# 27 The Colt 80 m receiver – Part 4

## Introduction

In Parts 1 to 3 of this series, the design of an 80 metre direct-conversion receiver has been described. In this final part, we are going to change the circuit to operate as a superheterodyne receiver, or *superhet*. Most radio receivers are superhets, and they change the incoming signal to another frequency, known as the *intermediate frequency*, or IF, before producing an audio signal. The use of a superhet in a good receiver is mandated by the requirements for good *sensitivity* and *selectivity*.

## Sensitivity and selectivity

**Figure 1** shows the block diagram of the receiver. If you look closely, you will see that it is two similar circuits, one after the other. The incoming

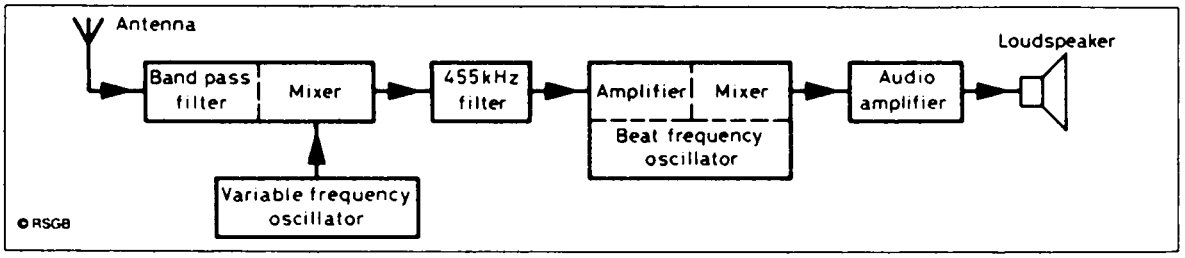



**Figure 1** This is how the different stages of the Colt go together to make a superhet receiver

signal is filtered and fed to a mixer where it is combined (mixed) with the signal from the variable-frequency oscillator (VFO). This oscillator operates at a frequency which is 455 kHz higher than the incoming signal from the aerial, and the mixer output is therefore at a frequency of 455 kHz. If you are not sure about this, please refer to the section 'The direct conversion process' in Part 3 of this project. This new frequency is called the *intermediate frequency*, or IF. This frequency doesn't change; the tuning is accomplished by the VFO, and the mixer output is *always* at 455 kHz. The extraction of the audio signal from the IF signal is identical with the direct conversion process which is used in your existing receiver.

This may seem a long-winded way of doing things, but it has its advantages. A receiver must have a good *sensitivity*, or gain, so that it can receive very weak signals. In very general terms, it is easier to handle low-frequency signals than it is to handle high-frequency signals. We are changing our signal frequency from around 3.6 MHz down to 0.455 MHz (455 kHz), which is much lower and can be filtered and amplified relatively easily. A second advantage is that it is easier to provide gain at a fixed frequency than at a variable frequency. Remember that the IF is fixed, and providing gain is, again, relatively simple.

Our receiver also needs good *selectivity*, the ability to separate (or select) one station from another very close to it in frequency. This requirement is significantly simplified by the fact that the IF is fixed, and a good filter in the IF circuits can do wonders for the rejection of adjacent-frequency stations! Several stages of IF amplification and filtering are possible in more adventurous designs.

The filtered signal at 455 kHz passes to another mixer which has an associated oscillator, usually called a *beat frequency oscillator* (BFO). When receiving CW (Morse) signals, the BFO is usually tuned about 1 kHz above or below the IF (i.e. at 454 or 456 kHz) to produce a 1 kHz beat note as the audio signal. This signal is then amplified and fed to a loudspeaker or headphones.

## The circuit

**Figure 2** shows the circuit of the IF section shown in the photograph on p. 94; this section is added to the existing circuit to make it a superhet. The existing mixer board (described in Part 3) is used as the first mixer. Between it and the audio amplifier is connected the new IF board.

The signal output from the first mixer (at 455 kHz IF) is fed into a *crystal filter*, the most expensive part in the whole receiver. It provides the selectivity which makes the Colt such a good receiver. Another NE602 mixer/oscillator chip follows the filter. The oscillator section is controlled by the tuned circuit in T1, the frequency of which can be altered by rotating the core inside the coil. Once set, it remains fixed.

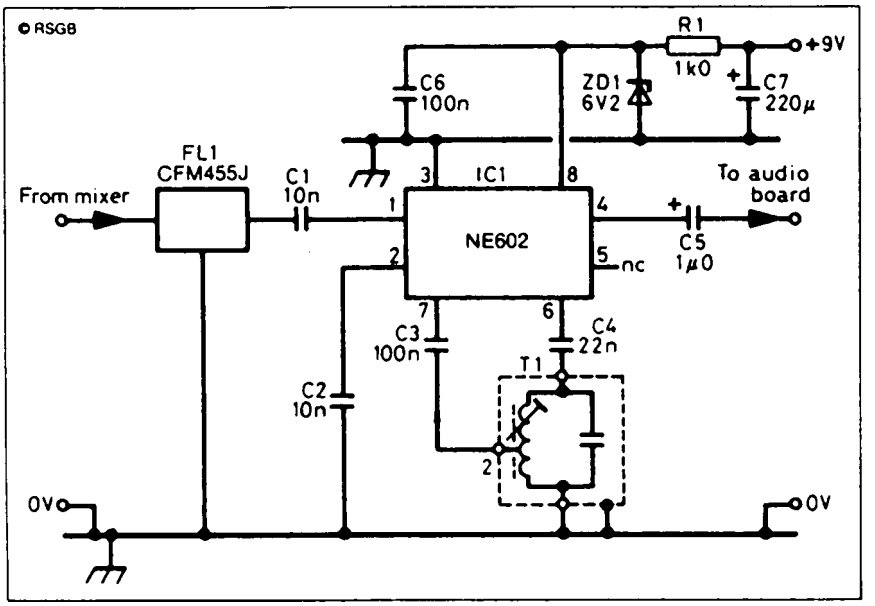



**Figure 2** The IF board is connected between the mixer and audio amplifier

At this stage you should have built the first mixer and the audio amplifier, and proved that they *both* work by using the circuit as a direct-conversion receiver. When you have finished constructing and checking the IF board, you will need to add it to your existing circuits.

## Adjusting and testing

There are three pairs of connections to the IF board – the 9 V supply leads, the input leads and the output leads. The IF board should be mounted on the metal baseplate, along with the other boards. **In making the following connections, make absolutely sure that the braid of each piece of coaxial**

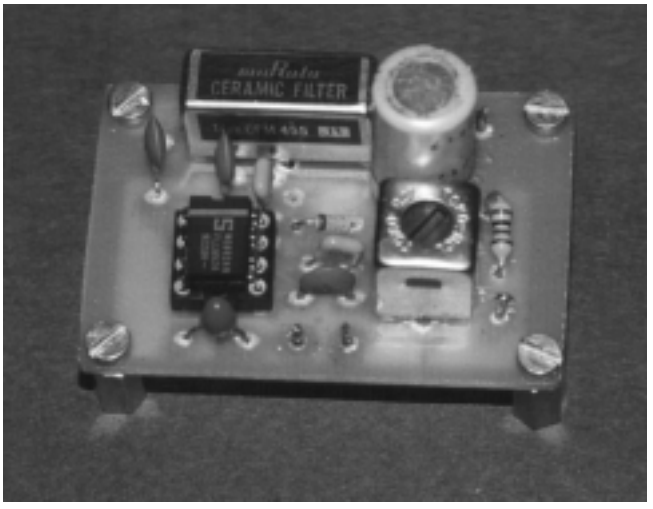
**cable is soldered to the correct connection on each board. The same applies to the polarity of the 9 V leads**. Disconnect the screened lead which presently goes from the first mixer board to the AF amplifier at the amplifier end. Connect it instead to the *input* of the IF board. Connect a new piece of screened cable from the IF output to the vacated AF input. Now connect the 9 V supply leads to the same points as the supply leads from the other boards. Check these newly made connections.

You should have confidence at this point that things should be right. After all, you *have* tested the direct-conversion process and you *know* it works. All that you are now testing is the IF board. This is the attraction of building a receiver in modules, working from the speaker backwards, and testing as you go!

The VFO and BFO need to be correctly adjusted. Mesh the vanes of the tuning capacitor and, using the same frequency measurement method as you did originally, set the VFO frequency to 3.955 MHz (which is 3.500 MHz + 0.455 MHz, if you hadn't guessed!). The BFO can be set using a frequency counter, but it is just as good to set it by listening to SSB or CW signals. A high-pitched hissing sound should be heard in the speaker. As you rotate the core, the pitch should reduce, go through a minimum, then increase again. Set the core at the minimum pitch position. You may want to readjust the two cores a little as your listening skills improve but, once you are happy, they will never need to be altered again!

## In conclusion . . .

You should now have built a superhet receiver capable of excellent results. It uses the same type of circuit as that found in far more advanced receivers.



The superhet is far more sensitive than the direct-conversion type, and can weed out those elusive DX stations. You may have found that a station will appear at two places on the dial of the direct-conversion receiver; you will have no such problem with the superhet.

## Parts list

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Resistor | | |
| | R1 | 1 kilohm (kΩ), 0.25 watt, 5% tolerance |
| Capacitors | | |
| | C1, C2 | 10 nanofarads (nF) min. ceramic |
| | C3, C6 | 100 nanofarads (nF) min. ceramic |
| | C4 | 22 nanofarads (nF) min. ceramic |
| | C5 | 1 microfarad (μF) 16 V electrolytic |
| | C7 | 220 microfarad (μF) 16 V electrolytic |
| Integrated circuit | | |
| | IC1 | NE602 |
| Additional items | | |
| | ZD1 | Zener, 6.2 V 0.5 watt |
| | FL1 | Crystal filter, Murata CFM455J |
| | T1 | Tuned inductor, Toko YHCS11100AC |