EH Scott radios, which are housed in attractive cabinets. Even some of the Bush and Pye radios, which were very stylish, do not command very high prices. In the UK, some of these are manufactured as 'retro' sets, and have the latest DAB broadcast reception. Nevertheless, sets like the 'Roberts' (and 'Dynatron') handbag radios are very collectable (if not very valuable).

**Condition** plays a big part. Sets with original speaker cloth in pristine condition, woodwork in excellent original condition, or bakelite cabinets with no cracks or blisters and fully working will command a respectable price. The original manuals and shipping containers will also add to the value.

Another factor is the **design**. A radio designed by a well-known designer in the art-deco style (for example) can be expected to command a higher price, especially if working and in good condition.

The **Age of** a radio plays a part, but perhaps **scarcity** plays a more decisive role.

For some people, the internal **electronic design** is an important feature. Expect to pay more for sets having 20 or more valves than for a conventional 4 valve superhet. As always, there were some fraudulent manufacturers who put lots of valves in their sets, even though they did nothing. At the other extreme, some EH Scott radios had more than 40 valves – and each one

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was there for a purpose. (By the way, the little FM radio chip inside your cellphone probably contains thousands of transistors, with each transistor doing essentially the same job as a triode valve. ) If you do purchase a set with lots of valves, remember that it will cost you a fortune to keep it going.

Here are some recent prices :

Venus Globes (Green), Good Condition, possibly not working

R3 560-00

Wooden 'Sentinel' 5 Band

R 300-00

Bush MB60 David Ogle Design

EUR 38 (2009)

SABA Oye-Oye (An art radio) Phillipe Starck

EUR 32

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R1155- Bomber Command Radio

GBP 255

Pye Art Deco Radio from the 1930s

GBP 31

Eddystone 940 (Mint Condition)

GBP 191

Please note that these are eBay prices (not the first two, though). The R1155 was used during World War 2 by bomber command in Lancaster Bombers, and so is of interest to military collectors. Eddystone radios have their own user group. They were well constructed, which made them expensive, but didn't always perform as well as their more cheaply made overseas counterparts. The Eddystone professional receivers can be very expensive nowadays.

In South Africa, use the overseas prices intelligently, and remember that if you have set your sights on a large, heavy radio, you will have to find a way to import the goods, allowing for freight charges and so on.

As a final word of advice – don't look on an old radio as an investment, the same way as you would a piece of Royal Doulton or a painting by Pierneef. Prices are very volatile and uncertain. If you buy a set at a dealer and find it elsewhere at a small fraction of what you paid, be philosophical and remember you paid what you thought it was worth to you.

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