

Phil's Portable Guide 2005

VERSION 1 ©2005



The information below is not guaranteed to be entirely free of mistakes.

1. Introduction.

Passport 2005 reviews 37 portables in 60 pages; we do it in four. Charts are organized by radio size in cubic inches. Negative attributes appear highlighted in yellow; positive in green; turquoise is used for emphasis. The "Rating" column indicates performance. The "Memories" column reflects only shortwave presets. The "Weight" column is in grams and includes batteries.

2. Is the radio portable?

We will exclude large radios over 72 cubic inches in volume. The radios below are roughly two to twenty-two times as large as this cut-off value. Two are very expensive and two are poor performers. Notice however that the Satellit-800 is by far the best performing portable.

Radio	Rating	Cost	Size (ci)	Memories	Problems
SW-77	VERY GOOD	\$580	142	162	FLIMSY ANTENNA
ATS-818ACS	POOR	\$225	198	18	POOR SSB
S-350	POOR	\$100	239	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
Satellit-800	EXCELLENT	\$500	1641	70	WEIGHS 15 LBS

3. Is the radio double-conversion?

We will exclude the single-conversion radios below. Double-conversion is necessary to reduce images. The small radios below are poor performers and have no SSB reception. Units combining digital frequency counter displays with ANALOG tuning experience annoying drift and have no memories. Notice that radios with considerable memories are more expensive.

Radio	Rating	Cost	Size (ci)	Memories	Problems
DE-205	POOR	\$15	10	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
KA-105	POOR	\$55	11	10	NO SSB
KK-C300	POOR	\$40	12	10	NO SSB
KA-818	POOR	\$35	12	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
KK-989	POOR	\$25	14	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
G1000A	POOR	\$50	15	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
E100 (PL-200)	POOR	\$100	16	200	NO SSB
CX-CB91	POOR	\$15	17	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
KK-S320	POOR	\$55	19	5	NO SSB
YB-50	POOR	\$80	20	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
M300PE	POOR	\$40	22	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
G2000 Porsche	POOR	\$80	24	10	NO SSB
KK-E200	POOR	\$65	28	12	NO SSB
YB-550PE	POOR	\$100	28	200	NO SSB
ATS-404	POOR	\$80	39	18	NO SSB
JX-M14	POOR	\$30	42	0	ANALOG, NO SSB
E10 (PL-550)	FAIR	\$130	42	500	NO SSB

4. Can the radio handle adjacent interference?

Selective fading is rare; while, one-sided interference is not. A radio needs either sideband-selectable SAM or two (narrow and wide) filter bandwidths. In the later case the narrow filter is selected and the radio is detuned up or down by one or two kHz to reduce adjacent interference.

Sony offers four radios with sideband-selectable SAM; however, high cost disqualifies the ones below. Each has few memories, a poor speaker, and no tuning knob. Notice however that the SW-100S is the best performing mini-radio (only 13 cubic inches).

Radio	Rating	Cost	Size (ci)	Memories	Problems
SW-100S	GOOD	\$360	13	30	POOR SPEAKER, NO KNOB, CLAM
SW-07	VERY GOOD	\$355	25	10	POOR SPEAKER, NO KNOB, CLAM
SW-1000T	GOOD	\$450	45	32	POOR SPEAKER, NO KNOB

The radios below were disqualified for having no sideband-selectable SAM and only one bandwidth. SSB reception is either missing or poor. The SW-35 and SW-40 do not come with an AC adapter (~\$20).

Radio	Rating	Cost	Size (ci)	Memories	Problems
eTraveller VII	POOR	\$100	10	10	NO KEYPAD, NO SSB
ATS-606	FAIR	\$120	25	54	NO SSB
SW-35	FAIR	\$79	42	50	NO KEYPAD, NO SSB
SW-40	POOR	\$120	46	20	NO KEYPAD, NO SSB
YB-80	GOOD	\$160	52	18	POOR SSB
ATS-505	FAIR	\$120	72	18	POOR SSB

5. Any other problems?

The KA-1101 only has 20 memories while the SW-55 is costly at \$360. Both have two bandwidths but no sideband-selectable SAM.

Radio	Rating	Cost	Size (ci)	Memories	Problems
KA-1101	GOOD	\$66	23	20	NO KNOB
SW-55	GOOD	\$360	59	125	EATS BATTERIES

6. The Top Five.

All five radios below are *recommended*. There are three familiar faces and two small newcomers from Degen. The YB-400PE and DE-1103 have the better "pause and continue" type band scanning. The chart on the next page lists some pluses and minuses for each.

Radio	Rating	Cost	Size (ci)	Memories	Weight (gr)
DE-1102	GOOD	\$64	28	133	354
DE-1103	GOOD	\$64	32	268	392
SW-7600GR	GOOD	\$146	45	100	716
YB-400PE	GOOD	\$130	60	40	733
ATS-909	GOOD	\$240	69	307	999



DE-1102



SW-7600GR



YB-400PE



ATS-909

Radio	Pluses	Minuses
DE-1102	AUDIO, FM	SSB ONLY IN "PAGE 9"
DE-1103	KNOB, GOOD DYNAMIC RANGE, FM	ODD VOLUME, NO 5-KHz STEPS, HIGH CURRENT
SW-7600GR	SIDEBAND-SELECTABLE SAM	NO AC ADAPTER, NO EARPHONES
YB-400PE	AUDIO, FM	POOR SSB, NEEDS 6 "AA" BATTERIES [NOT 4]
ATS-909	KNOB, ALPHA TAGS, 40-Hz STEPS	NEEDS EXTERNAL ANTENNA, EATS BATTERIES

7. An overall winner...



The **Degen DE-1103** costs just \$64 on Ebay. Incredibly this includes: the radio, shipping, an AC adapter, a 220V to 110V converter, 4 "AA" NiMH rechargeable batteries, a 30 foot random-wire antenna, earbuds, and a cloth pouch! The radio is only 32 cubic inches, 0.86 pounds, and well built. Features include MW/LW/SW/FM, AM/SSB, two bandwidths (6-kHz and 3-kHz), 268 memories, 17-dB attenuator, clock, dual alarm, sleep timer, keypad lock, simulated analog display, and band scanning. The DE-1103 has a backlight, keypad, tuning knob, wrist loop, and stand. There are earphone, line out, antenna, and power jacks. Coverage includes 100 kHz to 29,999 kHz [AM/SSB] as well as 76 MHz to 108 MHz [FM]. MW and LW reception is via a built-in 5.7" ferrite rod.

To change the volume on the DE-1103 the "VOL" button is touched and then the tuning dial is turned. This is blown into being a major problem but some reviewers. The 5-kHz tuning steps are barely missed because of the handy band scanning feature. Memories can be stepped through via the tuning knob. The buttons have good tactile feel and are backlit for easy usage in the dark. The DE-1103 has greater whip sensitivity and external antenna overload immunity than the SW-7600GR and YB-400PE. The DE-1103 accomplishes the overload immunity by bypassing the 10-dB RF amplifier when connected to an external antenna. The ATS-909 has poor whip sensitivity but does well with an external antenna.

Another great portable is the SW-7600GR with its sideband-selectable SAM-mode. Comparatively, the SW-7600GR offers no AC adapter, no rechargeable batteries, no earphones, no tuning knob, and less than half the memories: in a 40% larger package at 2.3 times the cost of the DE-1103. The YB-400PE and ATS-909 are over twice as costly as the DE-1103, do not include batteries, and are nearly double in size. The YB-400PE has distorted SSB reception; while the ATS-909 battery cover and stand can break easily.

The DE-1103 is small and inexpensive enough to take anywhere. Double-conversion reduces images, PLL synthesis reduces drift, a second bandwidth reduces adjacent interference, and good dynamic range allows usage of an external antenna. The tuning knob and simulated analog display are nice features. The radio is capable of listening to hams using SSB. Degen has become a significant player in the portable market.

8. Portable Awards.

Distinction	Radio	Cost	Size (ci)	Memories
BEST OVERALL	DE-1103	\$64	32	268
RUNNER UP	SW-7600GR	\$146	45	100
BEST PERFORMER	Satellit-800	\$500	1641	70
BEST MINI-RADIO	SW-100S	\$360	13	30

Thanks

I wish to thank my good friend Ken.

Contact

Please direct all comments to just_rtfm@<NOSPAM>yahoo.com. dr phil :)



May the immortals fill your cup with joy!

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