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QST Issue: Aug 2001

Title: The Hallicrafters SX-23

Author: John H. Dilks III, K2TQN

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OLD RADIO

The Hallicrafters SX-23

Hallicrafters introduced the SX-23 in the March 1939 *QST* in a big way. With a total of 10 pages of advertising, including a two-page-wide photo of the receiver, the debut was noticed by everyone. In the ad Bill Halligan, president of Hallicrafters, said, "Today we find ourselves building this ideal receiver, different from anything the Hallicrafters have produced in the past—new in conception, new in design, new in performance. Because its design is based on functional principles, and because it embodies the newest developments in the art of building communications receivers, it is extremely unconventional as compared to receivers designed even as late as a year ago."

Halligan didn't stop there. He also had the enclosure specially designed. The art deco styling of the cabinet and speaker is striking and makes it unique among communications receivers of this period. In fact, it is my belief that this may be the most beautiful receiver ever designed. Ironically, Hallicrafters never continued this elegant design in later receivers.

How the SX-23 was Developed

According to Halligan, it was several years earlier, in the wee small hours following a typical hamfest, that several well-known amateurs and communications engineers sat in a smoke-filled room discussing the ideal communications receiver. Each had his own pet ideas but, strangely enough for radio engineers, they agreed on several basic principles.

Returning to Chicago, two of the Hallicrafters engineers started to build this ideal receiver as a separate, private project of their own, purely experimental. As time passed the project grew and became the pet of the laboratory. At that time the design was far ahead of manufacturing techniques of the day, so it remained in the lab reminding everyone of the challenge they faced if they hoped to someday produce it.

As 1939 approached, manufacturing techniques had advanced to the point where the SX-23 could be built as a Hallicrafters receiver, at a price within the average

amateur's purse. The company decided to go ahead with the project.

The introductory price was around \$115. In succeeding months, *QST* ads show that many of the radio stores had affordable "time payments" for hams.

***** Sky Rider 23 *****

Buy HALLCRAFTERS

FROM
Robert Henry
W9ARA



Prompt Delivery of SX-23 on Ten Day Trial

COMPARE MY TERMS WITH ALL OTHERS

Model	Cash Price	Down 1/2 Month	Balance
SX-23	\$115.00	\$57.50	\$57.50
S-17	125.00	62.50	62.50
S-14	125.00	62.50	62.50
S-14	125.00	62.50	62.50
Sky Rider 23	125.00	62.50	62.50
Sky Rider 23	125.00	62.50	62.50

Henry Radio Shop
W9ARA
BUTLER, MISSOURI

***** the hallicrafters inc. *****

This is just one portion of the SX-23 advertising blitz that consumed 10 pages in *QST*.



The Hallicrafters SX-23 receiver.

There is a Story...

When I picked up my SX-23, I was told that Jim Robertson, K2EA, purchased it in March 1939 directly from Leo Meyerson, at his World Radio Labs in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Then a young engineer, Jim was traveling through Council Bluffs between work locations and missed his connection. Looking for something to do while waiting for the next bus, he visited WRL. Prominently on display was the radio he would fall in love with and purchase using Leo's "easy time payments of \$15 per month."


The SX-23 became part of his travel baggage that spring. Eventually, when his work was done, he journeyed back to his New Jersey home by train.

His train arrived at the station late at night. Unable to carry everything, Jim left the receiver and speaker sitting on the station's platform while he walked several miles home. Returning an hour later with a relative's car, the SX-23 was still there waiting for him. A testament to Jim's care, the radio still looks almost new.

Conclusion

There are no official Hallicrafters records available, but it is believed that fewer than 5000 SX-23s were built, making it hard to find the radio today.

I want to thank Bill Kleronomos, KD0HG, and *Electric Radio* magazine for contributing to this article. I would recommend anyone interested in the SX-23 to read Bill's extensive article in the March 1992 *Electric Radio* (issue 35). Back issues are available for \$3.25 delivered in the US. Please contact Electric Radio, 14643 County Rd G, Cortez, CO 81321-9575.

I will have the ten pages of SX-23 ads mentioned above, along with additional SX-23 information, on my Web site at www.eht.com/oldradio/arrrl/index.html. 



The "birth" of the SX-23 was announced in the March 1939 *QST*.