

MAKING TIME

7 FOUND-OBJECT CLOCKS

By Steven Dodds

You can make a clock out of just about anything you can drill a hole in—from hubcaps to circuit boards to old pulp fiction novels. Even that thing you picked up off the curb (you know, the objet d'art you discovered that your S.O. keeps referring to as “that dirty piece of junk in the hall”) has timepiece potential.

All of the clocks shown here make use of a pre-assembled, self-contained “movement.” This is the part that turns the hands. Movements vary in complexity, accuracy, and cost, but if all you need is something to tell you how long you have until *Star Trek* comes on, then a simple, AA battery-operated quartz movement will suffice. These can be purchased at craft and woodworking stores, as well as online at Rockler (www.rockler.com) and Klockit (www.klockit.com).

The movements we used match Klockit's Q-80 quartz model (\$4.95 including your choice of hands). The movement consists of a small plastic box that measures roughly 2" x 2" and contains the moving parts and the battery. Connected to the center of the box is a threaded metal sleeve used to attach the movement to the face of the clock. The shafts that drive the hands pass through the center of this sleeve. When purchasing a movement, make sure it accommodates the width of the clock's face.

Whatever object you choose, the first step is to drill a hole through the “face” of the clock. Make sure the hole is just large enough to pass the threaded sleeve through. When working with a tough material such as metal or dense plastic, start with a small drill bit and work up to the final size for a clean, snag-free hole. The pre-assembled movement should include all the hardware required and instructions for installation. Attaching the movement consists of slipping a washer over the threaded sleeve, poking the sleeve through the hole in the clock face, and threading on a thin nut. Once the movement is in place, the hands can be slipped on and the tiny retaining nut attached.

If you can't tell time without numbers, we're terribly sorry. Here are two options: on a smooth face, paint the numbers using a stencil sheet as a guide, or peel and stick on vinyl numbers (available at hardware and craft stores).

Whatever found object becomes your timepiece, these clocks are as easy to take apart as they are to assemble. So if your look-du-jour seems dated in a month, just re-use the movement in another time machine.



TIME



COST



SKILL LEVEL

INGREDIENTS:

- Object to use as clock face
- Clock movement

TOOLS:

- Electric drill
- Variety of drill bits
- Scrap wood to place under work piece while drilling

TIME CRUNCH:

The trick here is to crush the can in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Using the drive-by method, place the midsection of the can against your tire and roll over it a few times. (If your neighbors don't yet give you strange looks, this should do it.) Squash any remaining snags with a pair of pliers.



1

HUBCAPS WANTED:

We like the VW style, but any hubcap you can drill a hole through will do. A slot molded into the back of the movement makes wall hanging easy.



2

TIME CAPSULE:

This minimalist number uses an end cap for 4" schedule 40 PVC pipe. Sit this clock on the edge of a shelf (so that the hands swing down past the ledge) to form a sort of ever-changing kinetic sculpture. Hot-glue a weight inside the cap to keep 6 o'clock at 6 o'clock. PVC is easily drilled with a standard drill bit.



3

TEA TIME:

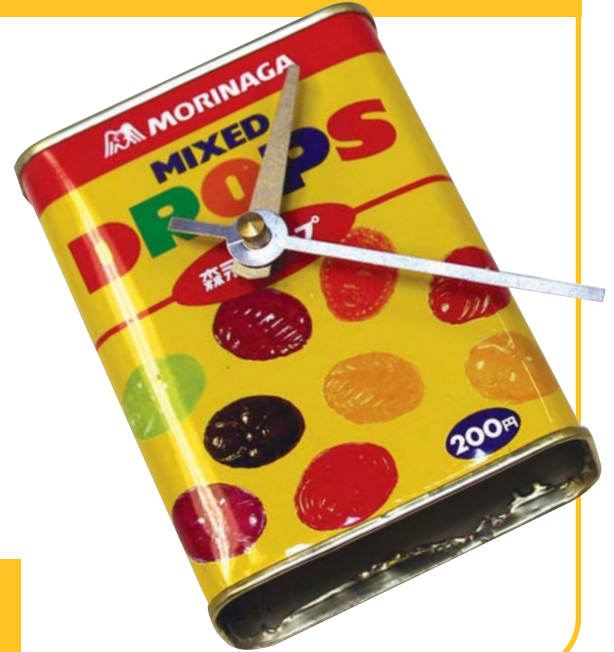
This table clock started life as a tea tin from a Chinese grocery. The fabrication is pretty straightforward; in this case, the mouth of the tin is large enough to accommodate the movement. Make sure the hands are short enough to clear the table at 6:30.



4

DROP CLOCK:

Another Chinese grocery find. Some tins will require that you cut out the bottom to fit the movement inside. Drill a series of small holes around the lip of the can as close together as possible. The metal strips between holes are easily removed with needle-nosed pliers. Use regular pliers to flatten any sharp edges that remain.



5

TIME FLYS:

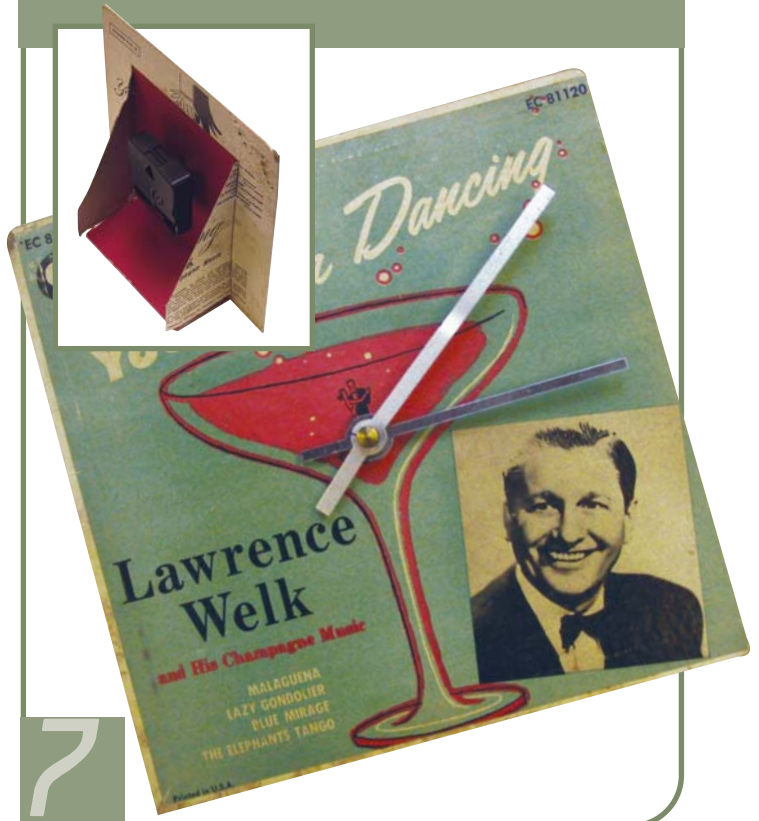
Your neighborhood auto repair shop will be happy to donate a flywheel. The challenge here is that the hole through the middle will be wider than the sleeve on the clock movement. Use a metal disk (the bottom of a Pringles can works well) on each side of the flywheel and tighten the nut on the sleeve to hold the movement in place.



6

RECORD TIME:

An LP jacket, a utility knife, and some scrap cardboard make beautiful music. Cut and fold two tabs out of the back of the jacket up. Slip some scrap mat board into the jacket and glue it into place for added rigidity.



7