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Made for television

Geoffrey Rowe makes a TV cabinet with a curved front to accommodate the demands of the modern family

A client recently commissioned me to design and make a TV cabinet with some interesting challenges thrown into the mix. One end of the cabinet needed to be the same depth as the fireplace, whilst the other end would be home to a 42in Plasma TV, which in turn had to be angled to face the centre of the room where the family would be eagerly gathered to watch the latest instalment of Eastenders. If the cabinet were not somehow wider at the TV end, then the TV itself would not be able to swivel to enough of an angle to be viewed. The idea of a gentle, 'grand piano' type curve for the front of the cabinet came to me, and my clients agreed the design.

EQUIPMENT

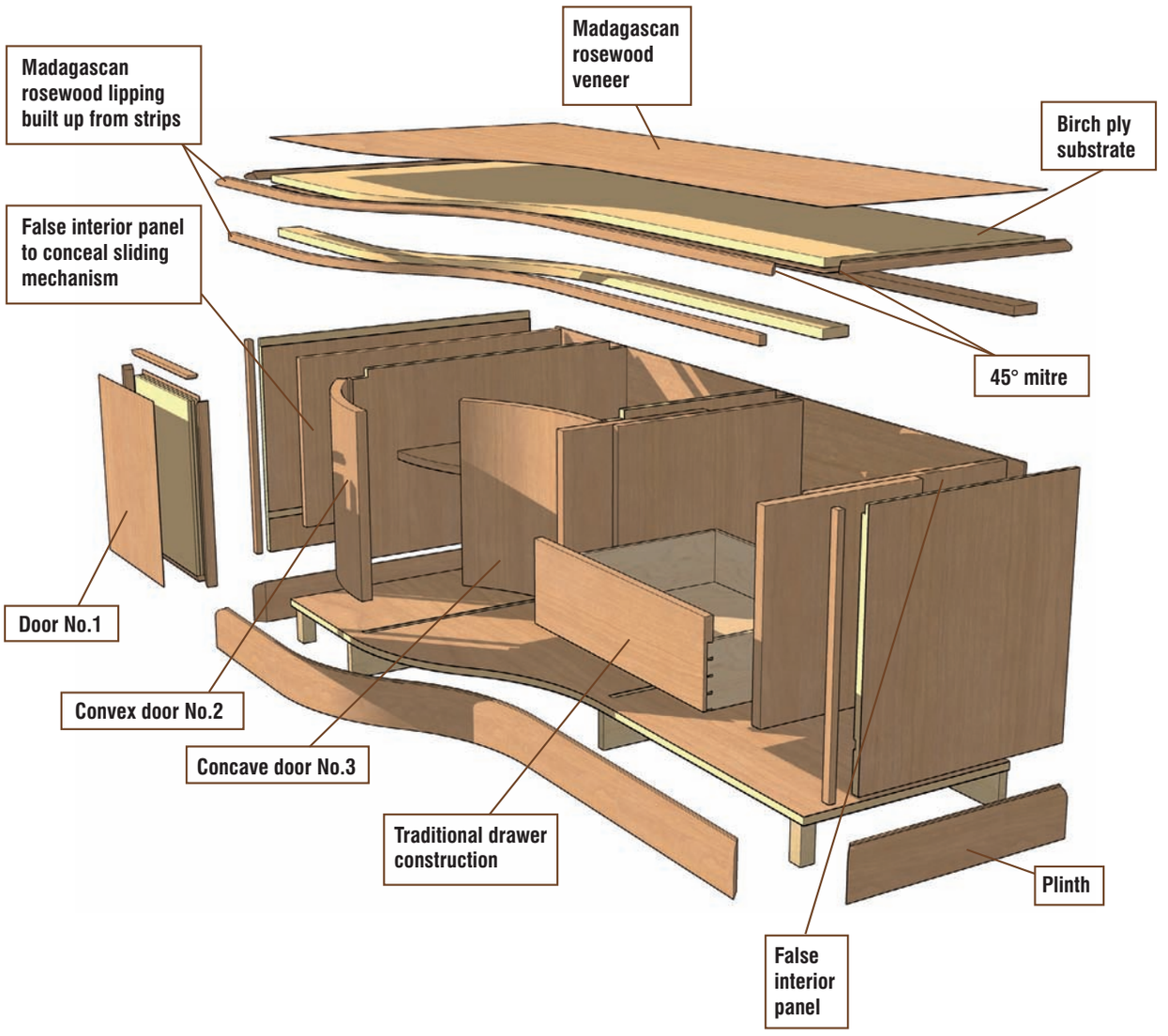
Inside the cabinet, the audiovisual equipment would be housed, which included a rather bulky 'sub woofer', as well as the usual TV digital box and CD player. In order to make remote controls work through solid wooden doors, there is a very neat system on the market called a 'Micro Link IR Receiver Kit' whereby you link all the equipment to a central power supply hidden somewhere inside the cabinet, fit a small bezel somewhere on the outside of the cabinet, and then aim and fire your remote controls at that. But in this case, the sub woofer when called into action, would require the door to be open. I decided the best course of action would be to use a pivot sliding door mechanism whereby the door opens to 90° and then the whole door is pushed, hinge end first, into the cabinet. I don't really like this set-up very much. Firstly, you end up losing some of the interior space and secondly, I haven't yet stumbled across a design that I have been totally satisfied with. They just never seem to work as well as they should. Nevertheless, I simply couldn't allow the cabinet door to be wide open every time my client wanted to play with his sub woofer, and I couldn't come up with a better solution.

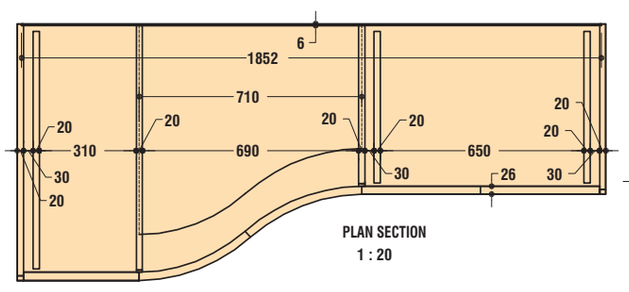
1 **It's always an exciting moment when you unpack the veneer and can start marking out**

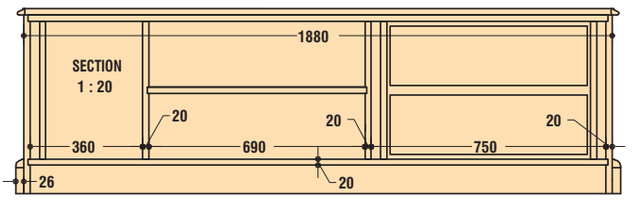
My clients wanted two drawers in the cabinet in which to hide their CD and DVD collection, however, after many attempts at the drawing board, it simply didn't look right. It ruined the flow of the curve and I was having none of it. The answer, of course, was to put the drawers behind doors. Two more pivot sliding doors – deep joy!

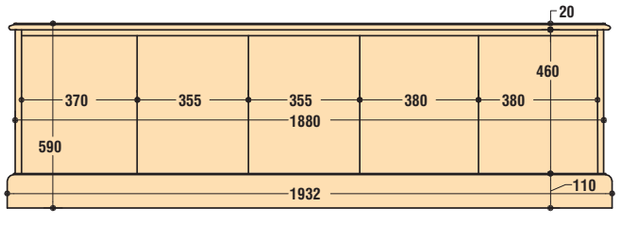
TIMBER

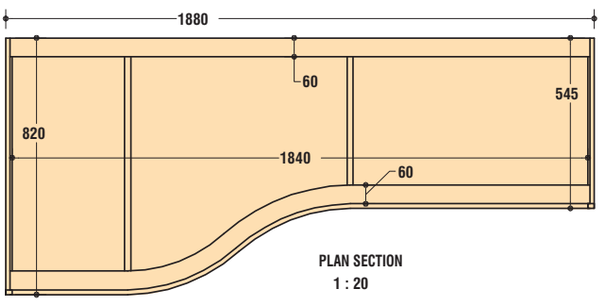
The timber for this project had to match a beautiful cabinet in the opposite corner of the room, which looked to be made of Madagascan rosewood *(Dalbergia spp)*, >







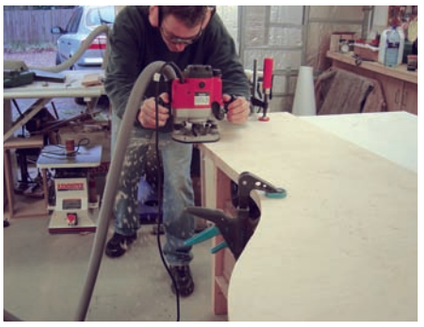




DRAWINGS BY SIMON RODWAY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEOFFREY ROWE

2 **Using a good old-fashioned compass plane to get a crisp, accurate edge**



3 **A flush trimming bearing guided cutter produced an exact copy of the original**

4 **The top having been lipped in stages, is now dry and ready for the mitre cut**

< so in order for the battle to commence, I purchased a bundle of veneer from Capital Crispin in Stratford, East London, some good quality birch ply on which to glue it, some flexi-ply for the doors, and a small amount of solid wood from the only person I could think of in the country who might have any – Bob Smith at Timberline in Tonbridge, Kent.

LIPPING

Every part of this cabinet had to be veneered and before that could happen, the solid lipping needed to be applied. The reason the lipping comes first is so that one can veneer right to the edge, which not only looks neater but also is necessary when one is going to apply a profile of some description.

The lipping involved planing and thicknessing some solid timber, slightly thicker than the ply, and then slicing it on the bandsaw. I always revisit the planer between cuts as this ensures a planed edge against the bandsaw fence each time, and also a planed side on the bed of the thicknesser a little later on in the process when finishing the thin material to final thickness. The lipping was then glued onto the edge of the ply and held securely with masking tape. After the glue had cured, I used a block plane to trim the edges flush with the side of the ply.

TOP & BASE

The curved plywood top and base were both cut to the same size and shape at this time. The top would eventually overhang the cabinet's front and sides, and this would be achieved with the lipping. I used the former on its edge to trace the curved shape onto the plywood and using a jigsaw followed by a good old-fashioned compass plane, managed to get a crisp, accurate edge. I cut the shape onto the other board, keeping a couple of millimetres from the line, and then, using a flush trimming bearing guided cutter, produced an exact copy of the original. The board for the cabinet base needed to be lipped before veneering but the board for the top required a bit more work. There was to be a large profile on the edge and so the lipping needed to be 20mm ($^{25}/_{32}$in) thick. This meant I had to build up the lipping using 2mm ($^{5}/_{64}$in) strips in order that they were flexible enough to successfully hug the curves.

When cured, I cut a 45° mitre very carefully by hand. The lipping for the sides was then added and after the veneering had been done, the profile was then routed.

VENEERING

The veneering process itself involved joining veneers together to achieve the width required. It was the first time I had attempted joining two pieces of veneer together of this length and I managed it by putting the two edges together, back to back, and pressing them between two straightedged MDF

5&5a **Cutting that mitre by hand**