Class 2

1

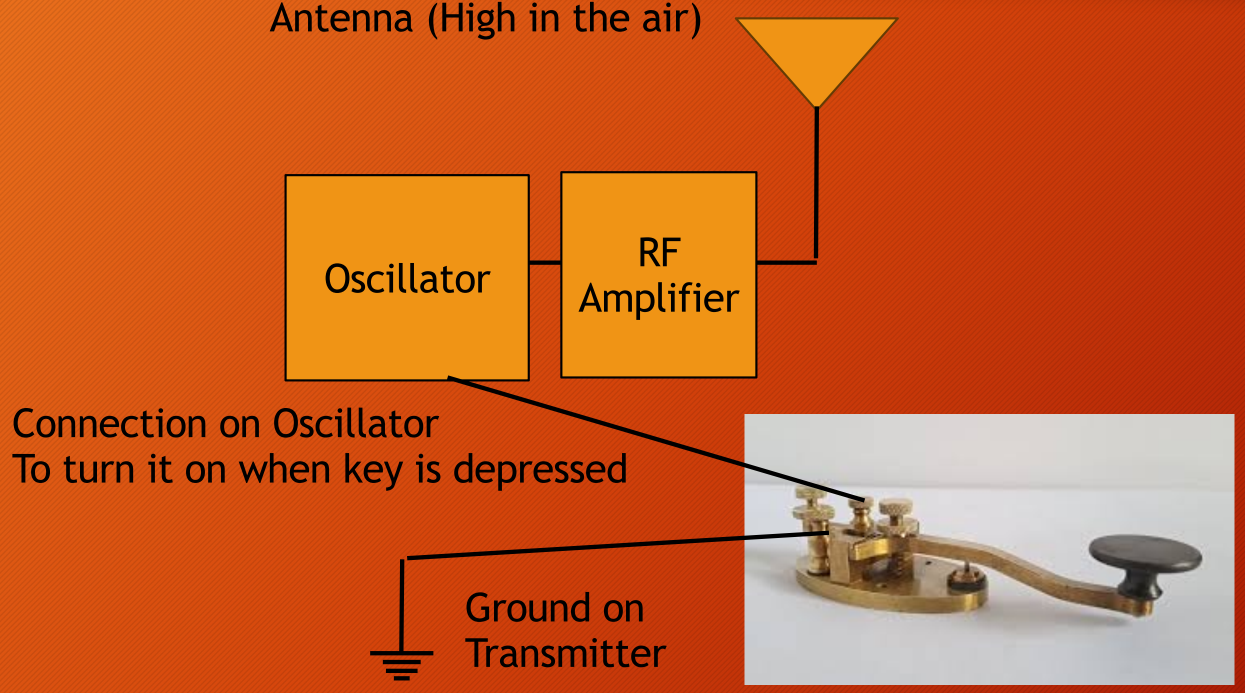
Radio Transmitter and Receivers

January 2026

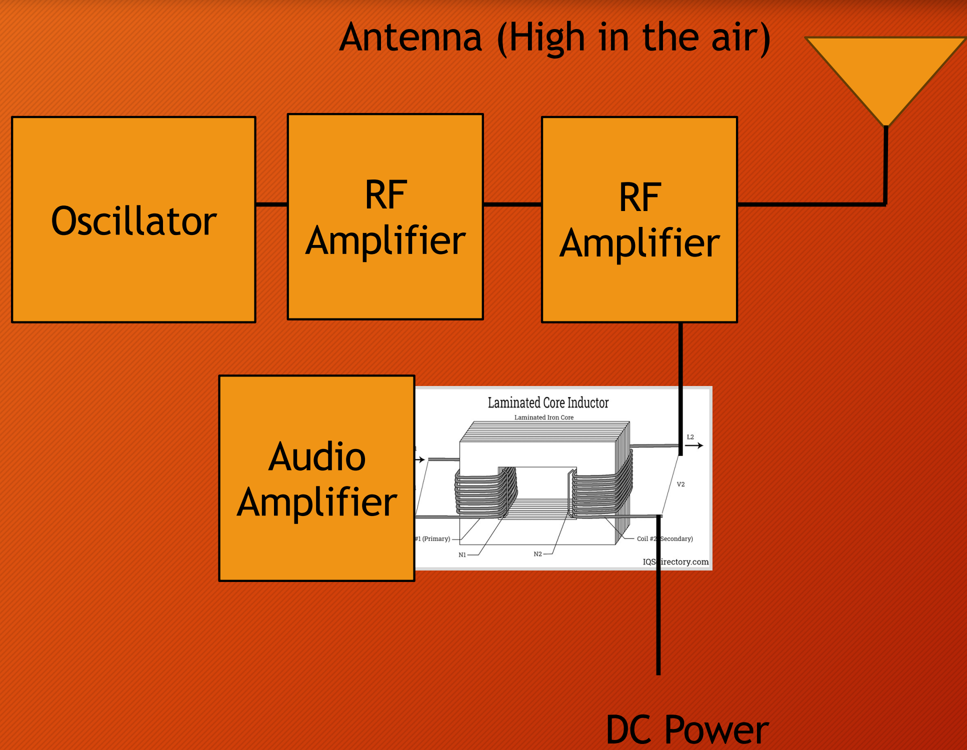
Radio Circuits

- From the 1910s to mid 1990s, all radio systems used the same design techniques
- First, everything was done with vacuum tubes
- Then, transistors
- Then, integrated Circuits
- Later, Large Scale Integrated Circuits (complete designs on one IC)
- Then, in the 1990s, computers became fast enough that designs started to be developed in software
- Now almost all radio systems are implemented in Software and called Software Designed Radios (SDRs)
- For this class we will discuss the designs of the 20th century
- We will not be discussing SDRs

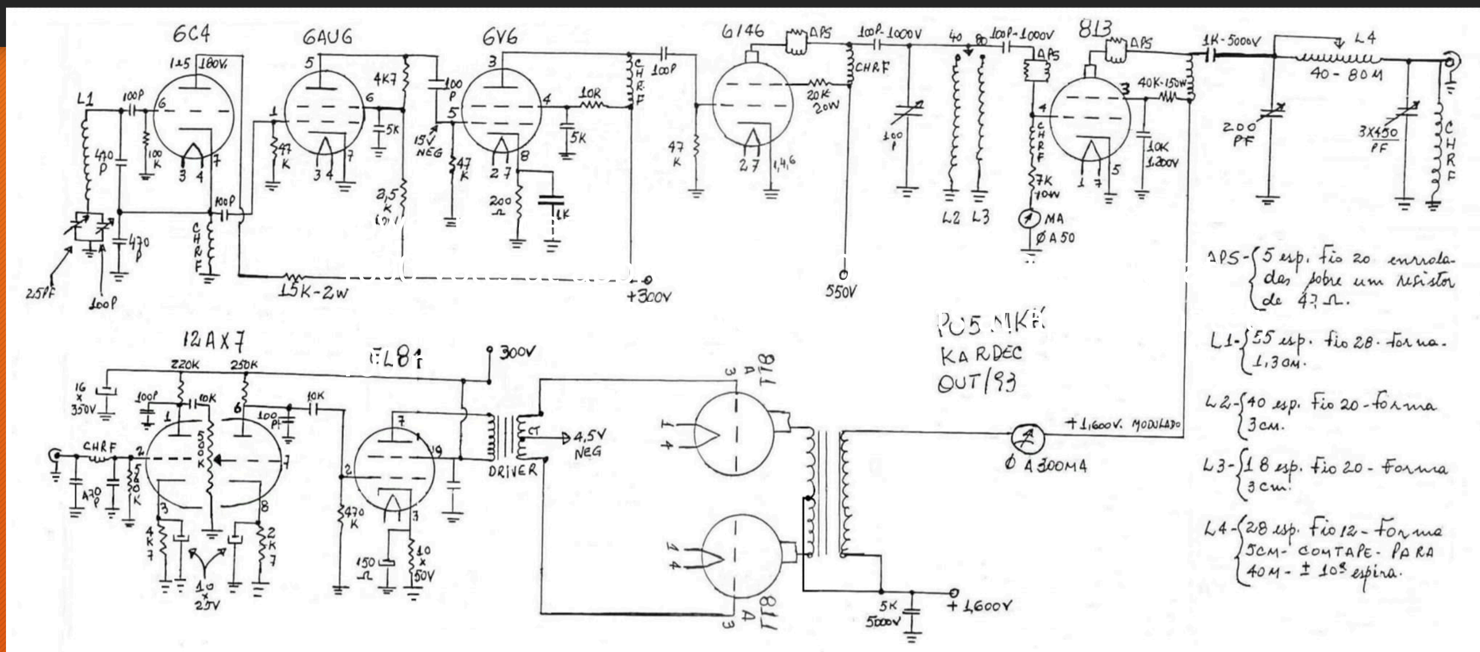
Continuous Wave (CW) Transmitter



Amplitude Modulation (AM) Transmitter



500 Watt Vacuum Tube AM Transmitter



Power needed:
1600 volts at approximately 0.5 Amps, 300 volts at approximately 100 mA and
550 volts at approximately 100 mA

Single Side Band Transmitter (SSB) - Filter

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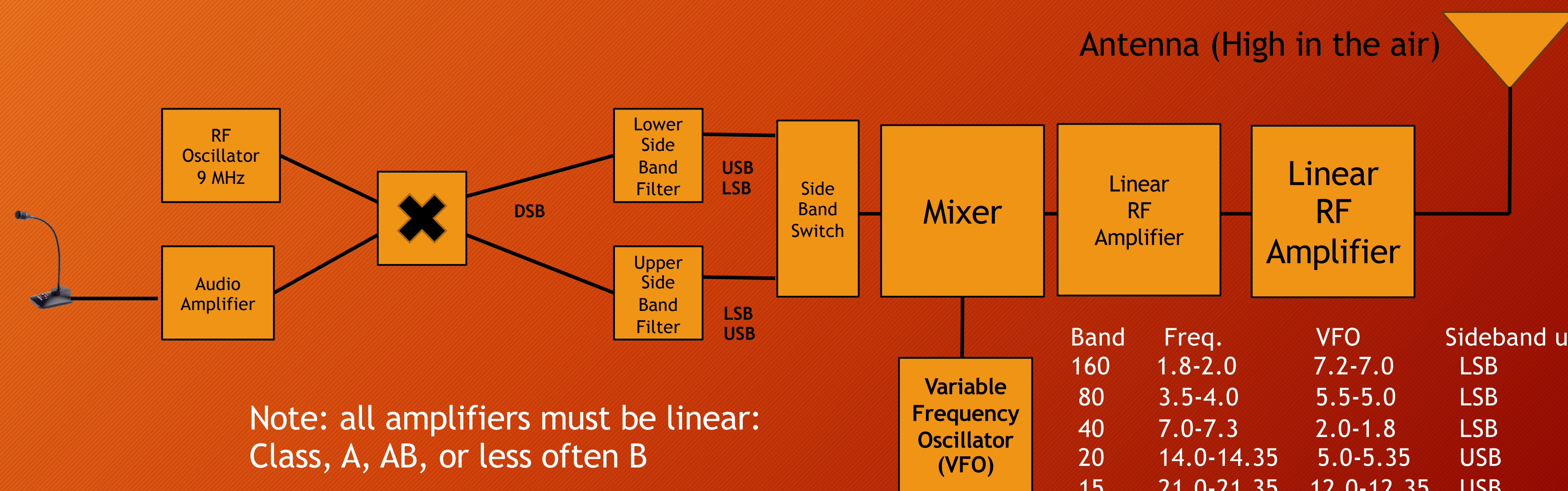

Band	Freq.	VFO	Sideband used
160	1.8-2.0	7.2-7.0	LSB
80	3.5-4.0	5.5-5.0	LSB
40	7.0-7.3	2.0-1.8	LSB
20	14.0-14.35	5.0-5.35	USB
15	21.0-21.35	12.0-12.35	USB
10	28.0-29.7	19-20.7	USB

Note: all amplifiers must be linear:
Class, A, AB, or less often B

Single Side Band Transmitter (SSB) - Phasing

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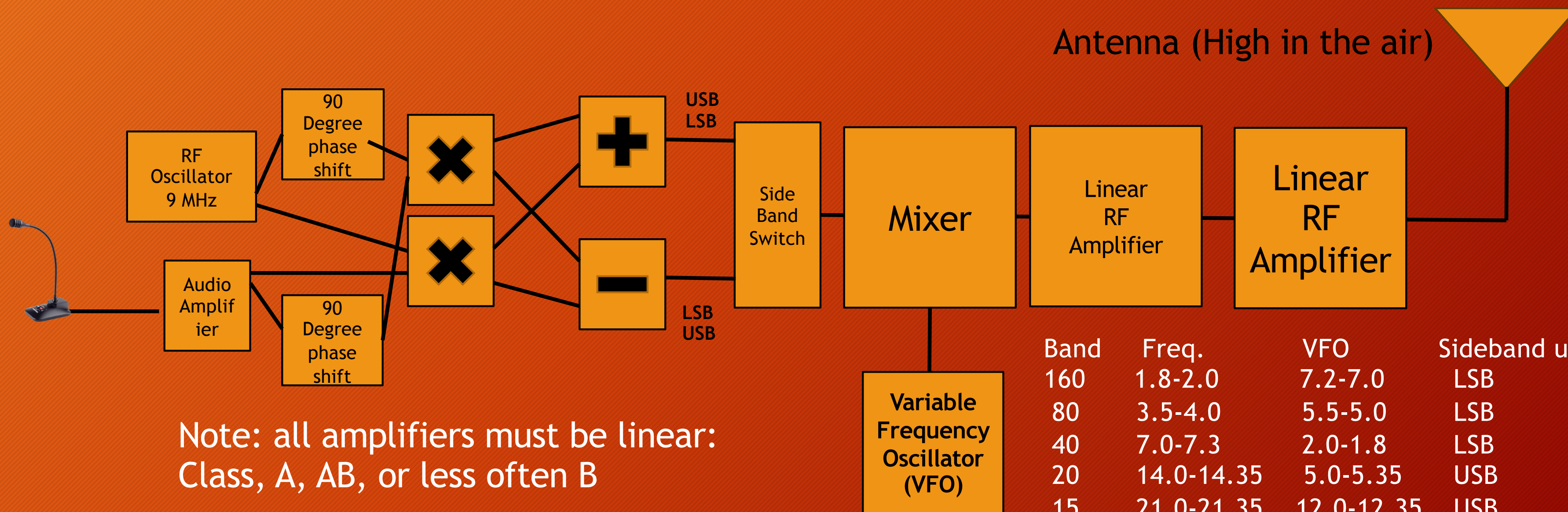

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160	1.8-2.0	7.2-7.0	LSB
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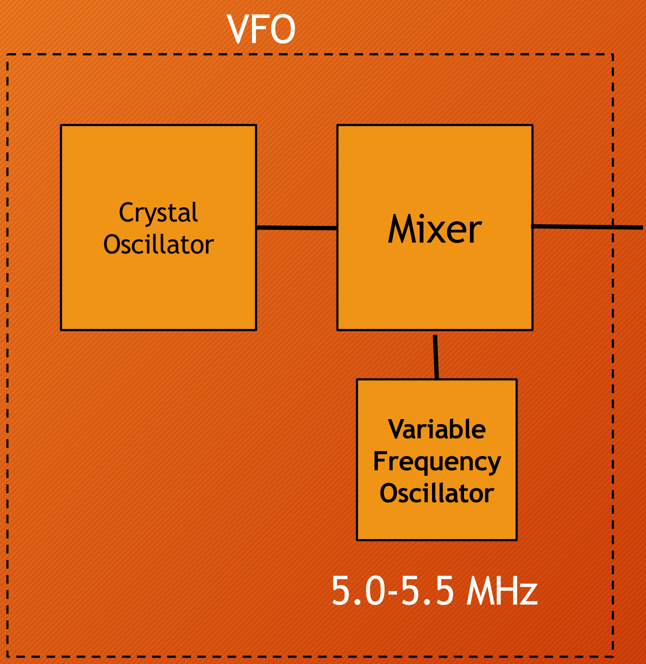
40	7.0-7.3	2.0-1.8	LSB
20	14.0-14.35	5.0-5.35	USB
15	21.0-21.35	12.0-12.35	USB
10	28.0-29.7	19-20.7	USB

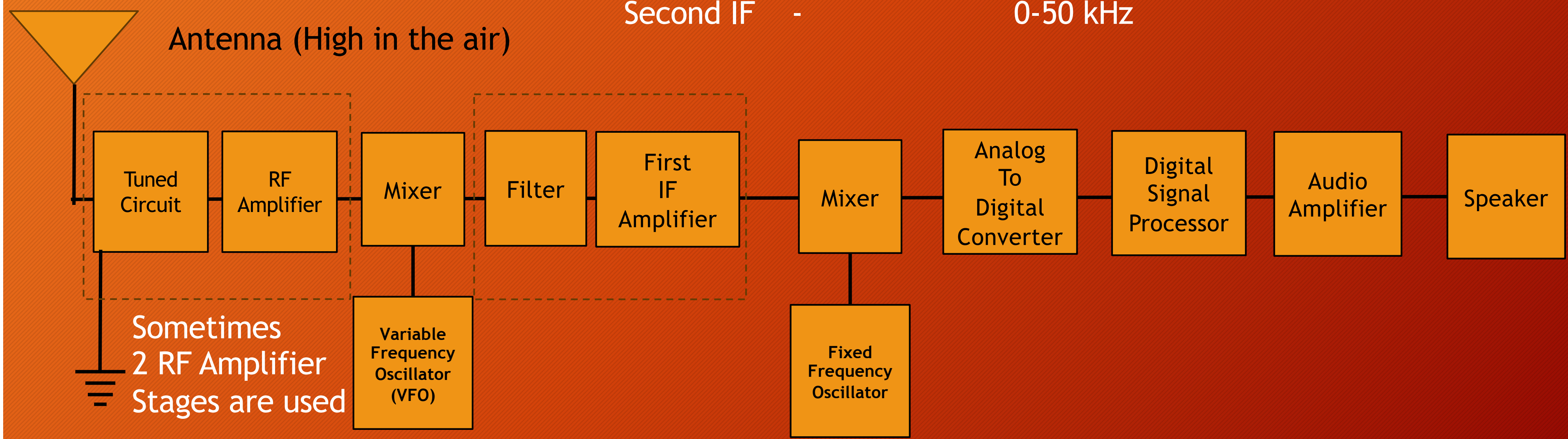
How the VFO is constructed



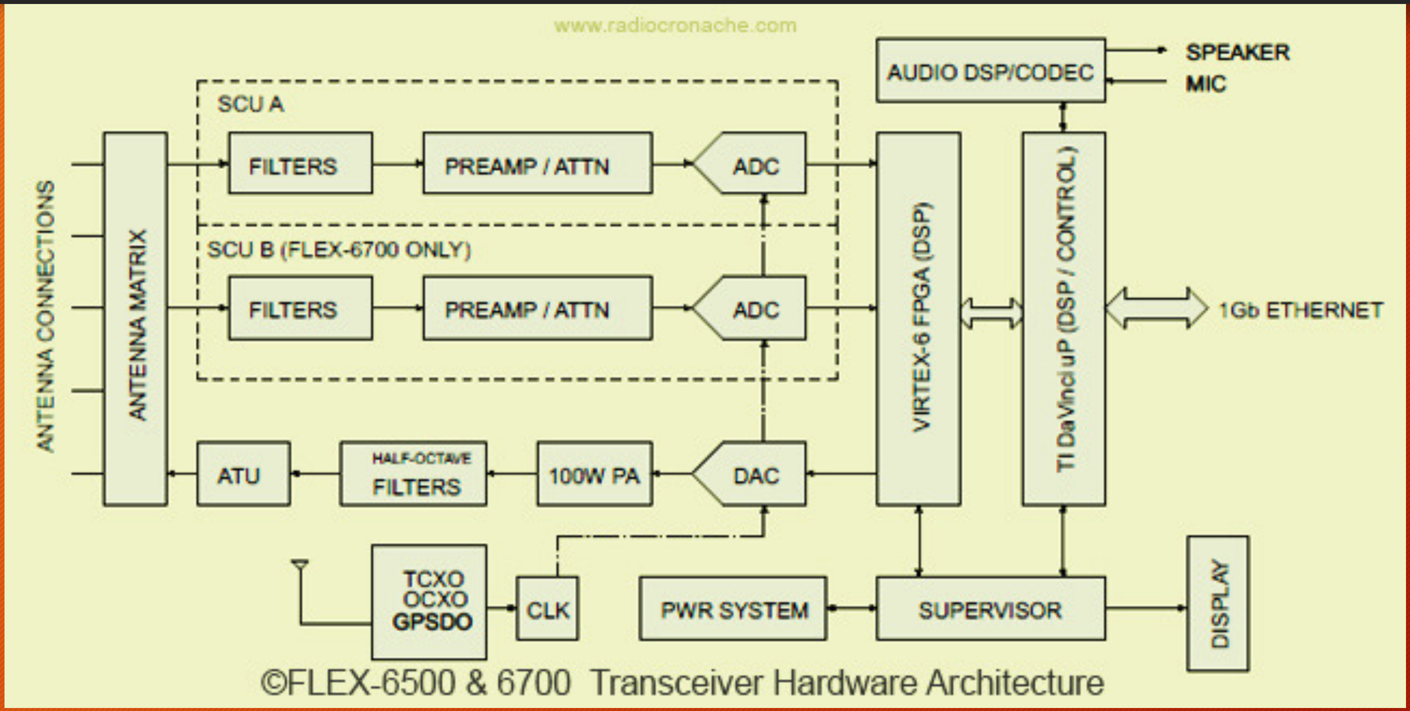
Band	Freq.	Internal Oscillator	Crystal	VFO	Sideband used
160	1.8-2.0	5.5-5.3	1.7	7.2-7.0	LSB
80	3.5-4.0	5.5-5.0	none	5.5-5.0	LSB
40	7.0-7.3	5.5-5.3	3.5	2.0-1.8	LSB
20	14.0-14.35	5.0-5.35	none	5.0-5.35	USB
15	21.0-21.35	5.0-5.35	7.0	12.0-12.35	USB
10	28.0-29.5	5.0-5.5	14.0	19.0-19.5	USB
10	28.5-29.0	5.0-5.5	14.5	19.5-20.0	USB
10	29.0-29.5	5.0-5.5	15.0	20.0-20.5	USB
10	29.5-29.7	5.0-5.2	15.5	20.5-20.7	USB

Modern Radio Block Diagram

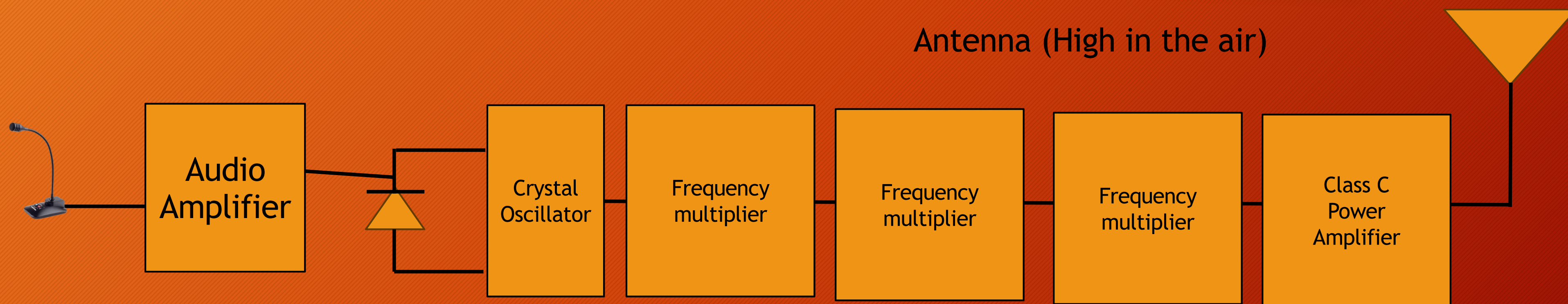
Typical IF Amplifier Frequencies
First IF - 45, 60 MHz
Second IF - 0-50 kHz



Flex Radio 6600 Block Diagram



Frequency Modulation (FM) transmitter
Pre 1980s



For 2 meters:	8.169166 MHz	x3 24.5075 MHz	x3 73.5225 MHz	x2 147.045 MHz
For 6 meters:	8.6033 MHz	x3 25.81 MHz	x3 not used	x2 51.62 MHz

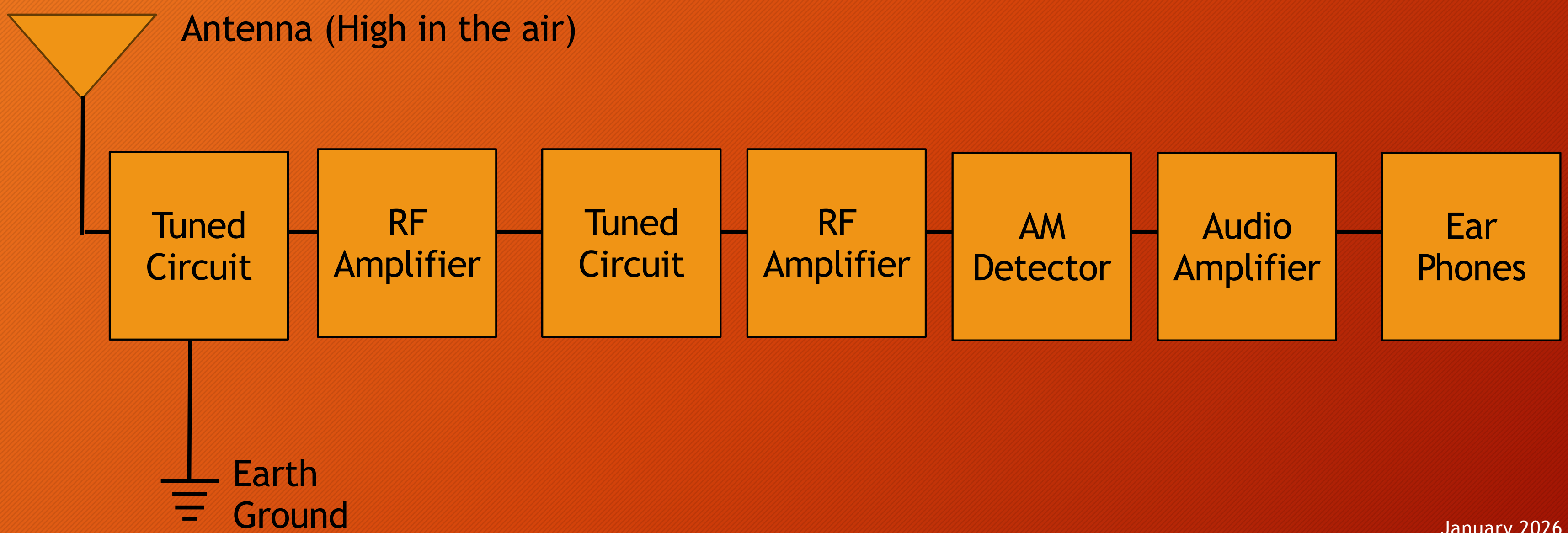
Modern FM Transmitters

- Designs since the mid 1980s have eliminated the use of frequency specific crystals and
- Channel Crystals replaced by frequency synthesizers that use a computer to generate all need frequencies

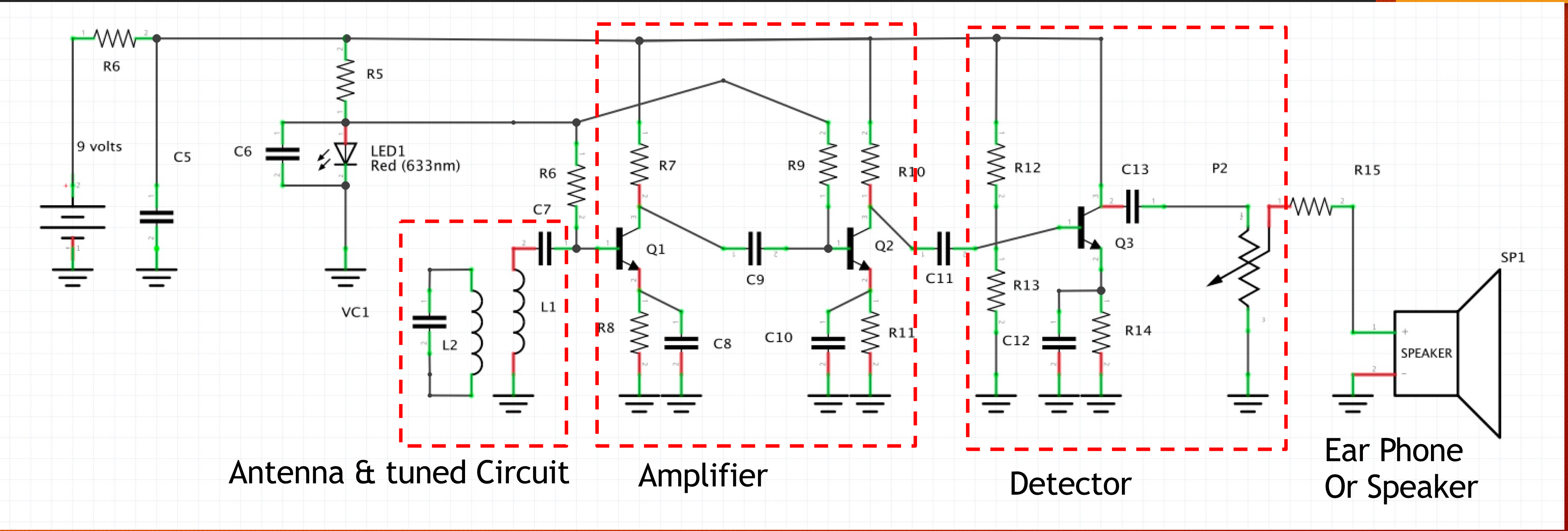
Tuned Radio Frequency (TRF) Receiver

- In a TRF receiver, there are multiple stages of amplification at the radio frequency of the transmitter
- The more stages of amplification, the more sensitive the receiver
- Unfortunately, multiple stages often have stray inductance and capacitance the results in the output of the receiver being fed back into the input resulting in oscillations

TRF Block Diagram



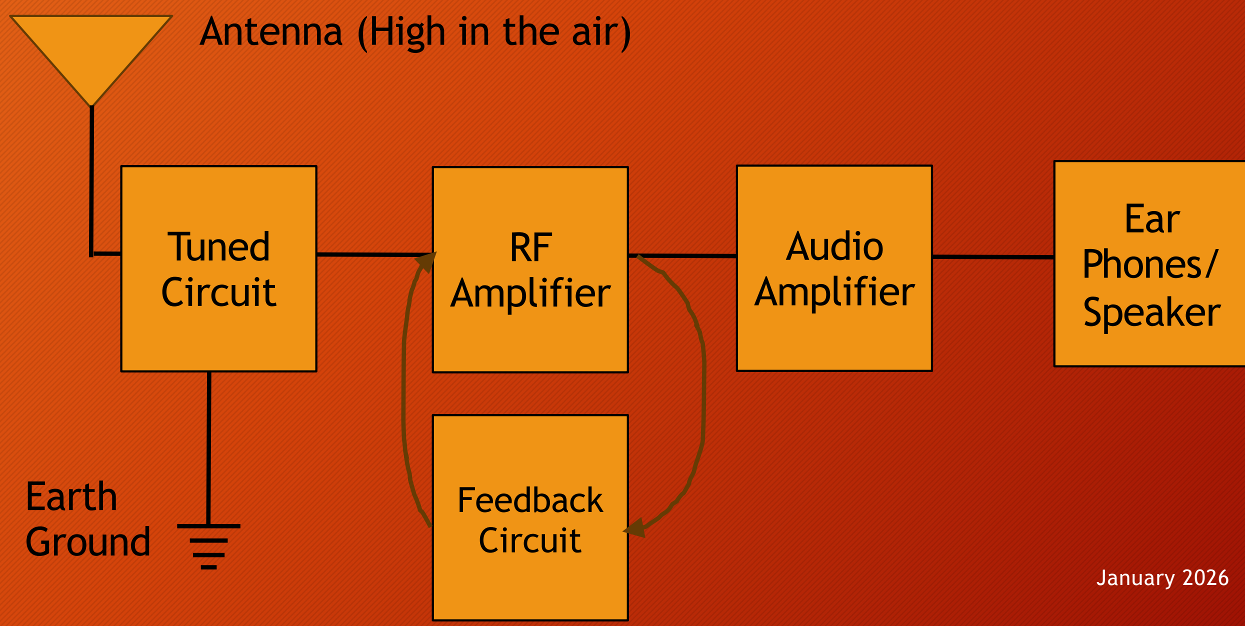
Example: Simple TRF Receiver



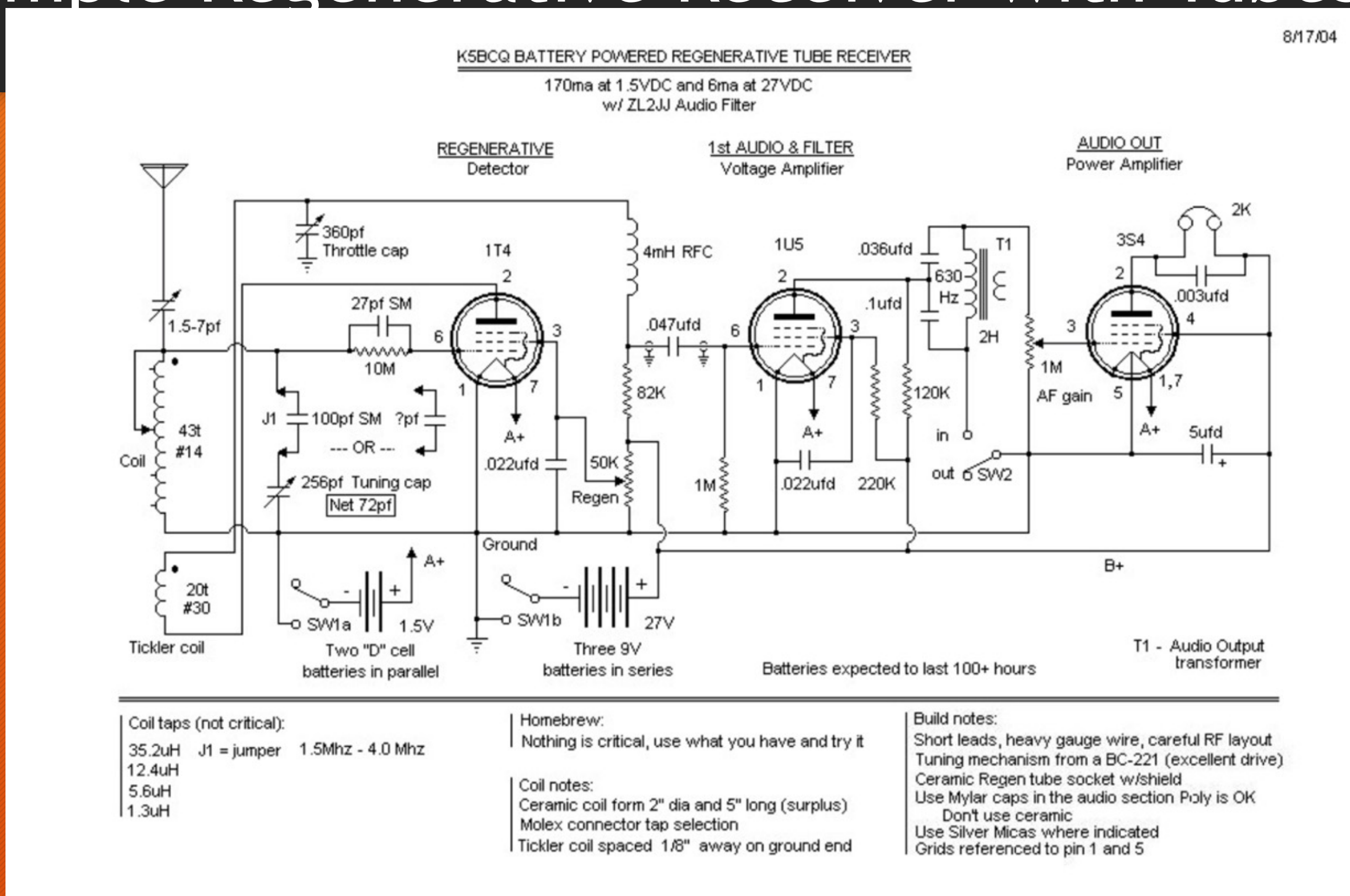
Regenerative Receiver

- The original patent for the regenerative receiver was filed by Edwin Armstrong in 1914
- He demonstrated it at the Marconi site (across the road from CDL)
- It uses an RF amplifier that feeds some of the output back into the input
- The amount of feedback is adjusted by a regeneration control and is adjust to make the amplifier gain be just before it starts oscillating
- A regenerative receiver can be made very sensitive to receiver very weak signals
- The regeneration stage typically also detects the AM signal
- Putting it into oscillation can make it receiver CW signals

Block Diagram of Regenerative Receiver

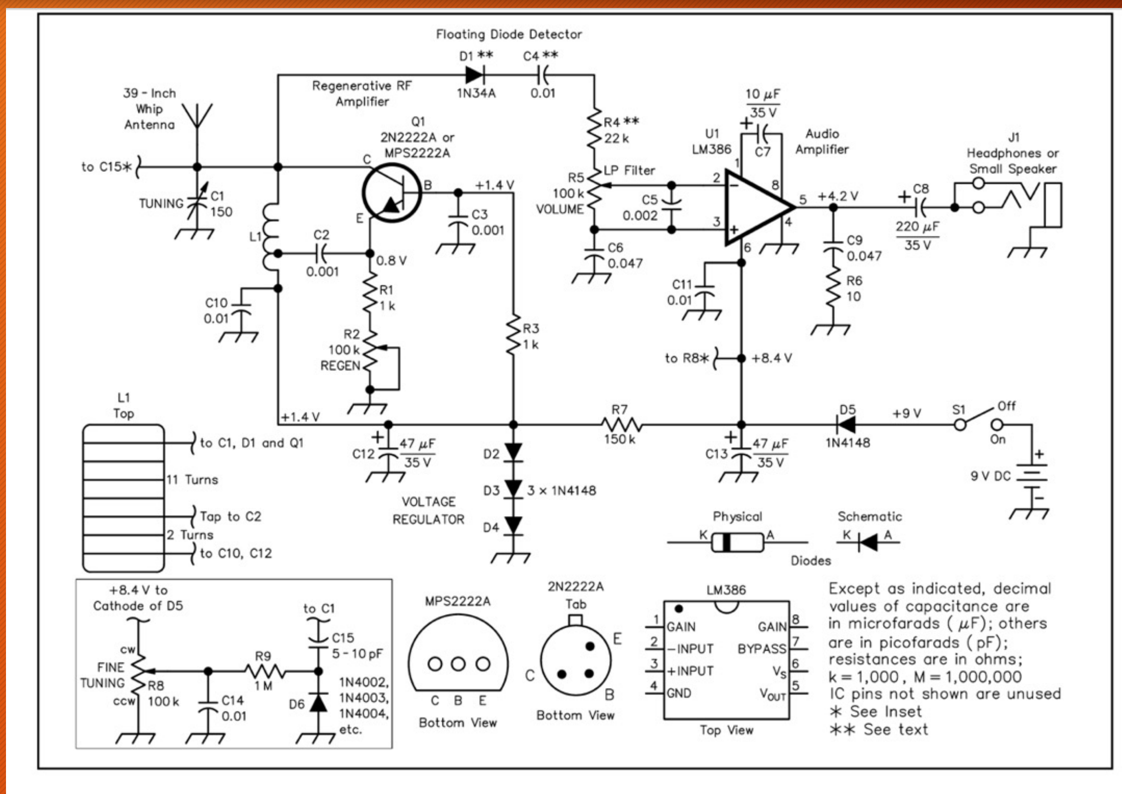


Example Regenerative Receiver with Tubes



https://www.arrl.org/files/file/Technology/tis/info/pdf/0009061.pdf

Example Regenerative Receiver with Transistors and Integrated circuits



Simple Regen Receiver From QST

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Super-Regenerative Receiver

- In a Super Regenerative Receiver, the circuit is made to in and out of oscillation at a rate around 50,000-100,000 times per second
- Thus no regeneration control is needed
- The receiver is very sensitive

Example Super-Regenerative Receiver

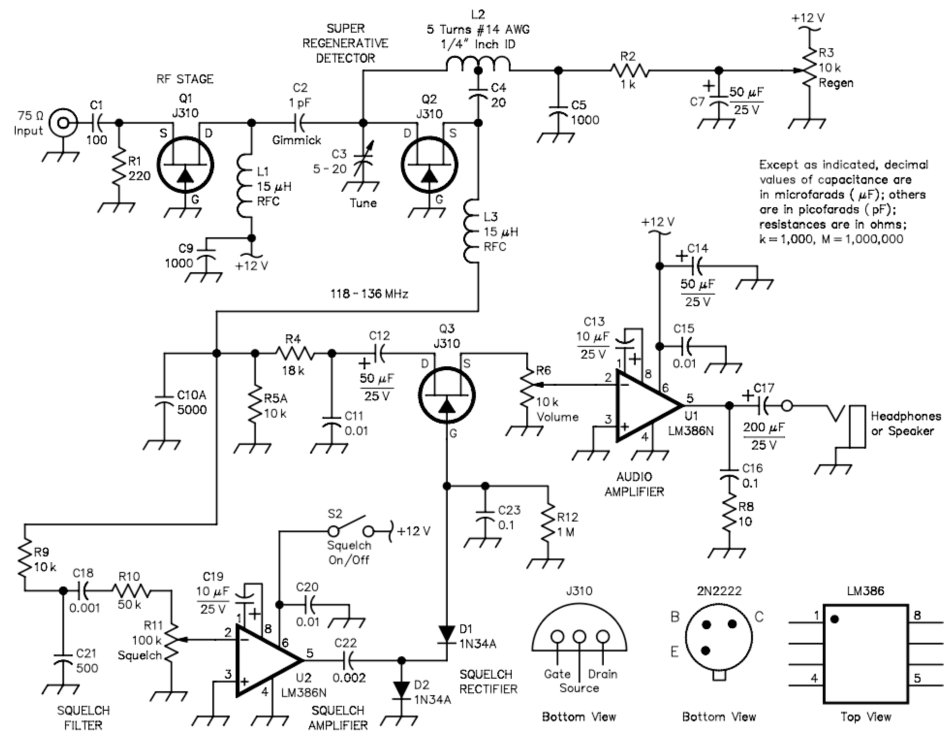


Fig 12—A super-regen VHF aircraft-band (118-136 MHz) receiver with squelch.

QEX Sept/Oct 2000 27

Can be found on arrl.org
new_super_regen_for_vhf_uhf_2000_09qex018.pdf

Disadvantages of Regenerative Receiver

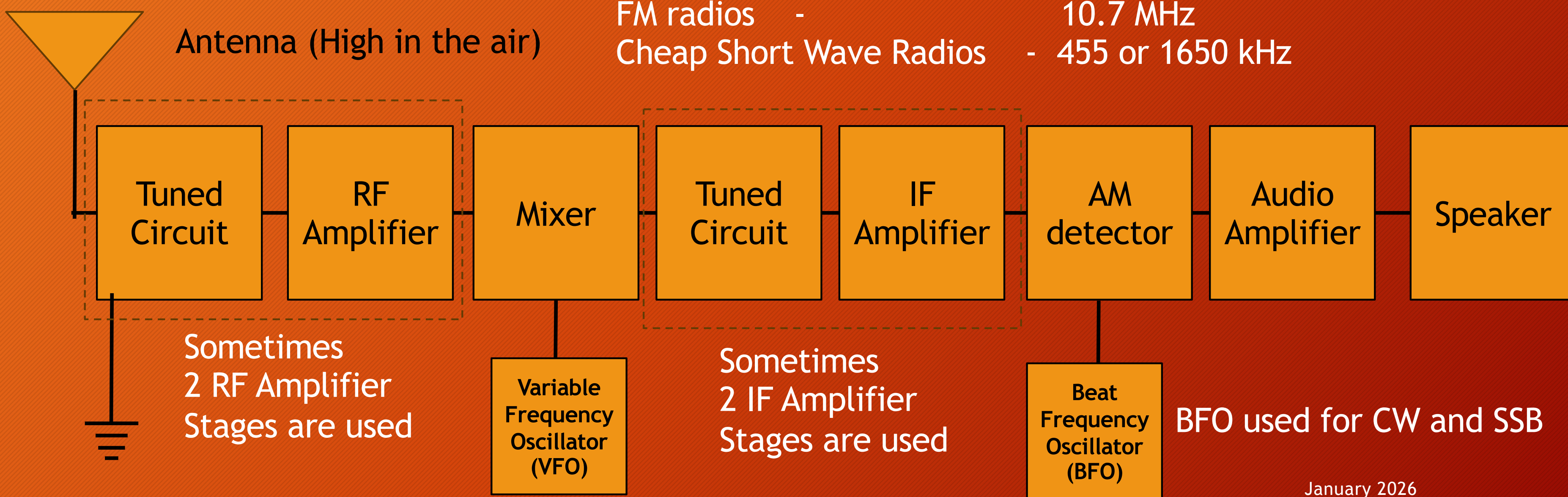
- It takes skill to adjust the receiver
- The control needs to be adjusted often from:
  - The antenna swaying in the wind
  - Changes in frequency of the receiver
- When a super regenerative or regenerative receiver goes into oscillation it radiates a signal like a transmitter
  - This can interfere with other receivers nearby
  - The Nazi's used this to direction find underground stations when the operators mis-adjusted their receivers and left them on

Superheterodyne Receiver

- Lucien Lévy: Patented the fundamental circuit scheme for the superheterodyne receiver in 1917
- Edwin H. Armstrong: Developed a more practical version of the superheterodyne method and was granted U.S. patent 1,342,885 in 1920 for his work
- In a Superheterodyne receiver, the received frequency is changed to a (typically) lower frequency where
  - Gain and
  - Selectivity is easier to design into the circuits

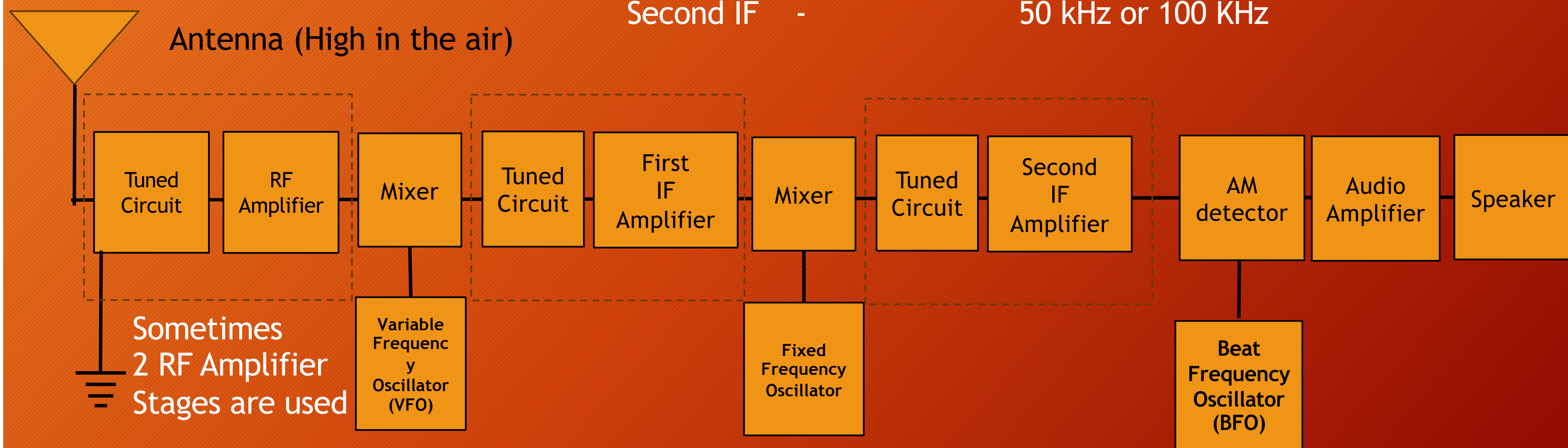
Block Diagram of Superheterodyne Receiver

Typical IF Amplifier Frequencies
AM radios - 455 kHz
FM radios - 10.7 MHz
Cheap Short Wave Radios - 455 or 1650 kHz



Block Diagram of Double Conversion Superheterodyne Receiver

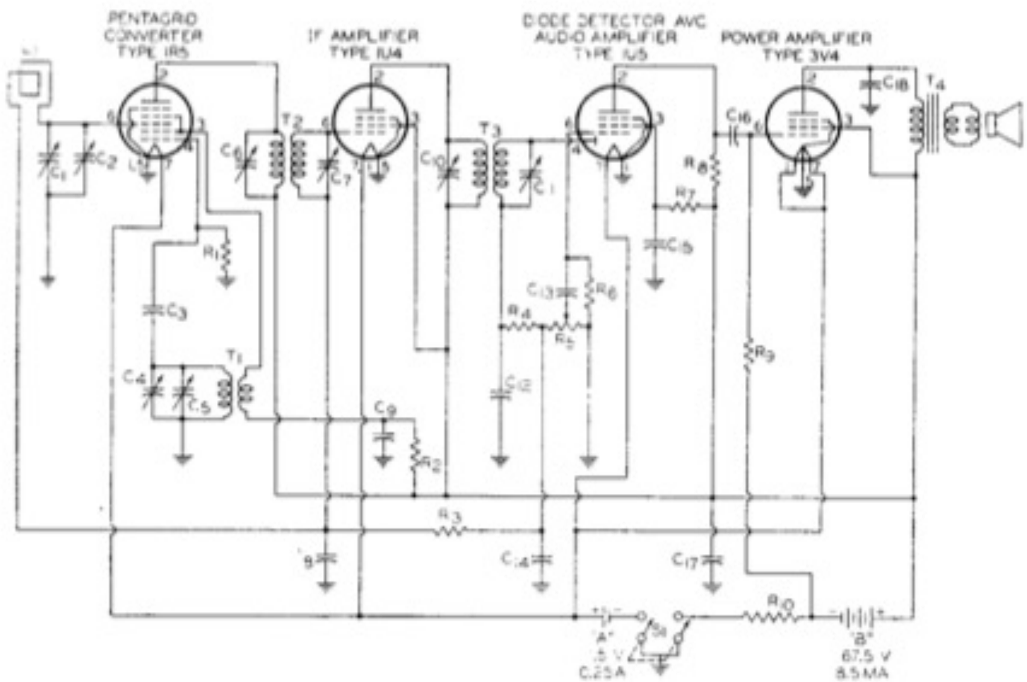
Typical IF Amplifier Frequencies
First IF - 455 kHz
Second IF - 50 kHz or 100 KHz



BFO used for CW and SSB

Superhet Receiver from RCA Tube Manual

PORTABLE BATTERY-OPERATED SUPERHETERODYNE RECEIVER



C_1 C_4 = Ganged tuning capacitors: C_1, 10-274 µµf; C_4, 7.5-122.5 µµf
C_2 C_5 = Trimmer capacitors, 2-15 µµf
C_3 = 56 µµf, ceramic
C_6 C_7 C_{10} C_{11} = Trimmer capacitors for if transformers
C_8 = 0.05 µf, paper, 50 v.
C_9 C_{13} = 0.02 µf, paper, 100 v.
C_{12} = 82 µµf, ceramic
C_{15} C_{16} = 0.002 µf, paper, 150 v.
C_{14} = 33 µµf, ceramic
C_{17} = 10 µf, electrolytic, 100 v.
C_{18} = 0.0022 µf, paper, 600 v.
L_1 = Loop antenna, 540-1600 Kc
R_1 = 100000 ohms, 0.25 watt
R_2 = 15000 ohms, 0.25 watt
R_3 = 3.3 megohms, 0.25 watt
R_4 = 68000 ohms, 0.25 watt
R_5 = Volume control, potentiometer, 2 megohms
R_6 = 10 megohms, 0.25 watt
R_7 = 4.7 megohms, 0.25 watt
R_8 R_9 = 1 megohm, 0.25 watt
R_{10} = 390 ohms, 0.25 watt
S_1 = Switch, double-pole, single-throw
T_1 = Oscillator coil for use with tuning capacitor of 7.5-122.5 µµf, and 455 Kc if transformer
T_2 T_3 = Intermediate-frequency transformers, 455 Kc
T_4 = Output transformer for matching impedance of voice coil to 10000-ohm tube load

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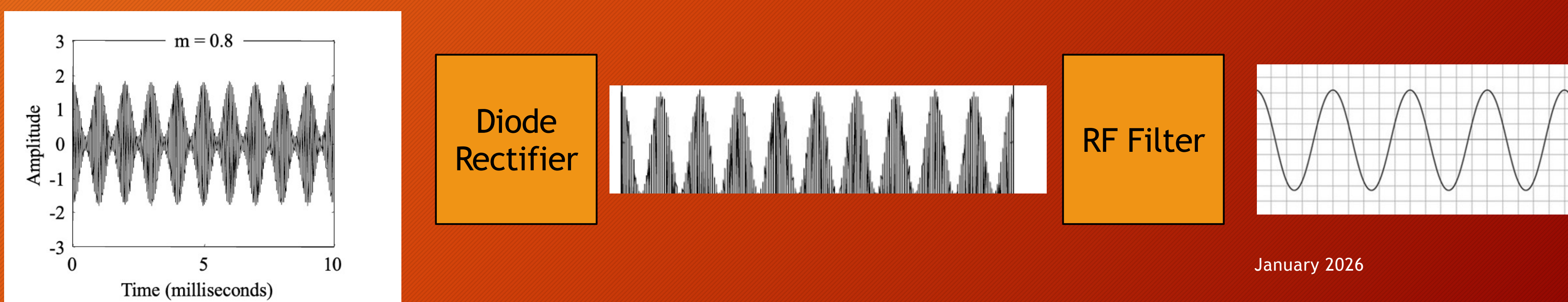
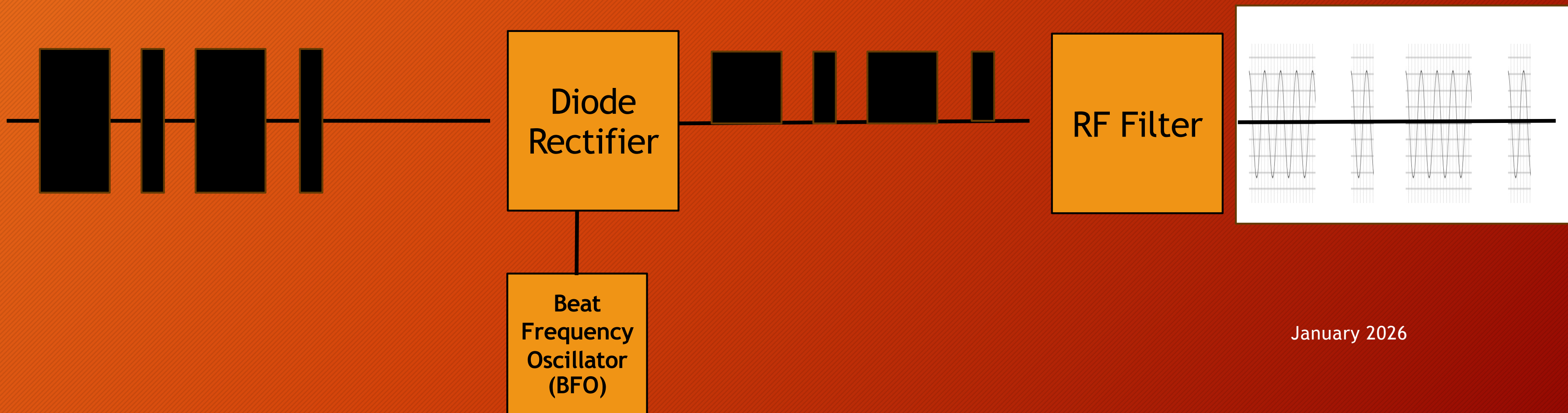
Demodulation of AM

- The simplest way to detect AM is to rectify the received signal
- Then filter out the RF leaving just the audio signal



Demodulation of CW

- The simplest way to demodulate CD is to use an AM detector and add an RF or IF signal 400 Hz to 1.5 Hz from the received signal
- The detector mixes the two signals together and generates a tone when the CW signal is present

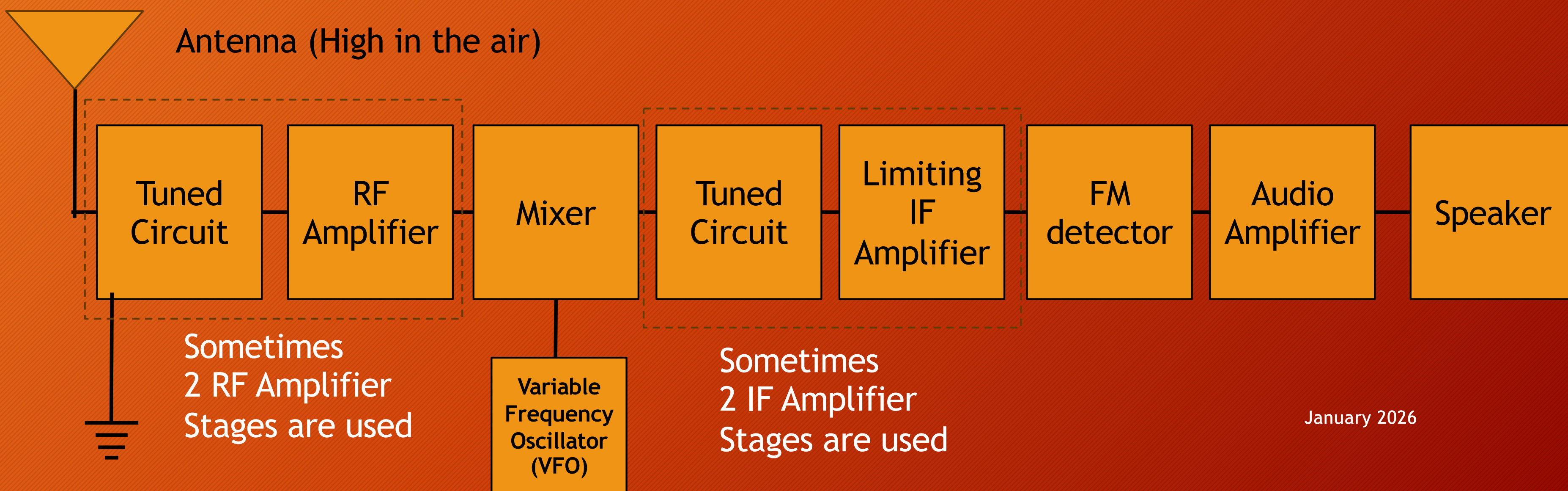


Demodulation of Single Side Band (SSB)

- Demodulation of SSB is similar to that of CW
- But the BFO signal needs to be within less than 100 Hz of the missing carrier signal
- Early SSB receivers tended to drift off frequency and the received signal had distortion that made is sound like “Donald Duck”
- This limited adoption of SSB in the 50s and 60s
- Modern SSB receivers use a mixer instead of an AM detector
- They also can be tuned and stay tuned to within a few Hz of the mixing carrier
- The speech sounds natural

Demodulation of FM and PM

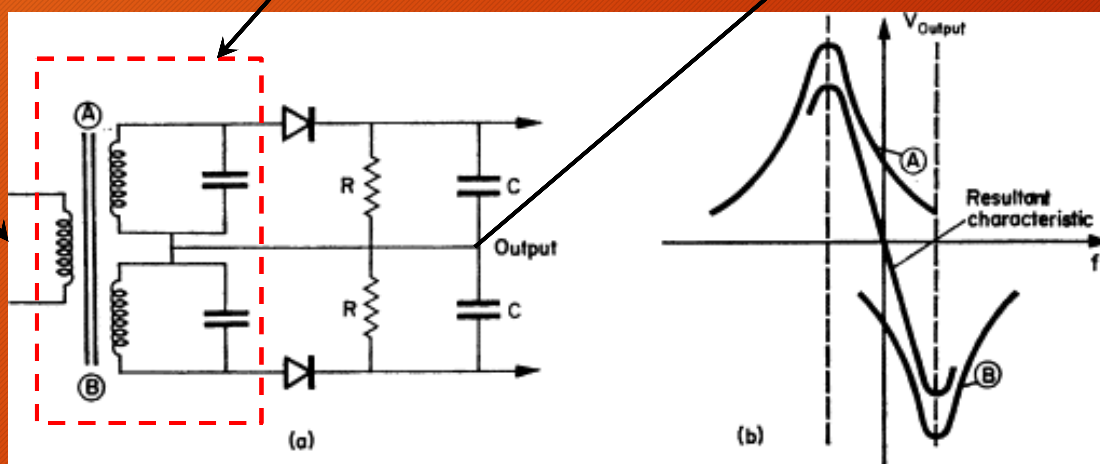
- Demodulation of FM in a receiver needs to additional circuits compared to an AM receiver
- An IF amplifier that limits the maximum signal and thus clips it to a constant level
- An FM detector that uses a special coil called a discriminator coil and two diodes



Discriminator Operation

The output changes with the changes in frequency

Specially designed coil



Adjustment of the coil can be difficult at times to get proper distortion free operation

References

- Recommended Textbooks
- ARRL: *The ARRL Handbook for Radio Communications*
- Make: *Radio*

- *Old but still good reference:*
- Rappaport, *Wireless Communications: Principles and Practice*
- Goldsmith, *Wireless Communications*
- Molisch, *Wireless Communications*
- Garg and Wilkes, *Wireless and Personal Communications Systems*

- Useful Online Resources
- FCC Spectrum Allocation Charts
- 3GPP Specifications (for LTE/5G)
- IEEE 802.11 Standards overview
- ITU Radio Regulations
- Simulation Tools
- MATLAB/Simulink Wireless Toolbox
- Python libraries: scipy, matplotlib, commpy
- Free online spectrum analyzers & demos