

Sony Cubes and Tubes

by Ian L. Sanders, radios photographed by Carl Glover

The predecessor of the six-transistor TR-1829 was the Sony cube radio – the TR-1819 introduced in 1966 – the model that launched a new genre of classic, cube-shaped radios from numerous manufacturers. The trendy styling and wood grain case made it an ideal gift for the office or the home. Judging by the number that continue to appear for sale today, they must have been quite a success for Sony. Coloured versions of the set, apparently introduced in the same year, (the author is aware of red, green and white, but there may well have been others) were given the model number TR-1823. These are much less common today and were presumably produced in smaller quantities. The TR-1819 and TR-1823 featured a large round tuning dial on the top of the cube and, in retrospect, it must have been only a small design step to streamline the cube into a cylinder to contour the diameter of the oversized tuning dial.



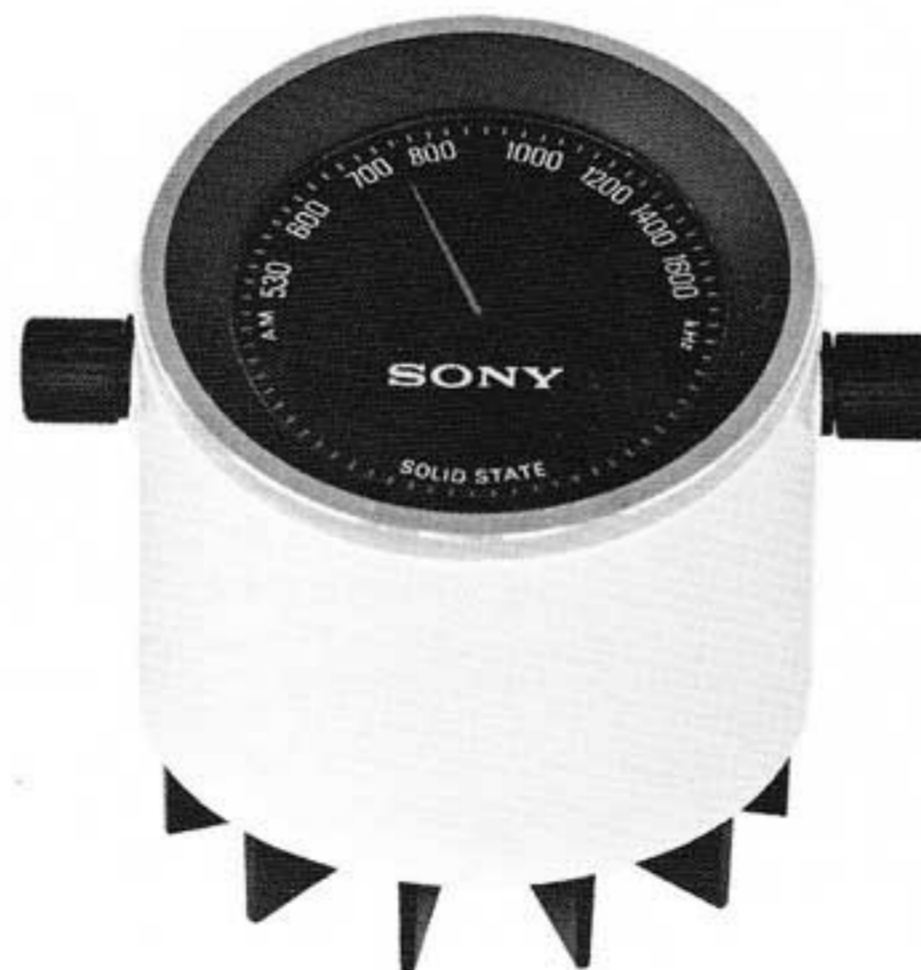
In 1967 Sony introduced the TR-1824 – a transitional design between the TR-1819 and the TR-1829 in that it was tubular, but with incongruous volume and tuning knobs protruding from the sides. White, red and orange cased examples of this set are known, but the author has not seen a wood grain version of this particular model. A distinctive feature was the base-mounted speaker, raised from the supporting surface by radial blades, and providing a richer sound than was the norm for small transistor radios of this size and time.

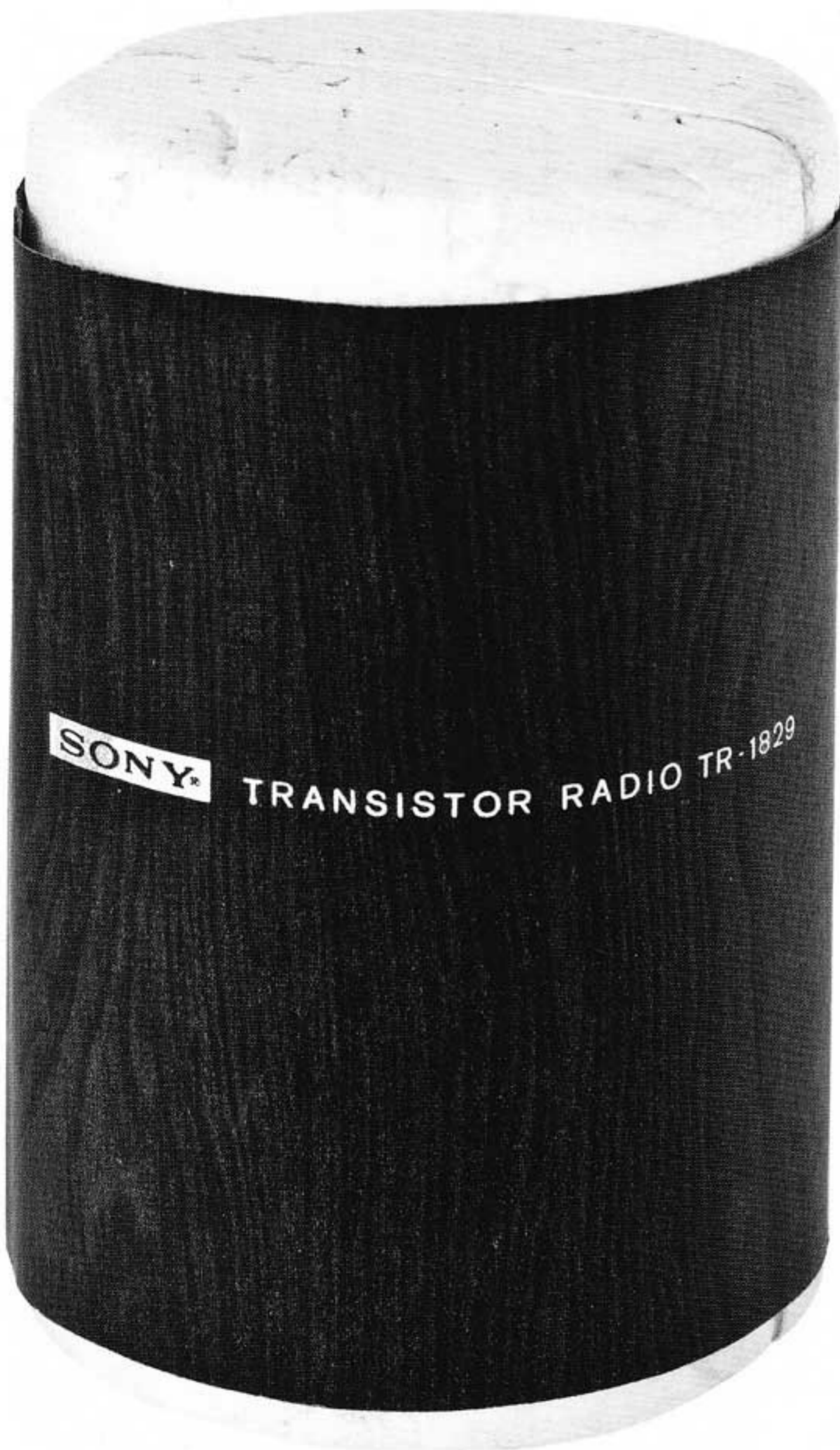
It seems that the set was redesigned later in that same year into the sleeker looking TR-1829. The simplicity and clean

lines of the set with its cylindrical wood grain case set it apart from earlier models and placed it firmly into the category of “executive desk accessory”. The large, circular tuning control blended into the tubular case, with a perspex window in the imitation metallic band allowing visibility of the tuning scale. An unobtrusive, thumbwheel-style volume control was located beneath the tuning scale. The bottom mounted speaker of the TR-1824 was carried over into the new design. In addition to the imitation wood grain case, three coloured models have been identified – orange, yellow and white (but, was there a red ?). These are much less common

today and are rarely seen offered for sale. The TR-1829 was available well into the 1970s and present day eBay activity suggests that it was popular in the US, Canada and Australia as well as the UK.

The last chapter in the 1960s Sony cubes and tubes story was the TFM-1837W – an FM-only version of the TR-1819 introduced in 1969. Physically identical to the earlier cube design, the only difference was a telescopic aerial mounted on the top panel. It seems to have been offered in just white and green (called avocado) – both with a gold-embossed design on opposite sides of the case, giving the set a more opulent look than the earlier AM





Below: The offending invoice – the first radio the author ever bought. A (then) extravagant gift for a girlfriend.

Tel.: 01-427 4179 DELIVERY NOTE HR 3468

ELECTRICAL SERVICE (EDGWARE) LTD.
Hi-Fi and Audio Consultants Radio, Television, Electrical
52/54, STATION ROAD,
NORTH HARROW, MIDDLESEX HA2 7SE

M.R. *Smiles* 2 *etc* *chairs*
N. Harrow
11-5 7 1975

1 Sony TR 1829		
SER 307585		
Radio		
paid with bank	7.15	

model. These are much harder to find than the AM sets and so were likely produced in small numbers – the demand for FM only at that time being very limited.

So, why is an obsessive-compulsive crystal set collector writing about Sony transistor radios? Has he finally lost his passion for the idiosyncrasies of the cat's-whisker or the glint of a freshly cut fragment of galena? Some readers with a bent for more recent wireless history may be disappointed to hear that the answer is "no". It has been triggered by something rather more mundane.

During a recent cleanup of the contents of a desk drawer, the discovery of a yellowing invoice in a discarded leather wallet brought back a flood of memories. The invoice was for the purchase, some thirty-five years ago, of a Sony TR-1829 imitation wood-grain, cylindrical transistor radio. The purchase was significant for three reasons: First – it was the first radio that the author had ever purchased. Second – it was bought as a flat-warming gift for a potential girlfriend (who showed little interest either before or after the

gift). Third, and most importantly – at £7 15s. (£7.75) it was an outrageous sum of money at that time for a poor engineering student, almost a full month's rent!

The nostalgic urge to obtain one of these radios for old time's sake was too strong to resist and a search of eBay revealed several for sale. An impulsive purchase was soon made. Another casual search of Ebay a few weeks later threw out an orange version of the TR-1829 in mint condition offered by a dealer in Canada. That was it. Another collection was about to be born.

How many different colours had been made? What was the history behind the "cute sixties" design? Surprisingly, the information on the web was somewhat piecemeal, and nothing very definitive on the TR-1829 family could be found. (It is no doubt to be found somewhere, but the author hasn't yet located it – any leads would be welcomed).

Any information that readers may have on other variations of these radios would be of interest. Please contact the author at: author@crystal-sets.com

TR-1829



Specifications

Circuit: 6 Transistor Superheterodyne
Frequency Coverage: 530-1,605 Kc. (566-187 m)
Antenna System: Built-in Ferrite Bar Antenna
Intermediate Frequency: 455 Kc.
Maximum Sensitivity: 200- μ v/m (at 10 mW output)
Selectivity: 20 dB at 10 Kc off resonance, at 1,400 Kc
Power Output: 172 mW (undistorted)
 270 mW (maximum)
Current Drain: 8 mA at zero signal, 95 mA at 270 mW output
Speaker: 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (5.7 cm), PM dynamic, 8 Ω
Power Source: Three "AA" or "Z" Size Penlight Batteries (4.5V in total)
Dimensions: 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (H) x 3" (D)
 (112 x 77 mm)
Weight: 21 ozs. (340 gs)

SONY

Below: TR1819 circuit.

From the people who put William B. in a cube: Johann S. in a cube.

Sony now makes an FM version of its original little AM cube radio, in white or avocado plastic, that you can set aside in 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cubic inches of desk, table, or (with its built-in slot) wall. It's \$19.95*. Lock, stock, and Bach.

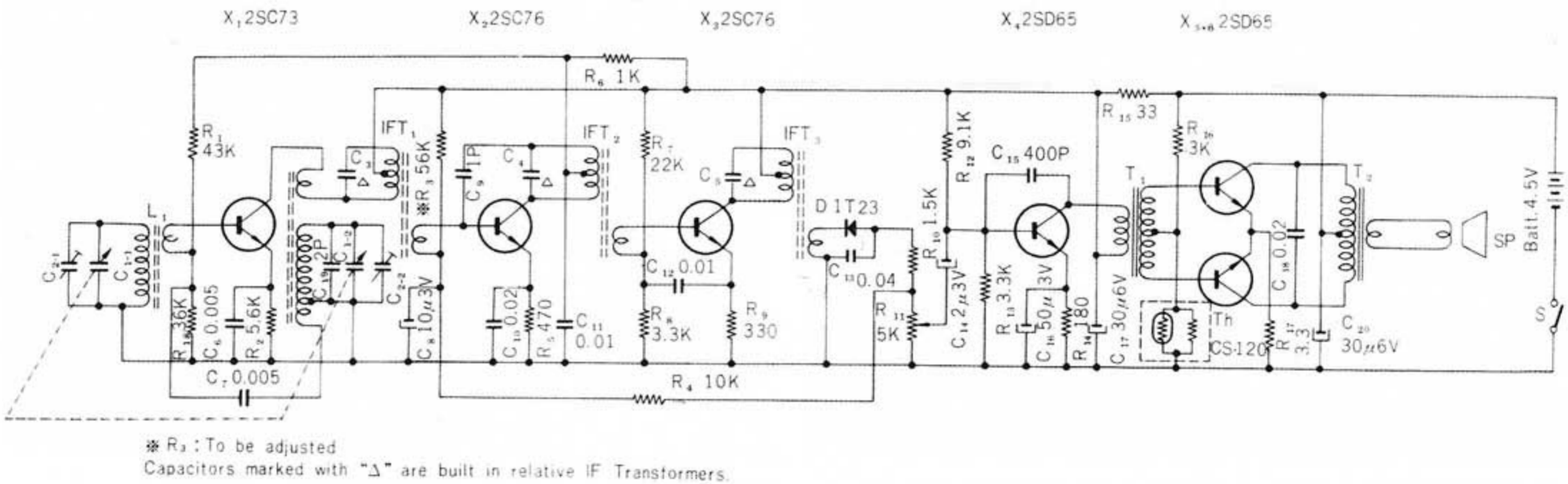
The Sony TFM-1837W FM Radio.



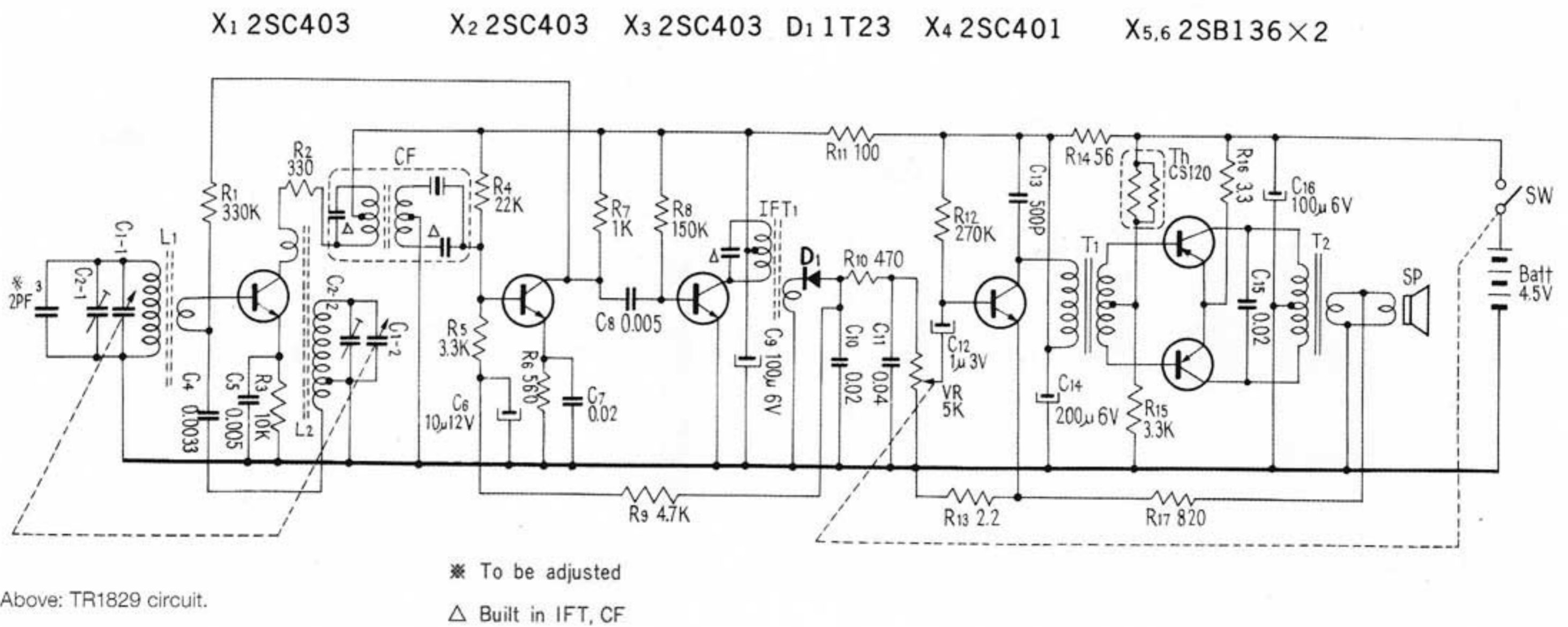
*Mfr.'s suggested retail price. © 1969 Sony Corp. of America, Visit our Showroom, 585 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022.

Above: New Yorker Magazine, October 1969.

Schematic Diagram



Circuit Schematic



Above: TR1829 circuit.