

Radios on the Roll

By George Schmidt

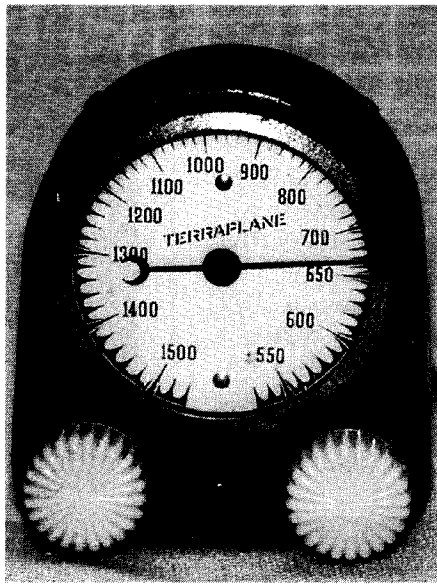


SO M E
INTERNAL
Hudson
radio repairs are
purely mechanical,
and can usually be
done at home. The
dial pointer can often

be adjusted to show more accurately the actual frequencies being received. Use two or three familiar stations (known by number) to check this. Sometimes, too, a tuner will not go quite all the way to the top limit of 1600 kilocycles. I discovered this because there is one local AM station (at Two Rivers, Wisconsin) that broadcasts at 1590 kc., "Top of the Dial," and my Hudson radio would not pick it up. A careful slight bending of one small metal stop inside the radio corrected this problem. If you know of a station which broadcasts at about 550 kc., you may also be able to check the tuner's lower limit in this way. Note that some of these tuners apparently work by varying the inductance of the tuning coils, rather than changing capacitance by using the familiar movable condenser plates.

When the tuning pushbuttons on a Hudson radio do not push eas-

ily, nor hit the stations accurately, lubrication is usually needed. Grease the internal tuning cams and the sliding parts of each button carefully with a lithium-base product such as Lubriplate (or perhaps there is a better specialized lubricant which readers can suggest). Grease also the gears for the manual tuning knob, but do not get grease or oil on any rubber or electronic parts. If the clutch for manual tuning slips when knob is turned, clean the rubber clutch facing with lacquer thinner or similar solvent. Re-install covers on radio case (note that these parts are aluminum instead of steel on some '48-'49 production) and then re-set the buttons to your chosen stations, preferably not in their previous order. For best accuracy, the radio should be warmed up by about 15 minutes of use, and the buttons re-checked for both day and night reception. Keep antenna short while setting strong local stations.



Close-up of control head for 1933 Majestic/Terraplane auto radio.

one of the pair.

With any new or changed antenna, the trimmer-condenser screw at one side of the case on many Hudson and other radios (see pictures, March/April 2002 WTN) may need re-setting.

Instructions are to operate the radio until normally warm (about 15 minutes); then with antenna at full length, tune in any weak station around 1000 to 1200 kc. on the dial, and carefully adjust the trimmer screw for maximum volume.

Long ago, in home or car, the cross-country reception possible with AM was a matter of pride. Today with added interference sources plus louder-mouthed local stations, this would be more difficult, although long-distance AM reception is still most easily achieved at night.

PROBABLY MOST car-radio interference today is not static, but rather is the fading or dropping-out which occurs when passing through some areas, especially near large buildings. Many car radios have included an automatic volume control circuit. Ideally this should not flatten the audio output level (which from most stations is already too flat), but should compensate for the varying strength of the incoming radio signal in a moving vehicle. It helps - somewhat. On 1953-54 Hudson radios the automatic volume control tube is the 6AV6.

For proper performance and long life of the radio, especially, the car's electrical system- generator, regulator, battery, wiring, connections, etc.- must be in good condition, providing a steady noise-free voltage of about 6.2 to 7.3. Radio should also be turned off

while external battery charger or jumper cables are being used.

SELECTIVITY- the ability to separate one station cleanly from another- as commonly been a problem with old AM radios. A good serviceman can sometimes improve the tracking between tuned stages a bit, but it seems to me that the Feds in later years perhaps allowed closer spacing between station channels than they did when these radios were made. (Can any reader tell us?) Extra-narrow selectivity, it's true, can further degrade sound quality, especially on high notes and overtones; hence some top-grade home tuners have included a manual adjustment for "wide" or "narrow." Occasionally one wishes for this in the car as well.

On many early radios the tuning dials did not have numbers indicating actual station frequency, but instead were arbitrarily numbered 0 to 100. Apparently even a few early car radios, with control head clamped to steering column, were made this way. In later years someone produced a small "reproduction" auto radio- transistorized, but with the 0-100 dial- which looked like the old control head, presumably for use in antique cars. A few home radios have also featured combination standard and 0-100 "log" dial scales, especially if with short-wave bands as well.

Dials of many mid-1950's radios (home and car) show a small added symbol at 1240 kc.- not because a station in my home area (WOMT, Manitowoc) has used this frequency since 1929, but because this was one of the two CONELRAD frequencies on AM chosen by the "civil defense" people for use nationwide in the event of war or disaster. During practice drills one could hear several voices mixed on this one frequency.

PAPER CONES of radio speakers are easily damaged, especially when old. On Hudson convertibles, particularly, be careful to keep rainwater out of front speaker. The "flocking" on speaker screen is mostly decorative, but is also a mild water repellent. Re-

flock if necessary, but not heavily enough to blur the sound. Flocking fibers are applied with an air gun over a thin coat of spray-on trim cement. They were available for years in brown, green, and other colors, and were also used on phonograph turntables and sometimes in used-car detailing work. Be sure the paper circle at center of speaker is in place to keep dirt and loose fibers out of the core. Re-flocking work may still be available today. Can anyone tell us of a good source?

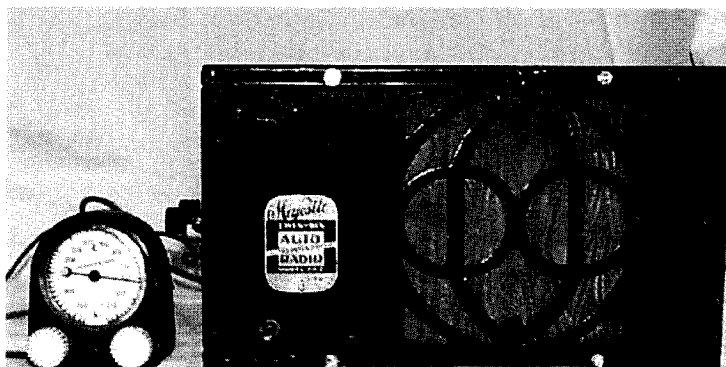
On most cars, one advantage of a rear speaker is the added deep-bass response resulting from the nearly "infinite baffle" effect of the trunk compartment; but this also leaves the speaker cone vulnerable to damage from a trunk lid being slammed while car doors or windows are open— or vice versa. Avoid door slamming if possible. The original rear speaker kit for these Hudsons, #213908, included speaker cover #215982, inside trunk, which offered some protection; but placing speaker in an airtight cup would much reduce low-bass effectiveness.

Limited upper-treble or high frequency response is another usual complaint with AM radio. Here too a serviceman may be able to effect a slight improvement, despite the typical "AM sound." Also, Hudsons c. 1954 retained the standard 6 x 9" oval speaker, but with an elongated grille; and as an experiment it might be possible to fit an auxiliary small "tweeter" speaker (with proper "crossover" in wiring), out of sight, in the extra space at one side. A tweeter elsewhere, perhaps on side kick panel, would not be as effective. Any excess treble (unlikely) is readily tamed by the tone control. As with rear speaker and other accessories, use suitable connectors to avoid cutting the car's original wiring. And although I have no wish to place myself in harm's way by suggesting non-stock replacement parts, someone may possibly try a "coaxial" unit (oval, 4-ohm)—which includes tweeter and crossover—as the front speaker. But please do not tell anyone you read it here. As early as the 1930's, an add-on tweeter (sometimes crystal type) had been suggested for big midbass-heavy home sets. Some

old AM radios have enough treble audio output to make this effective, and some do not.

AMONG PIONEERS in car radios were Paul Galvin (Motorola) and Gene McDonald (Zenith). It was McDonald who decided that auto radios with only hand controls were not very safe; and accordingly he had a prototype of his foot-controlled models built in less than a week's time. These radios (1942-47 Hudson and others) had a foot button for station changes and muting, and early ones included foot volume control as well. His Zenith home radios were noted for their giant-size dials, often with short wave coverage. What he and other pioneers would have thought of today's windshield-bending automotive audio is a moot question.

WE'RE SPECIALLY GRATEFUL for the early auto-radio information and pictures sent recently by Robert



Antenna installation (inside roof if necessary) is covered in detail, as is noise suppression; but no modern staff or windshield-type antennas were used. The usual two 1/2-mfd. condensers (for generator, etc.) were included, as was a set of "suppressor" resistors for the distributor and spark plugs (with rating of about 25,000

ohms); plus braided-wire shielding to be fitted around distributor and other wires, and
1933 Majestic/
Terraplane
Model 66
"Twin 6"
auto radio,
including separate
control head.

Campbell, Oregon. He tells us:

"The first (Hudson) factory/dealer-sold radio was for the 1933 Essex Terraplane, and 1934 was the first year for a full line of radios [for all Hudson-built cars]— see factory parts manuals. The '33 E-T radio is a Majestic ["Mighty Monarch of the Air"] Model 66 "Twin Six," [made by Grigsby-Grunow Co., Chicago]. The control head can be mounted either on the steering column or on the bottom lip of the dash, with the radio box mounted on the firewall." On the control head are the usual two knobs, for on-off/volume and for station tuning. A tone control is placed below, on the receiver case.

This radio has a vibrator, six

tubes, and a 6-inch dynamic-type speaker built into the case, although provision is also made for a magnetic-type extension speaker (for use at rear or elsewhere) to be added. Automatic volume control circuitry, too, is included. Although the dial face on Robert's radio reads "Terraplane," these Majestic units evidently were available with dial faces to match any 1933 U.S. car. Robert kindly enclosed copy pages from the original radio installation manual, and it includes instructions for Essex, Terraplane, Hudson, and at least twenty other makes then being manufactured.

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plugs (with rating of about 25,000 ohms); plus braided-wire shielding to be fitted around distributor and other wires, and
then grounded to car frame and engine. Sometimes re-alignment of the tuned stages in radio was necessary after installation.

SUBSEQUENT HUDSON radios were made by Stewart-Warner, Zenith, and others, since Grigsby-Grunow, the top U.S. radio producer in 1929, was bankrupted in 1934 (due to partly to high patent licensing costs, it is said). A successor company, Wilcox-Gay, is remembered for its "Recordio" home radio-phonographs, which could cut lacquer discs like those used by radio stations— and also for its postwar tape units— but not for car radios. Another company continued the Majestic name

on records and home radios.

Apparently the first radios for Hudson and some other cars to have the control head mounted in dashboard, rather than underdash, were on 1934-35 models (can anyone confirm this?). Hudson radios for 1933 through 1940 were made with separate control heads; those 1941 and up had the receiver and controls in a single case.

More automotive audio details another time. Reader addenda and comments invited.

SUMMER ITINERARY for me this year included three old-car shows (plus one for old tractors)– at Iola, Appleton, Manitowoc (and Chilton, here in Wisconsin. All were worthwhile, except for the longstanding problem that there should be many more Hudson-built vehicles– and also more of the earlier examples of nearly all makes– present and visible to the public at these annual events. Parts for the older models (and for the independent brands) could be more visible too.

At Appleton I renewed my acquaintance with Robert Plummer's neat blue '29 Essex– still beautiful, except for a frazzled fan belt (already V-type, in '29). At Iola, a lonely Navaho Bronze '49 Hudson Commodore was offered for sale. It featured a "Va. Clutch" switch on dashboard (unfortunately, the underhood control mechanism was missing, and the Ranco heater valve was something from a Brand X, with wrong type control). At Manitowoc I met a handsome Jeep, c. 1950, equipped with most of the authentic options of its time (including Unity lights with "Willys" tags)– but nary a Hudson was to be found.

As usual at these meets, I also asked the dealers in miniature car models about any Hudsons available– and as usual I drew virtually a blank. This too has been a very long-term complaint in our HET Club (see Hubert Couch letter, Feb, '74 WTN). Perhaps by now some members have found a source for Hudson miniatures in the



vidual who suggested in WTN, some time ago, that the engine in a Hudson had better be replaced with a nondescript late-model Big Three one, to increase the car's "resale value" or whatever. I refrained from commenting at the time since I could not think of anything printable to say. However, I'd certainly hate to be that individual's wife if she should ever require major surgery, wouldn't you?

Also, with all due respect for fellow columnist Richard Polese, who has written much of value for WTN in the past, I found his article in the September/October

Kent Moore/Hickok tube tester for auto radios.

Photos by Robert Campbell

popular 1:43 or comparable sizes. If so, we hope they will write and tell us, for mention in a future WTN article.

A complete surprise to me this summer was a gift from friends (former Mishicot residents), who brought me a sub-Lilliputian '51 Hudson Hornet coupé, die-cast metal with an opening hood and factory-color maroon paint, in 1:87 scale! This scale was new to me, but it is specified as "HO," evidently to fit in with the familiar HO-size model railway trains. Car is about 2 1/4 inches long, and is one of a series from Classic Metal Works, Inc. (3401 Silica Road, Sylvania, Ohio 45660). Thank you to Cheryl and Richard Sattler for the first Hudson miniature I've owned.

Clothing vendors at the summer car meets have not been entirely neglectful of Hudson enthusiasts. Larry and Donna Jefferies, for example (Nostalgic Wheels, P. O. Box 966, Belle Plaine, Kansas 67013) have offered two or three Hudson designs for their T-shirts. Perhaps readers can tell of additional sources.

THE Y.G.B.K. AWARD (You Gotta Be Kidding) from this column hasn't been presented for a while, but we hereby wish to bestow it upon the indi-

issue to be actually frightening – the mechanical equivalent of a modern Frankenstein-type horror story. Worst of all, perhaps, is the implication that a Hudson with its original engine, in good condition, would *not* be "an all-around satisfying creation that you can drive anywhere every day." Is it more satisfying to mongrelize automotive history instead? Original Hudson engines were durable, with great flexibility and torque, and with enough distinction of design (the pinned rings, splash oiling, etc., etc.) to add to the car's collector appeal. And they can still be rebuilt when necessary. If you wish to own a vehicle with a Big Three V-8 – or possibly with the latest government-approved smogless hybrid or rubber-band propulsion technology– by all means acquire one. But please, please... do it without butchering a classic.

**HAPPY HOLIDAY TIMES,
and a good 2003, to all!**



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