
SCANNERS

SHORTWAVE

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FTA TV

"12 satellite dishes for the ultimate TV freedom"

Al Jessup likes television and his home has 12 satellite dishes to prove it. The dishes are connected to three separate television sets and the West Virginian resident can receive more than 5000 channels from several satellites. Some of the channels are from paid services like Direct TV and Dish Network while the majority comes from "Free-To-Air" (FTA) satellites.

Most satellites have hundreds of channels that are compressed with MPEG2 and then multiplexed into a single data stream. A correctly programmed receiver can split the data back into a viewable channel. Jessup devotes one television set, satellite receiver and dish to Direct TV and another set for Dish Network. The third television set and remaining ten dishes are connected to an FTA receiver.



FTA receivers are user-programmable and can receive video streams from almost any satellite in the sky. The boxes are made by several manufacturers with Pansat and ViewSat being two of the largest vendors. You can think of the receivers as a blank slate version of ones from Direct TV or Dish. Out of the box, the receivers can only receive free and unencrypted channels from certain news and government stations such as NASA. However, with the correct firmware and channel list file uploaded via an RS-232 serial port, users can watch thousands of encrypted channels. Satellite owners will often switch

THE URBAN DX'ER

Established 1984

channels and re-encrypt the transmissions to frustrate owners of FTA boxes, but new firmware updates are generally released the same day on several pirate forums.

All of Jessup's twelve dishes are fixed-mounted to his front porch railing and each point to a different satellite. Many satellite dish owners use a motor to automatically point the dish to certain satellites, but this takes time to change channels. Owners of multiple dishes generally have a toggle switch that switches the input from different satellites.

<http://forums.koreanf2a.tv/forumdisplay.php?f=167>

CABLE TV A-LA-CARTE!

Federal regulators recently said cable-TV providers should allow consumers to order channels a la carte, rather than force them to buy prepackaged bundles of programs.

The statement by Federal Communications Commission Chairman Kevin Martin came at a Senate hearing focused on decency standards and reversed the findings of an agency study under former Chairman Michael Powell.

Martin said there were "mistakes" in the first study's calculations, and he indicated he believes a pay-per-channel model could work economically and save consumers money.

Jeff Kagan, an independent communications analyst near Atlanta, said the problem now is that channels don't cost the same. But he believes it could work if channels are grouped together in smaller packages than they are now, perhaps a group of five or 10.

"Customers love to get loads of channels, but they would rather save money with fewer channels (they really want). The television marketplace does not reflect consumer choices," Kagan said.

It's unclear, however, what impact the policy shift will have. The FCC said it wouldn't push Congress to impose mandates, although lawmakers could decide to take up the issue.

And cable industry officials, who have said an a la carte model would increase costs and reduce programming choices, continued to argue against government mandates. But some analysts believe cable- and satellite-TV providers now will be under pressure to at least offer a family oriented program package - if not individual or smaller packages of channels.

David Moskowitz, executive vice president of Douglas County-based Echo Star, operator of the Dish Network, told the Senate Commerce Committee that the satellite-TV provider would consider offering a family friendly tier.

But he said the company is essentially blocked from offering such a package now because of the bundling requirements imposed by large media companies.

Comcast referred questions to the National Cable & Telecommunications Association in Washington, which likened the possibility of mandatory a la carte pricing to "massive government intrusion."

Industry officials noted they have given parents devices to block unwanted content, enabling them in effect to create their own family friendly programming. Echo Star subscribers, for example, can block by channel or by an individual program's rating.

Several analysts said the problem with a pay-per-channel model is that the cost of channels can vary widely. Networks such as MTV, ESPN and Cartoon Network charge cable and satellite providers a monthly license fee to carry their service.

Industry officials argue the packaging of programs into big bundles is needed to keep costs low and special-interest channels alive. If, for example, a specialized channel is no longer part of a big package, many of its current subscribers may decide to drop it. That, in turn, could force those channels to increase subscriber fees, or cut or discontinue programming.

"We've been through this dance quite a number of times, and the business model (paying for individual channels) just doesn't work," said Matthew Harrigan, a cable-TV analyst with Janco Partners in Greenwood Village. "If you want to have more marginal special-interest channels squeezed off the air, fine."

While some of the current focus is a result of concerns by the "Christian right" about program decency, Harrigan said, Congress likely has more important issues to face than requiring a la carte pricing. But he said the debate could put pressure on the cable-TV industry to modify its packages.

"Realistically what might come out of it are some family friendly tiers" of programming, Harrigan said. "And I think that's reasonable."

Qwest, which wants to offer TV services over its telephone infrastructure in the Denver area, said the answer isn't more government regulation but more competition. (Qwest offers TV services now in parts of Highlands Ranch and in one development in Lone Tree).

"The U.S. General Accounting Office has found that cable rates in communities with wire-based TV competition are 15 to 41 percent lower," Qwest said in a statement. "Unfortunately, only 2 percent of the nation has facilities-based video competition."

Kagan also said encouraging competition from phone companies and satellite-television companies could help usher in more consumer choices.

Changing the menu

The FCC announced a policy shift Tuesday, saying cable providers should allow consumers to choose and pay for just the channels they want, rather than the current setup of requiring them to buy prepackaged bundles of programming.

Pros of a la carte pricing:

- Ultimate in consumer choice.
- Consumers would pay just for the channels they want.
- Consumers could save money depending on how many channels they order.

Cons of paying per channel:

- Price per channel likely would be higher than if in a big bundle.
- Consumers could wind up paying more if they order a lot of channels.

- Could lead to fewer TV channels to choose from and less program diversity.

XM MUSIC NOW ON DIRECT TV

If you have DirecTV, you now also have 50 or 67 music channels from XM Satellite Radio. This is great for people who want XM's mostly wonderful music formats in their homes, but don't want to invest in an (extra) XM receiver (or pay the monthly fee). The number of channels available depends on your DirecTV plan. Almost all the channels offered are formats created and programmed by XM and are commercial free. All major and many minor musical genres are covered.

The line-up does not include XM's talk and sports channels. Nor do the channel assignments (in the 800's on DirecTV) have any relationship to the XM channel assignments.

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Operating frequencies used for NFL games at Giant Stadium. The radios are used for communications between teams during football games.

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451.5375	451.5875	452.3125
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452.7875	452.8875	452.9875
456.2875	456.3625	456.4125
456.5375	456.5875	457.3125
457.4875	457.6375	457.6875
457.7875	457.8875	457.9875
462.1875	462.2125	462.2375
462.2625	462.2875	462.3125
462.3375	462.3625	462.3875
462.4125	462.4375	462.4625
462.4875	462.5125	467.1875
467.2125	467.2375	467.2625
467.2875	467.3125	467.3375
467.3625	467.3875	467.4125
467.4375	467.4625	467.4875
467.5125		

PIRATE FM STATION

From Bill, KA2KHV, "a friend of mine in Irvington, David, reports that WKCR Columbia University's station is being wiped out by a Caribbean station calling itself Roadblock Radio. Bill was scanning the fm band and can pick it up down in Middlesex county. WKCR 89.9 FM is in the

clear, but David says that the 90.1 signal kills it where he lives. Check this out!

SANGEAN ATS-909 PC PROGRAMMING

For as long as the Sangean ATS-909 and it's clones (the Radio Shack DX398, Roberts R861 & Siemens RK777) has been available, users of these radios have been asking what purpose does those DATA IN holes on the bottom of the radio serve and does anyone make anything that uses them? Finally someone has stepped forward with a programming kit that answers those questions.

Tomas Ramirez has developed the ATS909 Programmer. The ATS909 Programmer uploads and downloads the Sangean ATS909 and it's clones 306 memories (presets) via a computer's parallel port a.k.a. printer port. The ATS909 Programmer is not a computer controller program for these radios as these holes were not put there for that use. The ATS909 Programmer kit includes the software (Windows only) and the cable needed to get started. All you have to do is come up with the frequencies you wish to program into the radio. For more info visit

<http://www.radiointel.com/review-ats909program.htm>

And

<http://www.ats909programer.com/>

THE MEADOWLANDS ON 220?

On 10/20/05 the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority in East Rutherford, NJ was issued licenses in the 220 MHz band. For those of you who are hams, licensed amateur radio operators, you may recall our fight to save 220 several years ago. We lost and part of that band was given to UPS. As far as I know, UPS never used it and it's been little more than an "interesting" band to monitor. According to the FCC's announcement, the frequencies will be used for communications for emergency, life safety, crowd protection and control and critical communications during scheduled events open to the public on their premises. It's not known when use will begin or what mode will be used. Here's the list of frequencies, start programming and get listening!

220.8025	220.8075	220.8125
220.8175	220.8225	220.8275
220.8325	220.8375	220.8425
220.8475	220.9025	220.9075
220.9125	221.8025	221.8075
221.8125	221.8175	221.8225
221.8275	221.8325	221.8375
221.8425	221.8475	221.9025

221.9075 221.9125

SUMMIT – UNION COUNTY

The city of Summit, Union County was issued a license on 10/17/05 for what appears to be a new trunked radio system. At this time no info is known. Readers are asked to forward any details.

476.0375 476.1375 476.1875
 476.2125 479.0375 479.1375
 479.1875 479.2125 479.0375
 479.1375 479.1875 479.2125

INTERNET GOES INTO OUTER SPACE

LONDON — Satellite network operator Inmarsat has officially switched on its broadband service, dubbed BGAN. The Broadband Global Area Network is targeted at users in locations with unreliable telecoms infrastructure as well as enterprises.

Six years in development, the service will offer simultaneous voice and data at rates up to 492kbit/s, with the option of transmission speed guaranteed at up to 256kbit/s. For the moment, the service is limited to the footprint of the first of the operators' I-4 satellites, which was launched in March and covers Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. It will be extended in the middle of next year to North and South America when the second of the fourth generation satellites, launched last month, is tested and fully commissioned.

This will give coverage for 85 percent of the world's land mass, and a third satellite is being readied for launch to extend the service to Inmarsat's traditional clientele in the global maritime and aeronautical communications sector. Inmarsat says the I-4 satellites are the most advanced commercially used satellites launched, with exceptionally long life times and the ability to dynamically allocate beams wherever required. For the initial launch, terminals are available from Norwegian group Nera Satcom, the World Pro 1000, which at 1kg and about half the size of a laptop is the smallest in the range, and Danish company Thrane & Thrane, who's Explorer 500 weighs just below 1.5kg. Hughes Network Systems will soon be offering a multi-user device, the HNS9201, to be followed soon after by an entry-level terminal from Singapore design group Add value Communications.

The terminal suppliers say they already have

15,000 orders between them.

Inmarsat says the terminals are extremely easy to connect up using wired or wireless connections, including Bluetooth for the voice service and 802.11b for data links.

Thrane & Thrane has also developed a Radio Access Network controller for the system, while Ericsson has been chosen as the supplier for a UMTS 3G compatible terrestrial core network. "BGAN is probably our most significant revenue growth opportunity in a decade, and represents a \$1.5bn investment", said Michael Butler, Inmarsat's Chief Operating Officer.

The cost of transferring one megabyte of data from anywhere in the world is put at between \$4 to \$7, while a voice call is expected to cost under \$1 a minute.

"If you take your laptop with a 3G data card on it, you will pay nearly three times that per megabyte when you are roaming," said Butler. Inmarsat, which was set up as an intergovernmental organization in 1979 to provide communications to the global maritime community, said BGAN would be cheaper compared with traditional satellite communications, and in some cases cheaper than regular mobile communications. It is now a private company quoted on the London stock exchange following an IPO earlier this year.

NEW NYPD CHANNEL

This evening (12/28) NYPD Queens Radio Repair was busy testing the new repeater on 472.6125 with PL of 151.4. Radio Repair was calling over "testing on Traffic Enforcement".

Happy New Year

This issue closes out another year. It's the appropriate time to thank each of you who contributed info to this newsletter. Contrary to popular belief, most of the newsletter's content comes from our readers and listeners to our weekly net. Here's wishing that your new year will be healthy, happy, and prosperous – and full of good listening!

Cheers!

Bob, WA2SQQ

Charlie, N2NOV

Urban DX'er would like to thank all those who contributed to this month's issue!
Charlie - N2NOV, and "Anonymous"

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