

THE KRS ALL-BAND "ACTIVE" ANTENNA: A REVIEW

by Mike Hardester

From the time I began DXing and SWLing in the late '60s, I have longed for two things (actually three, but let's stick to the hobby): a good receiver and a good antenna. Obtaining the former is a simple matter of eating peanut butter sandwiches and drinking water for a few years (like since the late '60s), then suddenly all the money saved is carefully and lovingly paid out for the "ultimate" receiver! So far that's half the story.

The other half of the story is the antenna. I'm sure many of us would give up our first WSEB QSL (HCJB no doubt) in order to have a really efficient antenna system. However, even if you give up an entire year's collection of HCJB QSLs, there's little chance you're going to realize that dream antenna system if you live "in the city". Still, there is hope.

On a recent visit to Radio West, Grant Manning and I discussed the problem of having a good receiver and little in the way of an antenna system. At the time, I was virtually "living in a trashcan in downtown San Diego" and, DXwise, hating every minute of it. I had about 75 feet of wire in the air, but when it came to the 60 and 90 meter bands and ECB, my only loggings were from my wife's microwave oven and the neighbor's swimming pool heater! And the worst part was neither would QSL! Chronic depression was a reality.

After explaining my situation to Grant, he suggested I try out a prototype "active" antenna which Radio West was developing and I quickly accepted. A description of the antenna, from the new Radio West catalog, begins "This antenna consists of three parts: A telescopic three foot whip antenna with an FET preamp sealed in a weather-proof PVC enclosure, attached to 50 feet of RG-58 coax, a post-amplifier located at the receiver, containing a high power RF transistor for low intermodulation distortion and a RF gain control to prevent receiver overload, and a small AC power adapter.

The Active Antenna can be battery powered for portable or field use. While no antenna is better than another under all conditions, with all receivers, on all frequencies, the KRS All-Band "Active" Antenna is, in general, equal to a 100 foot longwire over the 200 kHz to 50 MHz frequencies. Supplied with three feet of shielded cable, phone jack to stripped and tinned leads for connection to the receiver".

I used the antenna at my home in San Diego where the only comparison I could make was with the 75 feet of wire and my three receivers: SPR-4, FRG-7, and FRG-7000. There was, actually, no comparison; the "active" antenna outperformed my wire antenna on all bands. However, I did notice some over-loading of the front-end in the medium-wave spectrum, but Grant advises this problem with the antenna I tested has been corrected in the production units now available.

Not satisfied with one test, I asked Grant if I could try out the "active" antenna at Radio West (located in a fairly QRM-free environment) along with his 200 foot longwire and KS preselector. Grant agreed. So, one dark and cold night (all night!) amid the local raccoons fighting outside, I proceeded to DX...er, test the antenna systems. The receivers in use were the FRG-7, FRG-7000, and the new Kenwood R-1000 (nice receiver!).

For reference purposes, Radio West is located in Escondido, California, about 30 miles/50 km northeast of San Diego. Of the three receivers used, there did not seem to be greater sensitivity of one unit over the other, though the R-1000 was easier to tune owing to the "automatic" preselector built in. Following is a brief list of the stations heard and their respective "S-meter" readings. Although of questionable value, I'm using the "S-meter" readings simply as a point of reference in relation to the antenna type used:

kHz/station	Active	200' LW	200' LW/preamp
3250 - SABC	2-3	N/A	9+30
3300 - R. Cultural	9	9	9+35
3390 - R. Zaracay	2	2	9+30
4680 - R. Nacional Espejo	3	N/A	9+20
245 - "AN" at San Diego International	3	1	3
233 - "LG" at Long Beach Airport	2	N/A	4
680 - KNER, San Francisco	9+30	9+30	N/A
830 - WCCO, Minneapolis/St. Paul	9+10	3	N/A
890 - WLS, Chicago	9+10	9+20	N/A

A point of clarification: the preselector for the longwire does not tune below 2 MHz, so no comparison is possible for the medium wave band.

Quite possibly the KRS All-Band "Active" Antenna will prove to be what many apartment and mobile home residents have been looking for: an antenna which won't bring down the wrath of the management! The price is \$115.00, including shipping from Radio West, 3417 Purer Rd., Escondido, CA 92025.