



DXer's Notebook #7023

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This time we're going to take a look at some of the recent comments and questions on receivers...big ones, little ones, expensive ones, cheap ones (sorry, too much Dr. Seuss lately). Many of these messages may just result on more questions rather than answers, but that's why we're here...and I'm deliberately leaving out most comments on the Sony ICF-2010 and the DX-398 due to their recent discontinuance.

SONY

Bob <ropel@golden.net>: Has there ever been a comparison of the 2101 vs. the 7600G or 7600GR done? I know the biggest difference between the 7600G & 7600GR is colour and memories available. The 7600G has (I believe) 22 memories, while 7600GR has (I know) 100 memories. I also know the 7600s do not cover the airband. They do however cover the rest of the frequency spread that the 2010 does.

Rick Robinson <kf4ar@arrl.net>: I always order service manuals for my receivers as soon as I get them. I bought a 7600GR in October and immediately ordered the service manual. Through a mix up by Sony, I received both the 7600G and the 7600GR service manuals for my 7600GR. From studying both I can tell that the GR has redesigned front ends for both the LW/MW and SW bands. There are other circuit differences between the G and GR other than the increased memories such as a different AGC scheme from the G in the GR. The processor/sync chip is the same in both the G and GR.

I also have a '2010 and there are things I like and dislike about both radios. The sync, while different in the GR, still performs quite well. I'd like to see a comparison in the style of the ARRL Lab tests for both receivers.

GRUNDIG

Rick Robinson <kf4ar@arrl.net>: Last week I was in my local Radio Shack and saw the Grundig G-2000A receiver designed by Ferdinand Porsche on closeout sale for \$64.97US. Being a portable receiver junkie, I bought one.

All I can say it's a good thing Porsche did better at cars than at radios. I know he only designed the case, but this is no Porsche of radios underneath the cover. Performance wise, it's a Yugo at best. This is a very insensitive, noisy radio that is marginal at best on all bands. Even sitting inside my RS loop, it is still marginal. It is OK for SW listening to the powerhouses, but was nearly dead on the 5MHz band where the Central and South Americans dominate. On FM, it would be good in urban areas unless it possesses bad image problem which I would be willing to bet it does. On the positive side, it's a good looking radio and comes with a nice cowhide case with clever magnetic latches on the front.

If you are a collector of Grundigs, this is a good opportunity to pick one up cheap. I remember seeing them going for as much as \$189 on the same sites that sell the YB400 for \$239US.

This is no YB400 by any means. My YB400 hears stations on all bands that the G-2000A doesn't. The receiver hiss from the G-2000A is very bad on all bands.

I haven't decided whether to keep it, buy a service manual and give it a good alignment or to put it on eBay with no reserve and try to get my money back.

Does anyone have any experience with the G2000A?

Powell Way <powell@conterra.com>: Rick you may have a defective one. My YB-400 had to go back 3 times and was gone for many months for the same defect. The one in the Lexington SC store kept locking up and I reset the processor twice and it died again. So I told them it was defective and send it back. That was the store sample.

Steve N5WBI <n5wbi@clearsail.net>: Who out there in NRC-land has some experience with the YB-205 on MWDX? It's available on the web for around \$39 (US), including shipping. It doesn't include the extended band (1605-1705 kHz), which is one drawback. As for it being analogue, and not digital, that, to me, isn't always a drawback. I like the ability to "sweep" across the band, rather than "chug-chug-chug" by pushing tuning buttons.

The only other Grundig radio that I've used is the analogue "Mini- World" that I received as a gift last year. It's OK for local FM listening, does a semi-decent job with 250 kW shortwave stations, but isn't very good with MWDX.

Anybody want to submit a mini-review of the YB-205??

Mike Brooker <aum108@idirect.com>: After 9½ years of service, several trips to the Kripalu Center and other yoga retreats, and a pilgrimage to India, my 1993 Panasonic RFB-45 virtually died. One day it was working fine; I was listening to Imus on WFAN in the morning, but at lunch hour I tried to listen to Jim Rome on WGR-550 and found the tuning had completely conked out. (since CHUM axed the sports, I've been taking my DX rig to work, just to listen to Rome!) Since the cost to have it fixed would be almost as much as a new radio, I chose the latter option. Yesterday I got a Grundig Yacht Boy 400 PE, for \$CDN195 at Bay-Bloor Radio, a long-established electronics shop in downtown Toronto at -- DUH!! -- the corner of Bay and Bloor streets.

The YB400PE is slightly larger and maybe an ounce or two heftier than the RFB-45, and takes 6 AA batteries, not 4. The jury is still out on battery life. I haven't done any serious DXing on it yet, but so far I like it. It's got some features the RFB-45 didn't have, like a clock display that doesn't disappear when the radio is turned on, 40 pre-sets (RFB-45 had only 18) and a dial light. Of course for serious AM DXing, it won't beat my trusty old 1978 RF-2200 that's been pulling in DX since the Carter administration.

What's with the stupid name "Yacht Boy"? Why don't they call it a "Yacht Girl", given the typical male predilection for slapping feminine monikers on cars, boats, and other machinery.

Hopefully this YB400PE will pick up as much good karma as my RFB-45 did. Maybe I will take it with me on another Indian pilgrimage, to Kerala and Tamil Nadu, later this decade!

Lynn Hollerman <lynn@eatel.net>: Just in case anyone wants more information, Nick Hall-Patch did a review of this model and his review is on the IRCA website (<http://www.ircaonline.org>) as a .pdf file.

Matt <broadwater@wnyip.net>: I have heard the first run of these 800s were a tad noisy on MW, and none too impressive. However, looking over rec.radio.shortwave posts from the last year, it seems that Grundig changed something inside the radios, and added a three pronged AC adapter (with ground), and their MW DX performance has improved a great deal. Do any of you have experience with these newer models of the 800 or have heard anything about them?

Kevin Burnett <kjb@nrcdxas.org>: I have an 800 I bought about 6 months ago. I don't know when it was manufactured (I didn't get a 3-prong AC adapter, for instance), and in my experience, its MW DX isn't very good at all. My old Sony 2010 easily outperforms it.
On shortwave it does much better, however, and it is one of the best-sounding AM-type radios I've ever heard.

Pete Lee <sunshine@angelfire.com>: Noticed that Radio Shack has the Yacht Boy 400 on sale. Does anyone know anything about this RX?

Mike Brooker <aum108@idirect.com>: I just got one a couple weeks ago!
Overall I'm happy with it, but like all small multiband portables, it has its limitations. It's not going to beat a good communications receiver or even my 25 year old Panasonic RF-2200. If you're looking for a small receiver for traveling or a back-up to your primary rx, go for it! What's the Radio Shack sale price? I got my YB400 for \$CDN195. (The Canadian peso is worth about 64 cents in real money)

Les Rayburn <lowga@hotmail.com>: Is there anyone on the list who can compare the MW DXing performance of the Grundig Satellit 800 Vs. The Sony 2010? Especially in terms of the synchronous detection and ECSS abilities? Also overall sensitivity and selectivity?

Gerry Bishop <gerryb4991@cox.net>: It wasn't a scientific test, but I did get to use an 800 and a 2010 side by side, same antenna, while in central Asia 17 months ago. No comparison between the two, I'll keep the 2010 hands down. Every station that was marginal on the 800 was readable on the Sony, and marginal on the Sony was not more than a carrier on the 800. We even replaced the batteries to confirm that wasn't part of the performance limitation. Could this have been simple deviations in production models, i.e. an exceptional Sony and a "Friday afternoon" Grundig? Sure, it wasn't scientific. We didn't measure the radios, just tried to hear what we could hear. The Sony 2010 was the receiver of choice from LW through 30 MHz. Shame it's out of production.

Kevin Burnett <kjb@nrcdxas.org>: I have both of these radios myself. For mediumwave, in particular, the 2010 is definitely a better radio, at least for DX. For shortwave, I don't think there's as much of a difference. The S800 definitely sounds better.

Matt <broadwater@wnyip.net>: I have heard the first run of these 800s were a tad noisy on MW, and none too impressive. However, looking over rec.radio.shortwave posts from the last year, it seems that Grundig changed something inside the radios, and added a three pronged AC adapter (with ground), and their MW DX performance has improved a great deal.

Do any of you have experience with these newer models of the 800 or have heard anything about them? Thanks for any help! P.S. the serial number of the one I'm looking at is S8201....

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Matt <broadwater@wnyip.net>: Hi Kevin! Thanks for the reply... I was starting to think no one ever heard of the 800! FWIW, I have read consistent reports that the 3 pronged adapter makes a very big difference with regards to MW performance. All you have to do is call Grundig and give them your name and address, and they'll ship a new one out to you, no questions asked.

As for the date it was manufactured, here is how you can decode the serial number to let you know:
S8008xxxxxx = August 2000. ("S8"=satellit 800; "0"=year; "08"=month; "xxxxxx"=unit number)

Pete Lee <sunshine@angelfire.com>: Bought an Aiwa CS-P500 "boombox" for \$3. Found that if one sticks this in a Radio Shack AM loop it can be quite a machine; the loop aiding tremendously in sharpening a freq. And the cassette part makes it easy to replay those top-of-the-hour breaks. On the back is a switch marked "OSC". To one side it has one dot, to the other two dots. Anyone have an idea what this means? It doesn't seem to do anything!

Paul Swearingen <PlsBCBDXER@aol.com>: This won't be a very technical answer ... but if you experience oscillator noise when you record directly from the radio on the one-dot setting, you should be able to switch to the two-dot setting and eliminate the noise, or vice-versa. I don't believe any of the newer boomboxes have this feature and may have added circuitry to prevent this interference. Anyone now when this manual switch was eliminated?

WISHFUL THINKING

Les Rayburn <lowga@hotmail.com>: Under the category of "wishful thinking", I recently had to part with my Drake R8B but plan to replace it quickly once business picks back up. With that in mind, I'm thinking of one of three receivers:

1. Drake R8B
2. AOR 7030
3. Winradio G303i

The Winradio G303i was recently compared to the Collins 95 receiver in Shortwave Magazine and seemed to outperform it. I'd be more comfortable with buying a G303i if I could find a AM DX'er who had compared one. Meanwhile, I know the Drake was wonderful, but wonder how it compares to the AOR 7030? Any comments, thoughts, or suggestions for other receivers would be welcome.

DRAKE

Neil Kazaross <neilkaz@earthlink.net>: I think this has been addressed before, but curious KAZ's R8B is on the way to me (so I have a backup rx and the ability to use two great rx's). What differences, or more importantly, improvements will I get with the R8B?

Charles Hutton <charlesh3@msn.com>: More memories (1000 vs. 144 or was it 200?), selectable sideband sync detector, and something else that escapes me. I believe there is something on Radio Netherland's site that lists the differences.

(RE)STARTING OUT

Next we'll approach this from a different angle...a couple of discussions from a some months ago on the listserv focusing on a DXer's quest to get back into the hobby, and suggestions as to the best way to accomplish that. We'll continue these over the upcoming issues.

Brian Leyton <bleyton@cpe-usalco.com>: Hello DXers, I used to do some MW DXing back when I was a teenager, but I've been out of it for some time. I'm thinking about getting back in, but I had a couple of questions.

First of all, I need a radio (unfortunately, I trashed the Sony I had years ago - don't ask, it's a very embarrassing story). I'm thinking inexpensive portable at first, so that I don't tick off the wife. Eventually I'd like to get something better. Any recommendations are welcome.

The big question though, is about my location. I live literally around the block (probably less than 1/4 mile) from the former 710-KMPC (now KDIS) towers, in beautiful Valley Village, CA (used to be North Hollywood until the real-estate agents figured out they could boost the property values by changing the name). This is a 50Kw by day/ 10Kw by night operation, and we get lots of interference from them - over the phone lines, a bit through the stereo, and nothing but splatter & overload on various other radios we have around the house. Just for good measure, we have power lines along the back wall of our backyard too.

Grounding has always been an issue, and is especially tough now with the drought.

Years ago (when I lived 2 houses over), I rigged up a longwire attached to the roof on one end, and the telephone pole on the other, and had pretty lousy results. Lots of noise.

So the bottom line is, should I pick another hobby, or are there things I can do to mitigate the conditions, while keeping within a very tight budget? Moving out of town is unfortunately not an option.

Since I'm just getting back into this, you may as well treat me like a novice - my electronics skills are weak, and I'm still trying to figure out all of the acronyms...I'd appreciate any pearls of wisdom that you might share.

Eric Conchie <econchie@reach.net>: Hi, I don't know about the issues with regards to the proximity to the stations, etc, but for a good, not too expensive radio, you might try the GE Superadio (about \$60 here in Canada, I'm not sure about the states). It works well. Also, the CCRadio from CCrane Co works really well. It's more expensive, but I've been using one since the spring and it smokes anything else I've used. Also, with both of the radios I've mentioned, they work well "barefoot" as well, which might help cut back some of your interference from the local transmitters. Good luck, and I would definitely recommend DX'ing as a hobby for anyone!

Rick Kenneally <woodlandview@yahoo.com>: Brian, The combination of strong local station and low budget receiver is probably your biggest issue. If your receiver crumples under the weight of your local radio station, DXing will not be fun. You can compensate by using a highly-tuned antenna (like a good loop) to act as a bit of a filter. Such a loop would enhance the frequency it was tuned to, and attenuate other frequencies (like 710). But the better loops are, not surprisingly, more expensive.

If you're going to go for a portable - don't get one of the super-sensitive AM receivers like a Superadio or CCRadio. Go for a Sony or something with less sensitivity but better strong-signal handling.

Finally, consider DXpeditions. Take a drive away from your local station, take an inexpensive loop and portable radio, and see what you hear.

Bruce Conti <BACONTI@aol.com>: Best Portable: Sony ICF-2010.
Best Communications Receivers: Palstar R30, AOR AR-7030+, Drake R8B.
Visit Universal Radio online to check out receiver specs and prices, www.universal-radio.com or via DXing.com.

(Regarding interference) Take a look at the noise-reduced wire and Double Ewe antenna on BAMLog. Either of these will kill household noise problems. Then visit Mark Connelly's WA1ION web site for phasing info. I would recommend a "classic" LC-tank tuned input design like the MWDX-5 to kill any

overload/intermod problems from the local powerhouse. A phased Double Ewe or phased noise-reduced wires should take care of any local broadcast interference.

Rick Kenneally: Eric, Gotta be careful with those super-sensitive portables. They don't fare as well with strong locals as some other receivers.

The best thing to have when you're living under the tower of a big blowtorch station (assuming you don't have the buckage for an AOR or a Drake) is a good old fashioned tube set like a Hammarlund or Collins. But one of Brian's criteria was a wife-acceptable radio, and it is a rare wife that finds tube boatanchors attractive.

Brian Leyton: Yeah, good point. Years ago I borrowed an old Hallicrafters from a friend. Besides being very useful on cold winter nights (not that it gets all that cold here in sunny CA), I also found that it was not nearly as sensitive as my Sony portable. The Sony was useless with the longwire because of the noise, and the Hallicrafters, even with the longwire, was still not as effective as the Sony with its built-in antenna. Considering that I can barely walk through the den without tripping over piles of books & papers (not to mention the dog & kids), it's doubtful I could even find a place for one of those beasts. I'm starting to suspect that I may have to go outside to find a nice quiet listening post. I guess I could try to clean up a corner of the garage...

I'm starting to think along the lines of some sort of homemade portable loop antenna, with one of the more moderately priced radios. I do see that CCrane has refurbished CCRadios for \$129. I'd love to go for a Sony ICF-2010, but that's definitely pushing my luck price-wise (though Hanukkah is just around the corner <(-:)). Is something like a CCRadio really going to be too sensitive, or could I manage to suppress KDIS with a good antenna design?

The DXPedition point is a good one - I suspect that my most successful DXing will be away from home. I do remember a few Sunday nights back in the 70's when KMPC went off for a couple of hours, but I suspect they don't do that too much anymore.

Harry Helms <ak6c@earthlink.net>: But check out the going price for a HQ180 or R390 on eBay, and then add in the cost/difficulty of trying to get replacement parts and repair for such vintage tube rigs. Used R8/A/B models are often available on eBay and are cheaper than many vintage tube rigs, they perform better, and they're more reliable. IMO they're better deals for day-to-day DXing than tube rigs. If you must have something new, the Palstar R30 series is a bargain for its performance; while it doesn't have the bells and whistles of the R8B, it is fully the R8B's equal when it comes to sensitivity, selectivity, strong signal handling, and audio quality.

Powell Way <powell@conterra.com>: As for the 180, unless there's a catastrophic failure, very little goes wrong. I have an excellent one. As for the R390 series Chuck Rippel rebuilds the A model, but right now he's a year behind and it costs a GRAND. But you get a radio that looks and performs AS NEW!

I got my HQ-180A from a ham in the upstate, and he posted it to our SE AM Ham club list and I had mail back to him and a call within 30 seconds of it being posted.

And then there's the SP-600 I bought with 56 black beauty capacitors to change.

Harry Helms <ak6c@earthlink.net>: I've owned three HQ180s (actually two 180s and 180A), and I had bandswitch problems on two of them; they became loose and you had to "twiddle" it to switch bands. Since the 180 splits the AM band in half (around 1050, IIRC), that quickly became a big pain in the posterior. I've also owned a HQ150 and the bandswitch on that is far more rugged---it almost "clanks" when you switch bands!

Don't get me wrong----if you can find a working HQ180 for under \$300, go for it! But used 180s often sell today for more than their retail price when new. You can find used R8s for around \$500, and at that price the R8 is a better buy than the HQ180.

Bruce Conti <BACONTI@aol.com>: Some (wives) might consider (a \$500-\$800 receiver) a good investment. At least he'll be at home "listening to static" (what those who don't understand DXing often call it) rather than out at the local pub all night. And when one adds up the cost of other potential hobbies like model railroading, boating, flying, professional sports fan, coin collecting, etc., AM broadcast DXing is quite economical. Now a one-time \$1000 investment for a receiver and a couple hundred dollars worth of antenna and phasing/tuning gear doesn't seem so bad. Of course if you really get hooked, costs can spiral out of control as you collect receivers, join multiple clubs, attend conventions, and travel to remote DXpeditions.

Brian Leyton: OK guys, let's not get too carried away here:-)

I agree that DXing probably is at least as economical as any other hobby, but since I'm already at home helping with homework, painting the bathroom, or whatever else the wife comes up with, the pub vs. DX argument isn't going to wash. 'course I could just tell her that I'll be happy to take payment for painting the bathroom in the form of a suitable radio, but since we're already in the hole this month, that might be a tough sale. Best keep it cheap. I'm just getting back into this again, so I think it's prudent to keep the cost down. Besides, if I jump right into a Drake R8B, then that leaves no room for dreams later on.

Anyone got a Sony 2010 laying around collecting dust that you'd like to unload? I can trade for a Panasonic ball radio, circa 1975:-)

Randy Stewart <jrs555t@smsu.edu>: Actually, those ARE quite collectible nowadays, aren't they?

Brian Leyton: Wow, you're right - there's several up on eBay, one is up to \$20.50, with 2 days left to go. I guarantee mine didn't cost that much when it was new.

Mine has been well used over the years though, so it's probably not worth as much.

I still remember using mine to listen to LA Dodger games when I was up at summer camp. I'd lay on my bottom bunk bed, and attach the keychain of the radio to the springs of the upper bunk & let the radio hang down. 'course it was hard keeping the signal steady with the ball spinning around...

More on this next time.