

Scanning - Shortwave - Ham Radio  
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# Monitoring Times

A Publication of Grove Enterprises

Volume 25, No. 9  
September 2006

**U.S. \$5.95**

**Can. \$8.95**

Printed in the  
United States

## MT SERIES LAUNCH: MONITORING MILITARY SATELLITES

**Propagation, Space Weather, and You  
Listening to Lithuania  
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# Around the World in 48 Hours: A Shortwave Century Weekend

By Joe Cuhaj

**L**ike many people, I am a frustrated traveler. Just look at my passport – empty. Not a stamp; not a smudge; not even an Italian Nutella Fondue stain. Nothing. There’s never enough time, never enough money. Heck, *The Amazing Race* hasn’t even answered my application. The closest I ever got to traveling the world was when I was a DXer in the ‘70s and ‘80s.

But recently the bug bit me again. I decided to dust off that old Radio Shack DX-392 (aka Sangean ATS-818CS) receiver to see if the magic was still there. I would embark on a trip around the world; a trip that would take me from my home to the far reaches of the globe and back again within 48 hours. I was about to embark on a Shortwave Century Weekend.

The premise is simple enough: log 100 stations within the allotted time frame, in my case, 48-hours. I’ve read where it had been done before, but that was back in “the day” – or back in the 1970s anyway – when shortwave was still the primary form of electronic media for small, developing countries. The excitement of picking up the right skip and hearing a faint signal from Papua, New Guinea, was exhilarating. The programming took you directly to the land and culture.

That was then; this is now. As I said, I had been in and out of DXing the last 30 years (mostly out), when I decided to give it another go, but there were questions: Would it be the same today in this world of incredible technology such as the Internet, digital satellite receivers, and cell phones? Would the excitement be there? Were there still challenging catches to be logged?

## Ready, Set ...

So that was my quest. The first step was to make sure I had the proper equipment and, more importantly, make sure it still worked after all these years. I pulled the DX-392 out of the closet, plugged in the four “D” and three “AA” batteries, and cranked it up. I immediately headed to the 19 meter band and WWV. It worked like a champ.

Next was the antenna. I wanted to have the

best chance of reaching my goal. I’ve always liked long wire antennas, but that was a problem, since my property is located smack dab in the middle of a cotton field with no trees whatsoever.

I looked online and broke out my old American Radio Relay League (ARRL) books for a quick throw together home-brew antenna, but in the end decided not to take the chance. With my luck, it would short out the whip antenna and I’d sit here all weekend catching nothing and thinking it was caused by “bad conditions.”

I headed for Radio Shack and there the manager directed me to a wall where I found a neat little contraption – the Portable SW Antenna (catalog # 278-1374). At \$9, this little gem was perfect. It is a 27-foot long wire antenna that rolls up into a case that resembles a chalk line container. The loose end has a clip on it that snaps onto the receiver’s whip antenna. Cool.

Next, I had to scope out the best possible weekend to pull this off and, as any serious DXer will tell you, a set of propagation charts was in order. I downloaded two nice charts – one from [hfradio.org](http://hfradio.org) (Tomas Hood’s site) and the other from the ARRL.

The information from [hfradio.org](http://hfradio.org) is a little more difficult to use since it’s a Gantt chart (uses rows and columns) to maneuver you through

time, regions, and frequencies. The ARRL chart was a bit easier to use. It uses nice tri-colored bell curves to show MUF, LUF, and a mid-range for all regions making the information “pop” off the page.

While I could have gone about this haphazardly and just started scanning up and down the dial blindly, I decided I needed to take a methodical approach using an up-to-date broadcast schedule. In addition to *Monitoring Times’* English language shortwave schedules, I found [primetimeshortwave.com](http://primetimeshortwave.com), the website of Daniel Sampson, who is also a frequency monitor for *MT*. Updated frequently, the list gives a thorough rundown of English language broadcasts in frequency, time, station, or country order. In addition, it identifies any special days of the week for broadcasts, target areas, and if the programming is sent via a relay station.

By using this list, I identified 111 different stations I could conceivably log and decided that the English broadcasts were the only way to go. Trying to identify a foreign language station could take up precious time.

Having everything I needed, I combined the propagation charts and schedules and didn’t like what I saw. We were already on the downside of the solar cycle, and the charts I had acquired were painting a bleak picture for a successful

TRANSMITIENDO GRATAS NUEVAS ALEGRES  
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From

GUATEMALA  
“Beautiful land of the Quetzal”

Frequencies:

- 730 khz
- 3,300 khz
- 5,955 khz
- 100.7 mhz FM



Facts:

The Quetzal is the national emblem of Guatemala. This bird seldom survives in captivity, hence, symbol of liberty.

“If the Son (Christ) therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”.

John 8:36

weekend. The local weatherman said a cold front was coming through the following weekend. I hoped that this would boost reception even if only a little. I marked the weekend in red on the calendar and was ready to begin.

After a slight delay (I had to wash the dog, wash the car, mow the lawn – you know, typical things to delay a good DXing session), I was ready to start for real. The door gets locked, the radio turns on, and off we go.

**Go!**

Turning on the radio, I quickly realized that this wasn't going to be easy. My goal wasn't to receive a QSL for the loggings. But I did need to hear an ID or anything to verify the station. I began at 1700 UTC and faced a possible 19 stations on 55 different frequencies. I could have done a scan of the bands, but the dial would stop on everything, again wasting time.

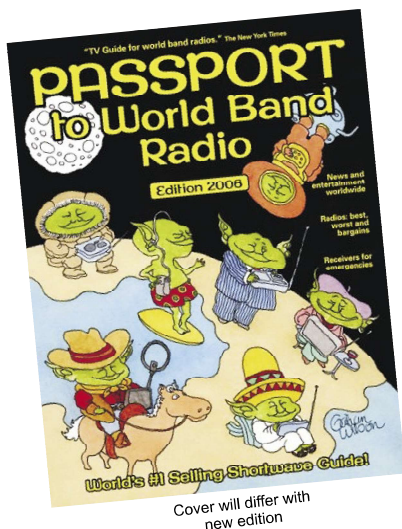
The DX-392 has 18 shortwave memory settings, so I put them to use. Whenever I had a few minutes before the next window of opportunity, I would program in 18 frequencies. This made it easy to push a button, listen a bit, push the next button, listen, and so on, until one of them came through with a verified logging.

After my first logging at 1705 UTC (Voice of Nigeria), I was feeling pretty good about my chances – an African station at this time of day used to be a rare occurrence with my meager equipment. But as the weekend bore on and the rain poured down outside, patterns began appearing: 31 meters was weak and 25 was virtually shut down, but 41 and above was humming

along quite nicely.

UTC	kHz	Log
1705	15120	Voice of Nigeria – Weak but it looks like we're off to a good start. I've always had trouble logging this one.
1735	17810	UN Radio – A surprise for me. I used to miss this one when I was more into the hobby, so catching it now made me feel like it was going to be a good weekend.
1740	9985	WWCR – Interesting discussion of someone hacking into their computers and the Dick Cheney hunting accident.
1745	21470	BBC – Get the easy ones out of the way, I always say.
2101	15180	Radio Canada
0003	13650	Radio Japan – A horrible signal. Wonder why stations can't synchronize their IDs with the fading so that it fades in when they're identifying themselves. (I'm getting giddy already.)
0010	11650	China Radio International – Fairly good signal.
0015	7325	ORF – Great signal. Things are looking up.
0033	5890	Radio Thailand – This is a Greenville relay? Terrible signal. Things aren't as good as I thought.
0038	7335	Vatican Radio – Caught their interval signal but there's heavy interference from CHU blaring over the top of it. They are strong enough to make them both out. At least the Vatican was right on time getting on the air.
0055	11800	RAI – Very weak, barely audible but enough.
0058	7345	Radio Prague – My people! I

0105	6175	Voice of Vietnam
0105	7145	Universal Life – I think I'm going to get a good dose of religion before this is over.
0110	7230	Radio Slovakia – Ugh. They beat the U.S. in Olympic hockey today. Very interesting discussion of the Slovak language – old people dying, young people leaving the country, local dialects are disappearing.
0115	5880	Radio Ukraine
0116	9820	Radio Havana Cuba – Picked it up on 9.820. Also on 6.000 but it was really weak.
0121	5850	WHRA
0145	15000	WWVH – Could hear the female voice identifying the Hawaiian time station under WWV. Hey, why not? I make an executive decision – time stations count. So...
0145	5000	WWV
0150	7335	CHU
0155	7250	Voice of Russia
0200	7270	Radio Cairo
0205	5950	Taiwan Radio International – I remember the days when Taiwan was a real gem of a catch. It was easy tonight with the relay.
0210	9515	Radio Budapest
0215	9560	KBS World Radio
0229	6010	Radio Sweden
0245	6115	Radio Tirana
0259	7400	Radio Bulgaria – Good signal on 7.400 and also on 9.700.
0300	7390	Channel Africa – Ah, the days of Radio RSA come flooding



# 2007 EDITION

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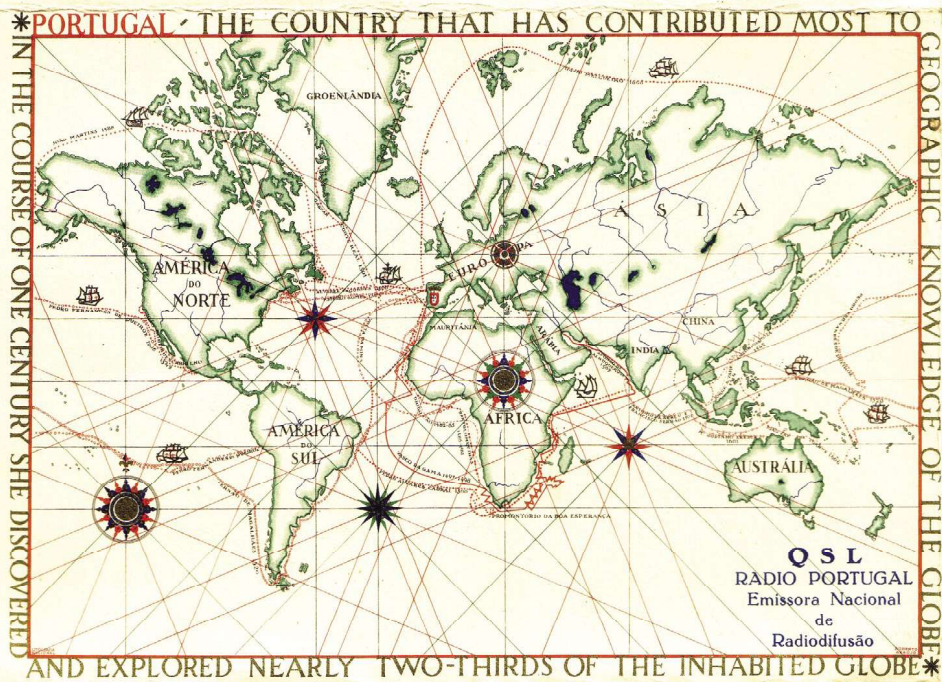
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ant surprise, VERY weak, but made out an ID.  
 1410 11715 KJES  
 1500 13810 Overcomer Ministry  
 1605 15590 KTBN – Thank goodness for American radio.

By 1630 UTC, almost 24 hours since I began the quest, I had 65 stations logged, 58 of those were positive IDs with the remaining being debatable. I continued for the next 24-hours, but the conditions were horrendous as the front pushed through and the bands were going silent and my weekend had come to an end.

### The “New World” of Shortwave

It was obvious that in this day, even as broadcasters disappear from the airwaves daily and head to the Internet and satellites, successful century weekends are still possible. There were a few restrictions that put a crimp in my actually hitting 100 loggings. The propagation for the weekend was not on my side. The number of possible catches was reduced by my using only English language broadcasts. And there were the schedules themselves, with a number of stations broadcasting only on weekdays.

The main thing I walked away with was a feeling of sadness. While the experiment was great fun and challenging, the lure, excitement, and adventure of a DXpedition such as this wasn't there for me. It was a pleasure to hear a couple of stations that I had not heard before and a couple of old friends, but much of the programming sounded more westernized than it used to. The feel for cultures half a world away was missing.

On one broadcast, Radio Slovakia had a story about their older citizens dying and the younger ones leaving the country for better jobs at an alarming rate. As a consequence, rare dialects and cultures from different regions were vanishing. I had the feeling I was witnessing the same on the shortwave bands.

- 0303 7285 Croatian Radio – Interesting news headlines. Each item is accentuated with a dramatic music burst – da-da-daaa!
- 0310 9750 Radio Malaysia – Heavy QRM from all sides.
- 0327 7210 Radio Belarus – Interference is pretty heavy.
- 0359 9555 Radio France International – The schedules I have said it was supposed to be in English. There was an English ID then into French.
- 0402 6020 Voice of Turkey – Picked it up on 6.020 and also on 7.240 but it was weak.
- 0427 6050 Radio Nigeria – Heavy QRM from nearby Spanish station
- 0435 6280 Israel Broadcasting Authority – Weak, weak, weak. But it looks like 25 meters is opening up.
- 0455 9775 Voice of America – I remember when I first started and picked VOA up for the first time as a kid. I really thought I had something.
- 0500 6165 Radio Netherlands
- 0505 9565 Deutsche Welle
- 0510 3185 WWRB
- 0515 5850 WEWN
- 0520 7415 WBCQ – The odd one of the session. They played a phone call from “Roving Radio Dude Dwayne” in Orlando. He talked about his reports on WBCQ. The word “sucks” used 3 times...wait, 6...wait 9...wait, the same 5 minute phone call is being re-broadcast, at least 3 times in 15 minutes. THAT sucks.
- 0600 6150 Universal Network
- 0605 11640 Trans World Radio

- 1120 12005 HCJB – Where have I been? HCJB used to be all over the bands at all hours of the day from Ecuador. This isn't Kansas anymore.
- 1255 7520 WHRI
- 1300 11850 Radio Polonia – VERY weak, almost inaudible but caught an ID.
- 1305 15105 Radio Romania – My ears will be ringing after this one. Horrible interference.
- 1310 13570 WINB
- 1330 9690 All India Radio – A pleas-

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The eyes have it – or have had it. It's time to turn in and get the ringing out of the ears. Next thing I know it's 1000. Ugh, only wanted to sleep an hour or so. Oh well, back at it.

- 1014 11775 World Universal Radio
- 1106 9475 Radio Australia
- 1110 5950 WYFR
- 1115 13840 Radio New Zealand Interna-