

unknown artists, and secondly the difficulty faced by Radio Corp. in breaking into the gramophone record market.

To appreciate just how difficult the latter task was it is necessary to know something of the conditions existing at the time. In those early post-war years His Master's Voice (N.Z.) Ltd held a complete monopoly of the local market, for in addition to their own products, which included British pressings of the main American companies Brunswick, Decca, Columbia and Victor, they also had sole distribution rights for the products of their only British competitor, Decca. Thus armed HMV did not welcome competition from any upstart local company, even going to the extent of covertly dissuading retailers from handling labels other than their own.

All this happened a long time ago but has been related here to indicate one of the difficulties Radio Corp. was facing when in February 1949 they launched their first, and the first, all-New Zealand record under the name TANZA. The name itself was made up from the initial letters of the words To Assist New Zealand Artists.

Fittingly it was a Maori singer, Pixie Williams, whose name appeared on Tanza record No. 1, the two items she sang being 'Blue Smoke' and 'Senorita'. The issuance of this record can be regarded as the start of a New Zealand industry as it was not long afterwards that HMV followed suit by issuing N.Z. pressings of overseas records, and a few years later similarly made recordings of New Zealand artists.

An undoubted factor in Radio Corp's success was that they had a ready-made national distribution set-up in the form of their Columbus Radio Centre shops, and had it not been for this the enterprise might well have never got off the ground.

### ULTIMATE RADIO

The company which became New Zealand's largest radio manufacturer had its beginnings back in 1922, following the return of the representative of an Auckland firm of importers from Canada. Whilst there he had heard a radio broadcast and was sufficiently impressed with the commercial possibilities of the new medium of entertainment to suggest to his company, after his return home, that they should add radio apparatus to their range of imports. So it was that in October 1922 the firm of Radio Ltd was formed as a separate company to handle this new side of the business. But early as it was, they just missed being Auckland's first radio importers for the Johns brothers had started in business during the previous year (1921).

Radio Ltd's first act was to place an order for 300 crystal sets with the Canadian Independent

Telephone Co. of Toronto. In an attempt to steal a march on the competition it was arranged to have the order forwarded by express transit to Vancouver for direct shipment to Auckland, but in placing the order a small trifle had been overlooked. There was no broadcasting station in Auckland! And without any station there was no hope of selling those 300 crystal sets, so Radio Ltd had no option but to establish one. A cable was hurriedly sent off to the Canadian De Forest Co. requesting the urgent despatch of a suitable transmitter. Pending its arrival a tiny 15-watt De Forest Radiophone was pressed into use. Radio Ltd thus became, albeit somewhat unwillingly, the owner of Auckland's first broadcasting station—1YA.

Fourteen years later it was revealed by the then managing director of the company, W. J. Trustcott, that the crystal sets had cost £3-9-0 to land, which made the retail price rather too high, so much so that a sizeable quantity remained unsold at the end of two years.

However, this initial setback in no way deterred the fledgling company who went on to become the country's largest importer of radio parts and receivers. For many years Radio Ltd's main business remained that of an importer, the company securing many choice agencies for both components and receivers. By 1929 the company had a nation-wide network of dealers throughout both islands.

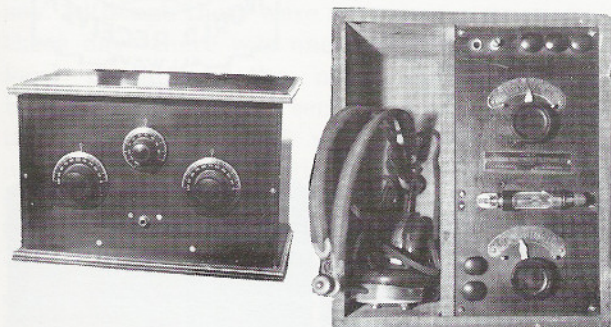
The name 'Ultimate' was introduced in 1923 when a decision was made to commence manufacturing receivers. The first Ultimate was actually no more than a 2-valve Gilfillan kitset, model RA-1. It goes without saying that it did not need much capital outlay or require a great deal of technical knowledge or manufacturing expertise to 'make' a radio in those days—home constructors were doing it all the time!

Over the next three years 4 and 5-valve sets were produced until in 1927 the first all-wave model appeared. It was a 4-valve regenerative set of up-to-date design using a screen-grid RF stage and ganged tuning condensers. A set of 8 plug-in coils provided coverage down to 19 metres. It was housed in an attractive aluminium cabinet finished in black lacquer, although other colours were available to order.

During 1928-29 the same model continued to be produced, though with minor variations, including the use of a pentode output valve. It was one of these sets which was used by the company's chief engineer, R. J. Orbell, when he accompanied Admiral Richard E. Bird's first Antarctic expedition in 1929 as assistant radio operator. This event represented quite a feather in Radio Ltd's cap and provided much useful publicity for the Ultimate name.

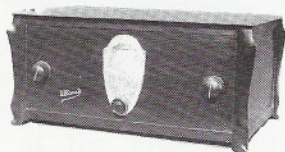
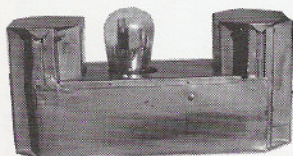


An AC version of almost identical construction was introduced in 1929. It was housed in the same metal cabinet and was connected to its separate power pack by a 4 ft long 'umbilical cord'. The extreme length of cable was considered necessary to allow placement of the power pack at a sufficient distance to prevent hum pickup by the audio transformers in the set.



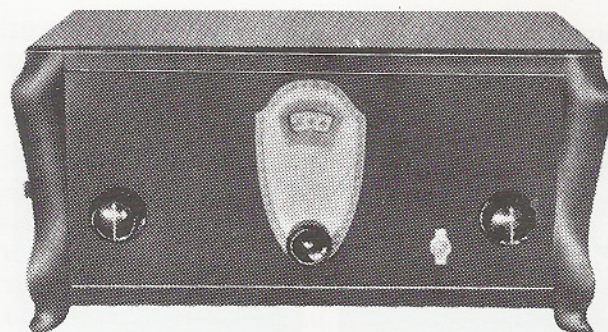
Assembled and sold by Radio Ltd in 1923, this Gilfillan RA-1 kitset was later claimed to be "the first Ultimate".

The first set sold by Radio Ltd was made by the Canadian Independent Telephone Co. In this picture the crystal detector is not original. 1923.



The power pack used on the AC version of the Ultimate Screen-Grid 4 was made by the Sexton Radio Co. 1929.

First AC version of the Screen-Grid 4 1929.



THE NEW SCREEN - GRID "4"

THIS wonderful new Screen-Grid 4-Valve Receiver is one of the most remarkable sets ever offered to the radio-loving public.

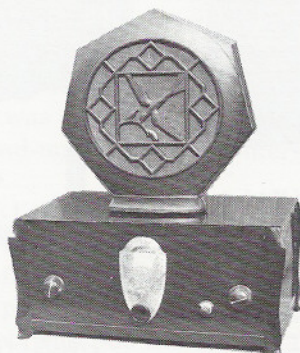
Wherever it has been tried, results have been little short of marvellous. Beginners have picked up stations in Siberia, America, Holland, England, Australia, etc., at tremendous loudspeaker volume, with the utmost ease.

Incorporates the new screen-grid that will, it is predicted, revolutionise radio reception. Single dial control; all aluminium duco-finished cabinet. Wave-length 20 to 550 metres Full Particulars from—

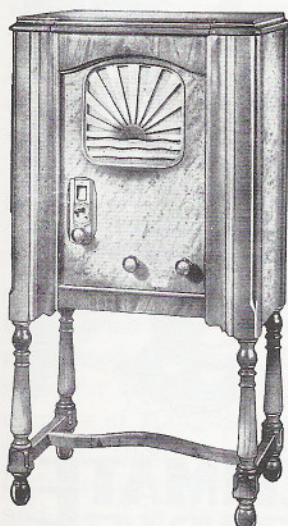
**RADIO LTD.**

Commerce Buildings,

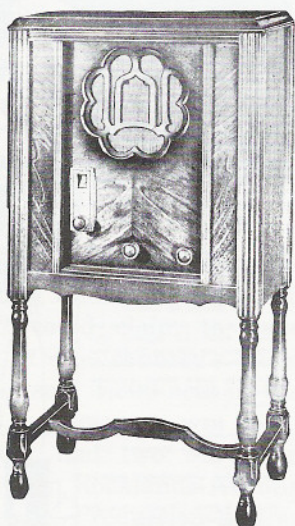
Cnr. Anzac Avenue and Beach Road, 1928  
AUCKLAND.



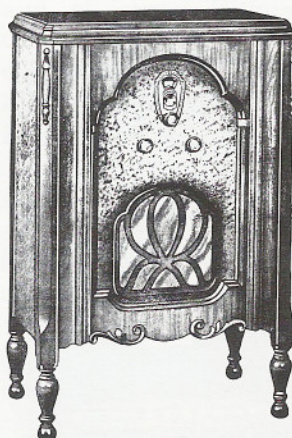
Right: The cabinet of the SG4 was normally finished in maroon lacquer but other colours were available to order. 1928.



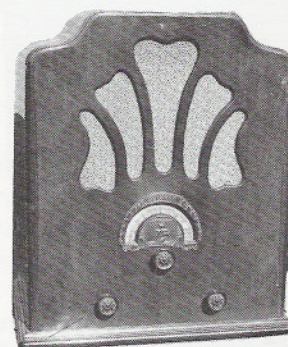
Consolette 5-valve dual-wave regenerative TRF 1931.



Consolette 7-valve BC superhet 1931.

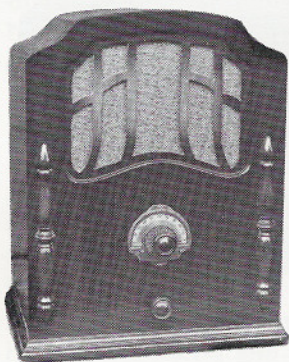


Model 856, 8-valve all-wave superheterodyne 1931. It used plug-in coils.

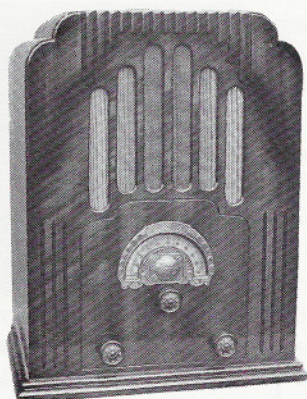


Model 524, chassis 'L' 1932. The first Ultimate superhet.





Ultimate 4-valve TRF,  
chassis 'S' 1932.



Model 5LN, 5-valve BC  
1933.



Metal nameplate as fitted  
to cabinet backs, 1932-33.  
(Slightly larger than full  
size.)



Right: Ultimate logo used  
in connection with all-wave  
models during 1931-33.



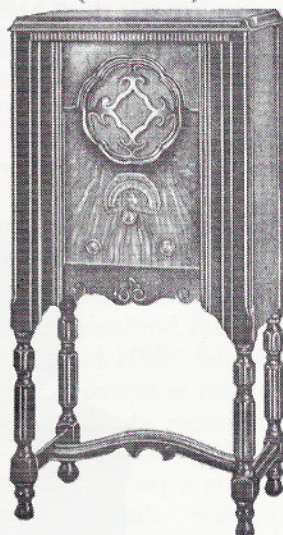
Mantel Cabinet of Matched  
Burl Walnut

#### Specification

6 ARCTURUS Valves Multi-Mu and Pentode  
Superheterodyne circuit.  
Highest quality Dynamic Speaker.  
Tone Control and Static Modifier.  
Extra Stage of Tuned Radio Frequency pre-  
ceding the Detector-Oscillator.

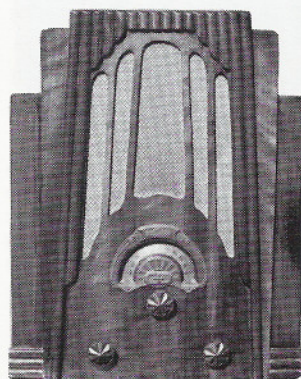
Effco 180 degree full-vision  
dials were first used by  
Radio Ltd in 1932.

ULTIMATE Model 631  
(All-Electric)

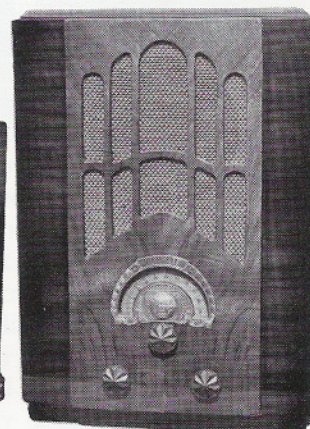


CONSOLETTA CABINET  
Chassis specification same as  
described in Model 627

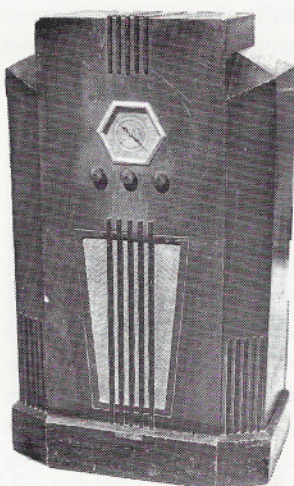
This cabinet was also used  
on the 5-valve model 527  
in 1932.



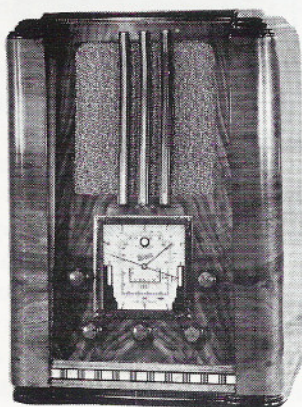
Skyscraper model 5NR, 5-  
valve BC 1933.



Model 5LA, 5-valve BC  
1934.



Courier model 7LAW 1935.



Ultimate 6-valve AW 1936.

Tuesday, August 4, 1936.

THE N.Z. RADIO TIMES.

# A WORLD'S RECORD

*a triumph to*

## ULTIMATE RADIO

# 798

VERIFIED  
WORLD-WIDE  
STATIONS

RADIO RECORD  
DX CUP

### CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS

Against leading English, American  
and Australian Radios.

Mr. J. R. Bain, of Marton, with his  
standard 5-valve A.C. Superhet, Ulti-  
mate Radio, has just won the DX Cup  
for world-wide long-distance reception.

Ultimate Radio scored sweeping  
victories in this latest DX Cup Cham-  
pionship.

#### TWO NEW RECORDS

798 Stations with All-electric Ulti-  
mate Set.

531 Stations with Ultimate Battery  
operated Set.

Making 9 great Ultimate victories  
against all comers.

# ULTIMATE RADIO



A point of interest is that the power pack was not made by Radio Ltd but by another early Auckland manufacturer, W. J. Sexton.

Receiver production continued to grow steadily and in 1930 Radio Ltd could claim to have made and sold over 1,000 console models, a quite respectable figure considering the fierce competition from imported receivers, including those imported by the company itself, one might say. Although there were no import restrictions in those days there was one factor which favoured local production, the not inconsiderable "Be British, Buy British" sentiment in existence at the time. Radio Ltd was not slow to take advantage of the situation and for several years made a point of advertising Ultimate receivers as being of "British Construction"; in fact these words were actually embossed on the dial escutcheons of some 1932-33 models. After all, New Zealand was a British country and this fact was justification for the claim, even if some of the components used were not of British manufacture.

Another factor favouring local production was that because most imported receivers were of American origin they incurred a fairly high rate of duty while, on the other hand, New Zealand-made sets could incorporate English raw material and components which could be imported duty free. In 1932 an Ultimate 5-valve superhet in a floor-model cabinet was being advertised as—"This Beautiful Console at the Price of the Imported Midget".

During 1931 Radio Ltd continued their pioneering tradition by producing this country's first AC superheterodynes, one of which was an all-wave model. When it is realised that, even in the U.S., only one company, RCA, had marketed superhets before this, Radio Ltd's accomplishment was all the more noteworthy.

New models, both broadcast and all-wave, followed in 1932, the total for that year amounting to 12, including a 3-valve short-wave converter.

By 1933 there were 16 different models in production, ranging from a 5-valve chest to a 10-valve de luxe all-wave radiogram.

In spite of the prevailing depressed economic conditions of the early 1930s, Radio Ltd continued to flourish and in 1932 could claim to have accounted for over 20% of the country's radio sales for that year, having sold 1,800 sets in the months of May, June and July alone.

By 1935 the company had two Mt Eden factories in operation, No. 1 in Rocklands Avenue and No. 2 in Porters Avenue. Production figures for that year exceeded 9,000 sets. However, so rapidly was business increasing that larger premises were soon required and at the end of

1935 a move was made to a large four-storey building in Quay Street. Here the company was reorganised as Radio (1936) Ltd, under which name it was to remain for the next 20 years.

Although by this time the firm was no longer stressing the 'British' aspect of its products, they were nevertheless sufficiently aware of the still extant public preference for British goods, and this led to what can only be described as a dirty trick on their part. Even after all these years a description of it will bear repeating. Since about 1934 Rola speakers had been used exclusively in the manufacture of Radio Ltd's products, supplies being obtained from America, Australia or England. However, when using American-made speakers the firm stooped to the deceitful practice of painting out the words "Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A." which would otherwise have been only too readily apparent to any prospective purchaser who happened to look inside the back of the set. This was a deliberate deception intended to conceal the fact that the speakers were not of British manufacture.

But is only fair to say that, in spite of this minor lapse, the name Ultimate earned for itself a well-deserved reputation for quality of workmanship among technicians and sales people alike. In any case the continuing need for subterfuge was removed by the introduction of New Zealand-made Rola speakers towards the end of 1939.

By 1934 production had increased to the extent that there were no less than 18 different models available in that year. From this time onwards a policy of issuing sets under different brand names was put into effect and within the next few years the number had increased to 12. Initially, in 1931, only one additional brand name, that of Courier, was used, but by about 1938 the following were in existence: Courier, Crusader, Hamilton, Golden Knight, Lewis Eady, Luxor, Madison, National, Paramount, Rolls, Skyscraper and, of course, Ultimate. With the exception of Courier, these brand names belonged to various distributors or retailers who, in many cases, also had radios made for them by firms other than Radio (1936) Ltd.

Originally, in the case of the Courier brand, although the same dials were used, the cabinet styles differed considerably from those used on the Ultimate brand. Later, with the advent of the so-called 'aero' dials in 1935, the Ultimate brand sets used square escutcheons while others used round escutcheons. When glass dial scales came into use from 1938 onwards all brands used the same dials. Up until 1940 there were minor differences in cabinet styles between the various brands but after that they were virtually indistinguishable. By that time, however, there



- thrilling foreign reception
- superb lifelike tone
- rare cabinet beauty

WITH AN

# ULTIMATE

The  
**World's  
FINEST  
RADIO**  
for 1938

**ULTIMATE 1938  
RADIO**  
embodies the latest in  
Radio Research.  
In tone, quality, and  
performance it is a  
revelation, and being  
made in New Zealand  
specially for New  
Zealand conditions,  
the **ULTIMATE** will  
give you many years'  
trouble-free service.

**Attractively Priced at :**

4-valve A.C.	from	£9/10/-
5-valve	}	from £14/14/-
Dual-wave		
8-valve	}	from £33/10/-
All-wave		



**798  
VERIFIED  
STATIONS  
ON AN  
ULTIMATE  
RADIO**

In the 1936  
**CHAMPION OF  
CHAMPIONS**  
D.X. Challenge Cup  
Competition  
**ULTIMATE RADIO**  
scored an outright win  
with the amazing  
total of **798**  
verified stations !  
A similar outstanding  
performance can be  
expected from any  
**ULTIMATE RADIO.**

**DEMONSTRATIONS  
ARRANGED.**

**M'CABES RADIOS**  
**CORNER QUEEN ST. & KARANGAHAPE RD.**

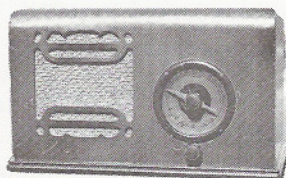
• Telephone 41-193 •

"The World's Finest Radio for 1938."  
How about that? But it really was a good set.

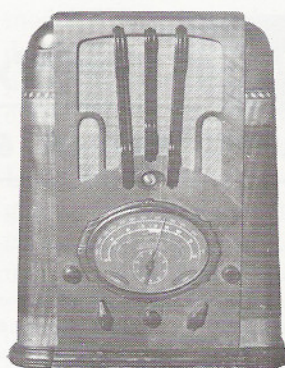




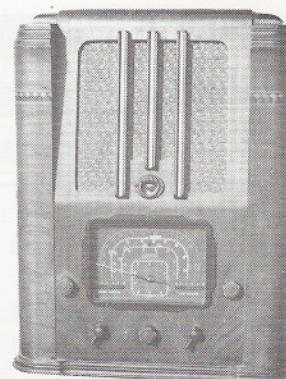
Skyscraper NS, 5-valve BC 1935.



Skyscraper BAU, one of Radio Ltd's first 4-valve reflexed models. 1936.



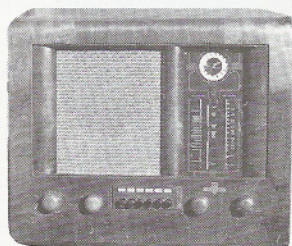
National BCU, 7-valve all-wave 1937.



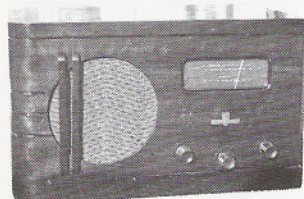
Ultimate BCU, 8-valve all-wave using metal valves. 1937.



Ultimate BXU, 8-valve AW 1938.



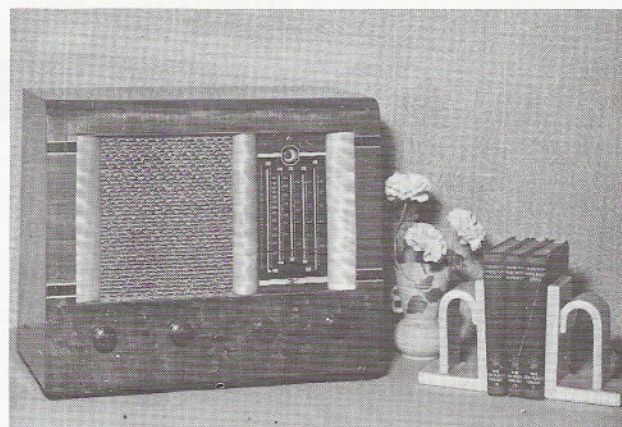
Skyscraper model EA 6-valve DW 1940. Note similarity in appearance to British Bush PB63, even to the inclusion of push-buttons and "Teleflic" tuning.



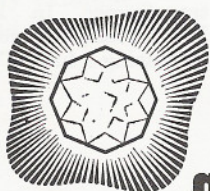
Skyscraper 4-valve reflex 1941.



Ultimate model RU, 5-valve BC 1947. The bakelite cabinet was the largest made in N.Z. at that time.

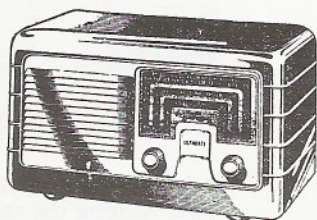


Ultimate model FA, 7-valve bandspread 1940. It had a cabinet styling almost identical to that of the Bush PB63.



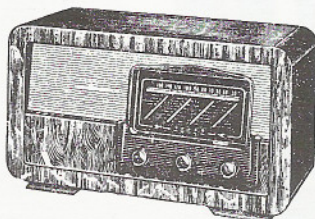
**BRILLIANT...**  
as an **ULTIMATE**

Brilliant—sparkling—that's Ultimate reception. Ultimate Radios have looks, too: each cabinet is a masterpiece of styling and finish. There is an Ultimate model for every need. From 4-valve Broadcast to 10-valve All Wave Radiogram.



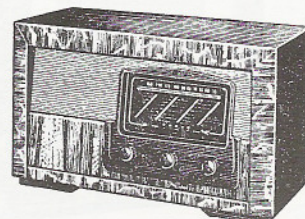
**ULTIMATE 5 VALVE BROADCAST MINOR.** Concentrated power gives "large room" volume. New bass-boosting circuit increases tonal range. Smart, small, modern. In cream or walnut moulded cabinet.

£23-9-6



**ULTIMATE 5 VALVE BROADCAST DE LUXE MANTEL.** Exclusive pentonic tone control. 6 valve performance. Provision for gramophone and extension speaker. Full station markings in echelon. 8" speaker.

£34-17-6



**ULTIMATE 6 VALVE BROADCAST OR DUAL WAVE MANTEL.** Exceptional range and rich tone. Staggered station calibration. Five position tone control. Gramophone and extension speaker plugs.

B.C. £39-17-6

D.W. £48-15-0

Manufactured by:

**RADIO (1936) LTD.,**

**Quay St., Auckland**

1951



# Ultimate Quality

## MANTEL RADIOS & TABLEGRAMS

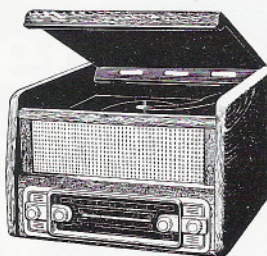


ULTIMATE  
"STUART"

Oak cabinet with new type inclined dial fitted with 6 - 914 speaker with provision for gramophone input and extension speaker.

Retail £27 19 6

When you sell an Ultimate Radio or Tablegram you are selling the BEST. You can be confident of QUALITY that will outlast all others—PERFORMANCE that is perfect and a rich, clear TONE that will give true-to-life reproduction.

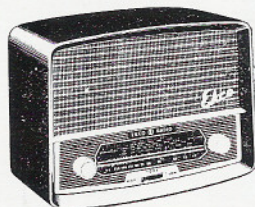


ULTIMATE  
"WINDSOR"

Solid oak cabinet — new crystal dial. Full volume 5-7 elliptical speaker, B.S.R. automatic record player.

Retail £49 19 6

A few selections from the great range  
of ULTIMATE-EKCO Radios



EKCO  
"SPRITE"

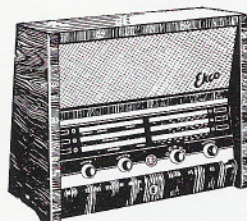
Modern design moulded cabinet. 5 valve broadcast mangel with outstanding performance.

Retail £19 18 6

EKCO  
"CORONET"

6 valve bandspread with sensitive and selective circuit giving brilliant reception. Streamlined walnut veneer cabinet with wide, easy-to-read dial.

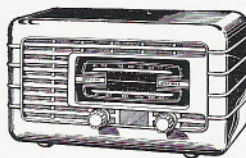
Retail £42 10/-



EKCO  
"AIRLIE"

5 valve, 5 bandspread in grained walnut moulded cabinet. Provision for gramophone input and extension speaker.

Retail £36/-/-



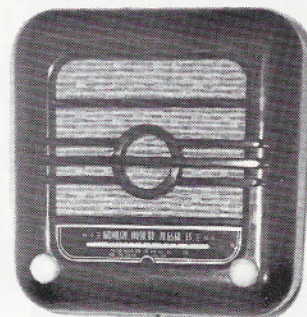
ULTIMATE  
"CYGNET"

Occupies a minimum of space — gives maximum performance. 5 valve broadcast. Moulded cabinet in range of 5 pastel colours.

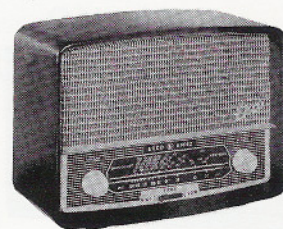
Retail £18/10/-

Quality products of ULTIMATE-EKCO (N.Z.) CO. LTD., Quay Street, Auckland.

1957

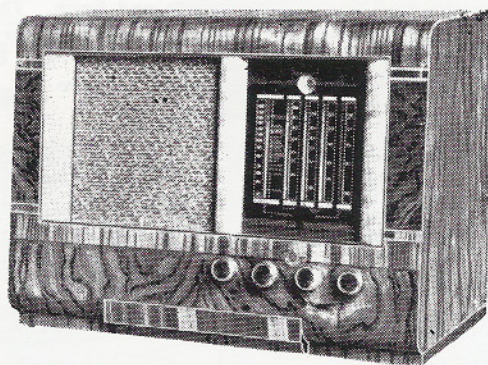


Ultimate RBP, 4-valve BC 1952. This model was supplied with a base which could convert it to table mounting. When wall mounted it was not unknown for the string to break. This set earned for itself the name 'The Hanging Horror'.



Ekco 'Ekcosprite' model RCX, 5-valve BC 1957. An English model originally AC/DC modified locally by the addition of an auto transformer. In 1961 it was redesigned as model REI using a full AC circuit.

The 'box' illustrated houses National's latest 9-Valve All Wave Band Spread job. Its a wow — and so is the 7. Try one soon!

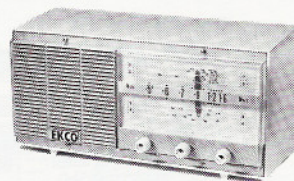


NATIONAL ALL-WAVE BAND SPREAD 7 VALVE MODEL £33/10/0

9 Valve Model as Illustrated £42/0/0

JOHN BURNS & CO. LTD.

Radio Department, Ground Floor, Customs Street East  
AUCKLAND :: Phone 32-685



Ekco 'Embassy' 5-valve BC 1964. Nearing the end of the line.

Left: Model FC, 9-valve bandspread 1941.



remained only about four different brand names, apart from Ultimate, still in use.

A little known fact, worth recording here, is that between 1938 and 1941 Ultimate radios were exported in sizeable quantities. Although Australia provided the main market some sets went as far a field as India. Unfortunately, full exploitation of the export market was prevented by wartime conditions and after the war this side of the business was not proceeded with.

After many years of using American cabinet styling a sudden switch was made in 1940 when a contemporary British Bush receiver became the model for Radio (1936) Ltd. In fact, so similar was the outward appearance of the Ultimate model EA to the Bush model 71 that the two could be taken for twins; even the Bush 'Teleflic' dial was transplanted.

After a notable wartime effort in the production of military radio equipment, which is a story in itself, Radio (1936) Ltd continued to hold the position of New Zealand's leading manufacturer. It was at this time that the production of a range of electrical appliances, first commenced in 1937, became firmly established.

One of the first post-war sets, released early in 1946, was the model RB. It was notable for being housed in a metal cabinet, finished in baked white enamel which was lined inside with Pinex softboard. The use of such a cabinet probably reflected the early post-war difficulties in obtaining supplies of veneered plywood for wooden cabinets and, as yet, bakelite cabinets were not in production. By 1947 however, the first bakelite cased sets appeared, the model RV being an early example.

The first post-war radiograms, such as the

model RY, appeared in 1948, but production was dependent entirely on the availability of record playing units from England which were then in extremely short supply.

As with other local manufacturers, Radio Ltd's post-war receiver production levels were greatly affected by the availability of certain imported components, a situation that remained for several years.

With the advent of television looming large on the horizon in the late 1950s, the need for technical assistance and production knowhow called for overseas connections and led to an association being formed with the old-established British firm of E. K. Cole Ltd. In 1955 the company was reorganised as Ultimate-Ecko (N.Z.) Co. Ltd and not long afterwards selected models of Ecko radios were put into production and marketed alongside existing locally designed Ultimates.

Although not among the first manufacturers of television receivers, Ultimate-Ecko produced one of the highest quality sets until 1965, when E. K. Cole Ltd was taken over by Pye Ltd. It was this takeover which eventually resulted in Ultimate-Ecko coming under the control of N.Z. Pye, and in 1967 the Quay Street premises were finally vacated after being the home of Ultimate radio for 31 years.

The closure of the factory represented the end of an era in New Zealand radio manufacturing and the start of the domination of this country's electronics industry by overseas interests. Although the Ultimate name was carried on for the next 15 years or so, it was by then only one of the brand names used by Pye.