

# Lamps from Tubes

*For fun and profit — and gifts!*

*I have always had a spot in my heart for tubes. You know that old saying, “Real radios glow in the dark.” I know that transistors are here to stay, but I do derive some pleasure from looking at a large tube, seeing the big graphite plates, and looking down from the top at the grid wires. Try doing that with a transistor.*

**M**y shack already had many of my favorite tubes mounted on nice pine wood bases. These were conversation pieces to say the least, especially with the younger set (which at my age seems to include everybody).

Walking through the electrical department at our local Home Depot, I spotted a “Make-A-Lamp Kit for Bottles,” and it dawned on me that I might have a better way of showing off those tubes sitting in my shack. I was going to make a lamp.

## Getting started

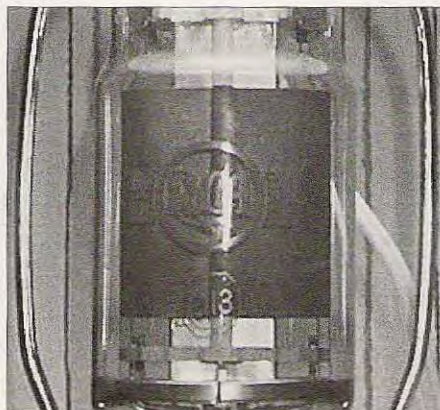
A Philadelphia company named Angelo distributed the kit that I started with. I wasn't sure how I was going to do this, but at least I had a starting point. The kit came with the electrical fixture and line cord, as well as

different-size rubber plugs that were supposed to hold the assembly in the bottle. Of course, I wasn't going to use it this way, so I had to adapt things a bit.

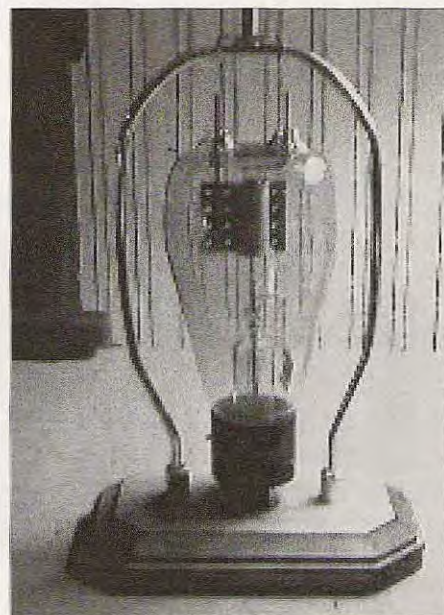
The first lamp that I built used my 813 tube. I was already displaying this tube in the shack. If you look at **Photo B**, you will see that the tube has a



**Photo A.** My first lamp — and my favorite — is made from an 813 tube.



**Photo B.** A beautiful RCA logo on my 813 tube.



**Photo C.** The tube mounted on the base inside the harp.



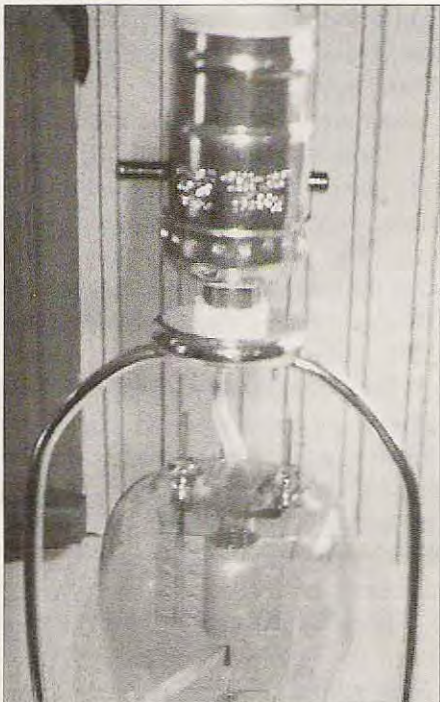


*Photo D. Solder the nut with the threaded pipe to the top of the harp.*

beautiful RCA logo. The base of the tube has a unique serial number, and the date of manufacture was April 1941. With its heavy-duty construction and graphite plates, it was quite a conversation piece.

### Constructing the lamp

When I bought the lamp kit, I also purchased the metal frame that outlines the tube. In lamp circles, this frame is known as a harp. What I visualized was the tube inside the harp, and



*Photo E. The light fixture mounted to the harp.*

somehow the light socket and shade above it. I drilled another two holes in the base about 1 inch from either side of the tube and pushed the ends of the harp into the wood. Looking at **Photo C**, you can see how the harp fits nicely around the tube. Each step brought me a little closer to my lamp!

I wasn't exactly sure of the best way to mount the light socket. In the light kit was a brass 1/8 IP thread locknut and a small piece of threaded pipe. I took a heavy-duty soldering iron and soldered the locknut to the top of the harp as shown in **Photo D**. The pipe connected the light fixture to the top of the harp. Next, I slipped one of the rubber plugs that came with the kit over the pipe to hide the exposed threads. Also included in the kit was a nice-looking gold piece with a hole in the center that was referred to as a check ring. It's a little larger than a quarter, and it fits nicely over the soldered nut on the top. I used the check ring to hide the soldering job on the nut.

You could probably make the lamp by going into any good lamp department and just buying what you need. One of the things the lamp kit gives you is a light fixture with a small hole on the bottom for the line cord to pass through. If you just buy a regular light



*Photo F. The completed lamp.*



*Photo G. Lamp made from a 3-500Z.*

fixture, the wire passes out the bottom through the threaded insert, and in the case of a regular lamp it finally goes out the bottom of the base. If you don't buy the kit, you will have to drill a small hole and add a small rubber grommet. I found a large selection of

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*Photo H. Lamp made from an 814 tube.*





Photo I. The author's shack is well lit in more ways than one.



Photo J. WA2OKZ.

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Angelo kits and accessories at Home Depot and Ace Hardware.

Harps come in different sizes of lengths and widths — get the dimensions of the tube that you want to use before you go to buy the parts. I also bought extra brass locknuts because they were larger than the one that came with the kit and I thought it would be easier to solder it to the top of the harp.

To complete the lamp, a lampshade is needed. The type of shade you need is the one that clips over the light bulb. I bought mine at a local Target store for about seven dollars.

My shack has three lamps. The lamp in **Photo G** was made from a 3-500Z and was the most interesting. I had to cut the harp where it bends. The other lamp, in **Photo H**, was made from an 814 tube that also gives a neat appearance.

### Some helpful hints

When you are ready to mount your tube on a wooden base, visit your local craft shop. I got nice clean pine bases for anywhere from 50 cents to \$1.50.

When I was ready to drill the holes for the tube pins, I got a piece of carbon paper from one of the secretaries. I placed the tube on top of the carbon paper and gently pushed down, leaving nice marks where the pins were to go. I used an old piece of pine to drill out first so that I could get the diameter of the holes correct on the final piece.

Remember that you do not have to build your lamp exactly as I did. Take a chance if you see something a little different. You can't really lose anything. The parts are relatively cheap, and as long as you don't drop the tube, you can play all you want until you get the lamp to look the way you want.

### Hardware

As I said earlier, I found Angelo Brothers by accident. The company is located at 12401 McNulty Road, Philadelphia PA 19154. When I considered writing this article, I wanted to make sure that the parts would be available. I sent E-mail and inquired if they sold direct. I was told that if I wanted a local distributor, I should call (800) 999-2226. Their Web site is at [www.angelobrothers.com].

The kit that I purchased was their part number 70015, "Make-A-Lamp Kit for Bottles." The kit contains the on-off light socket with a line cord, a set of bottle adapters, which plug into the mouth of the bottle, a steel nipple, a locknut, and a check ring.

Part number 70220 is an 8-inch two-piece detachable lamp harp. I added a package of four brass locknuts, 1/8 IP thread, Angelo part number 70620, and an 8-piece assorted 1/8 IP threaded steel nipple, number 70150.

The bottle kit, the harp, a block of wood, a light bulb, the lampshade, and your favorite tube is all that you will need.

### What did it cost?

These lamps are all unique. If you have a collection of old tubes, you can make some nice gifts. The lamp kit is less than \$6, and the price of a harp about \$2.

Add some extra nuts and some extra threaded pipe and you're in the \$12 range. If you have to buy the base, we're talking of another \$1.50, tops. The most expensive single item was the lampshade at \$7. You should be able to keep the final cost under \$20.

I know that there are many talented people out there who will figure out a better way to make tube lamps, or maybe even a better way to display these relics of the past. When you finish your lamp, please E-mail me a picture.

I hope you have as much fun as I have had in building these lamps. They go together quickly. So even if you don't need more than one, you can give the rest away as gifts. 73

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