

Words & photos: Bob de Bont

*There are a number of articles in the Tech Talk area on our website on the “pros and cons” of being wired for sound and how various people have fitted UHF radios to their MX-5. This article applies to those lucky enough to have an NC PRHT (power retractable, or folding, hard top).*

Two things have always stopped me from fitting a permanent UHF radio to my MX-5: where to fit the antenna ... and my portable was nearly as good as any other setup so why change?

After receiving an offer too good to refuse, I started to investigate the various methods of fitting an antenna.

The kit I received came with a magnetic mount which I'm not a big fan of; I didn't like how a permanent mount sat out like a sore thumb, and drilling a hole in any panels was out of the question. I looked at how various others had mounted their antenna and none really appealed to me. Eventually I came up with something which I believe is neater and relatively easy to install.

**The NC PRHT has a blanking plate** on the rear panel between the two speakers, and covers a hole where the soft top release lever resides.



Under the plate is an ideal spot to mount the antenna inside the cab. The benefits are: all the wiring stays inside the cab, the radio can be used even when raining, there's no chance of paint damage and, with the antenna removed, the blanking plate can be refitted you wouldn't even know it was there!

**For this mod you need** a UHF antenna base with lead to suit your antenna. Using the antenna provided in the Club kit, I purchased a *Uniden AT380* kit comprising lead, mount and antenna (about \$35 from eBay). **Note:** *The maximum antenna length is about 350mm and still fitting under the raised roof.*

### Looking for help? Ask Bob!

Interested in minor modifications like this that need panel removal and refitting, but not prepared to have a go yourself?

Bob is happy to assist – in return for a little consideration for his knowledge, time and effort.

Contact Bob on <rmdebont@yahoo.com.au> to discuss your requirements.

### Procedure

**Warning!** This is a moderately complex task and does require some understanding on how to remove (lots) of trim parts.

1. To remove the blanking plate, lift out the bottom slightly and use a pry to lever it upwards and out.
2. Remove the centre console. This presents two of the hardest tasks!
  - a. **Hard task one** is removing the gear knob. I used brute force to twist it off; another method is to take the car for a drive and keep trying to loosen the knob as the gearbox heats up.
  - b. The handbrake cover is lifted from the rear and then remove.
  - c. Remove the cover from the rear of the console, then remove the various screws (five in the NC1 and three in the NC2) freeing the console.
  - d. **Hard task two** is disconnecting the electric window switch, I found attacking it from the driver's side using a small screwdriver to press the release detent and wiggled the plug free.
3. Slide both seats forward and tilt.
4. With a pry, remove the front part of style/roll bar covers. The wind blocker is removed by pulling straight up.
5. Remove the sill plates by pulling them straight up.
6. Remove the various plastic rivets.
7. Remove the seat belt covers by pulling them up at the rear and unclipping the front.
8. Remove the plastic rear door jamb panels. Once removed, replace the metal clips onto the plastic trim.
9. Remove the plastic panel behind the seats.
10. Drill a 16mm hole in the centre / rear of the cavity using the top locknut as a guide.



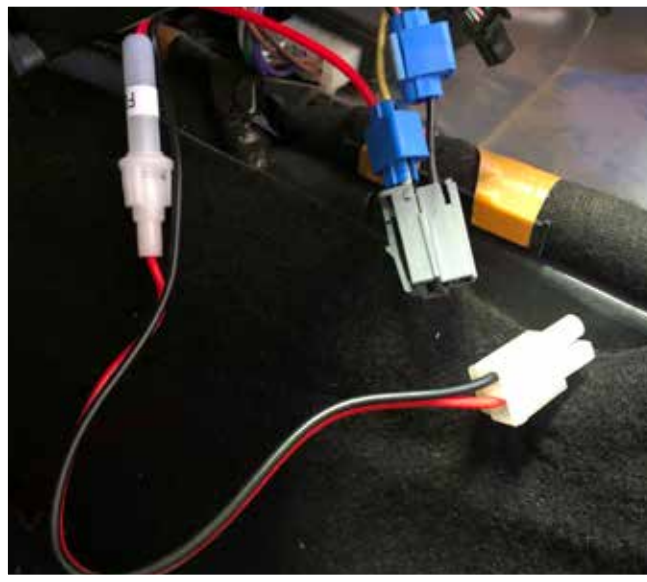
# retractable hard top



11. Fit the antenna mount and tighten the locking nut, run a suitable length of cable to where the radio is to be fitted and tie off the excess wire behind the panel.



14. To power the radio, I tapped into the power and earth wires from behind the cigarette lighter.



15. Refit the centre console (don't forget the window switch plug), handbrake boot and gear knob.



12. Refit the rear panel followed by all the other panels and plastic rivets.  
13. Zip tie the antenna lead to the loom running the length of the centre console.



Antenna and lead fitted!



And you're done!

■ Please note: All "Tech Talk" information is provided as a guide only. All work is carried out at the owner's risk.