

A JAMAICAN DX'ING HOLIDAY

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As the L1011 Whisperliner lifted off the runway of Miami's International Airport, it finally hit me that I, at last, was going to make it to Jamaica---that island of the West Indies where (according to the brochures) "clear, aquamarine seas stroke ivory beaches in naturally varying rhythms and where a blindingly white sun warms the air and skips its light off mountains green and lush and gentle." Six days, six whole days of lying in the sun, sipping rum punch, and DX'ing from the geographical center of the Caribbean Sea. The prospects were intoxicating. To heighten the mood even further, someone toward the front of the plane began singing, "Down in Jamaica, they've got, lot's of pretty women..."

My home for the next week would be the beach at Negril, a relatively undeveloped seven-mile stretch of coast an hour's drive to the west and south of Montego Bay. Discovered in the late 1960's by affluent "flower children," Negril has a reputation as a slow-moving, unspoiled alternative to the commercialism of Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, and Kingston. It also had the potential of being a very good DX'ing location. And carefully packed in my suitcases were my DX tools---a modified (narrow IF filter) Sony ICF-6500W, a modified TRF, and a Hot Rod. To supplement this arsenal I had also packed 50' of wire, the latest WRTH, Schatz's Cuban list, Hutton's split list, my own list of targets and unID's and miscellaneous items such as tape, screwdrivers, pliers, etc. I was not totally optimistic, though. The Cubans were potent pests in northwest Florida and could be expected to be far worse on an island roughly 100 miles south of Fidel. And conditions could easily be sub-par for the short period I'd be in Jamaica. As it turned out, these were problems but they were easily secondary to the principal one---the atmosphere of Negril itself.

Flight 973 touched down at Montego Bay airport on time and, after being greeted by singing Jamaican school girls and a representative of Jamaica's rum industry who was serving complimentary rum punches (I had six; they were little), I found myself in the back of a mini-bus performing aerial acrobatics as the driver tried to set a new land speed record on the sickeningly winding two-lane road connecting Montego Bay and Negril. After a seeming eternity, we arrived in Negril and, after settling in that first night, I realized I was too tired for serious DX'ing so, instead, I tuned to Radio Jamaica FM and fell asleep to the ska beat of some very entrancing reggae.

The next morning was beautifully clear and bright so I decided to sit on the beach and casually scan the band to get an idea of conditions. Not ten minutes had passed before I realized that it is next to impossible to DX on the beach at Negril. This is because of three things: (1) Long Bay, the seven-mile stretch of reef-enclosed water that forms Negril Beach, is indescribably beautiful and listening to static on a man-made electronic box seems sacrilegious; (2) every five minutes a native Jamaican stops to offer you anything from money to various illegal drugs to "a good time with my cousin" in exchange for your radio (Jamaica only imports certain brands; all others are highly desired); and finally, (3) the beach at Negril is topless throughout its length and swimsuit-optional on much of it.

Now I enjoy DX'ing as much as anyone and it would have been an easy step to take to retreat to my room to avoid the bids by the locals for my radio. And while sequestered indoors, the allure of Negril's natural beauty could probably have been kept out of mind. But, the thought of missing scantily (at most) clad young ladies strolling up and down the beach, well, as I said, I enjoy DX'ing but....

So, as a result, I only managed one daytime bandscan during my stay and, unfortunately, only about 20 hours of DX'ing during the night. Nonetheless, I thought I'd share what loggings I did manage.

The following loggings contain both midday and mid-evening receptions; no sunrise or sunset skip sessions were attempted nor were time or luck sufficient to avoid extensive unID's.

- 530 Costa Rica. TICAL only slightly better than received in Pensacola; nights only.
- 535 Grenada. Present only as a weak carrier during mid-evening.
- 540 Colombia. Dominant all times with R. de Colombia ID's.
Nicaragua R. Corporacion fair around the clock; better than NW FL.
- 550 Cuba. R. Rebelde owning the channel at night; equal to Jamaica days.
Jamaica Only 50 miles away but being tested by Cuba during daylight.
UNID Poor LA under the others.
- 555 Nicaragua. Good day and night. No sign of St. Kitts.
- 557 UNID. Not separable.
- 560 Jamaica. Good day and night with weak unID LA under.
- 570 Cuba. Rebelde dominant days.
Venezuela. Replaced Cuba at night atop frequency; Rumbos ID's.
- 580 Jamaica. R. Jamaica owns it day and night.
Cuba. Very weak under Jamaica days.
- 590 Cuba. Only fair but dominant at all times.
Dominican Republic. R. Santa Maria poor but readable at night.
- 595 Dominica. Surprisingly weak but present at night.
- 600 Cuba. Rebelde the one, day and night.
Colombia. Fair in partial Cuban null around the clock; R. Libertad.
- 610 FL, Miami. WIOD always atop Cuba.
Cuba. Rebelde losing to WIOD.
- 620 Cuba. Always strong.
Jamaica. Excellent in Cuban null, especially during the day.
FL, St. Pete. WSUN occasionally in at night under the others.
- 625 Nothing.
- 630 Cuba. Very good day and night.
El Salvador. Weak in Cuban null during day; La Monumental ID's.
- 640 Guatemala. TGW atop channel during day, weaker at night.
Cuba. R. Progreso best at night; weakest of three during day.
Cuba. R. Liberacion second best daytimer.
- 650 Guadeloupe. No sign of.
Cuba. Liberacion atop during the day.
TN, Nashville. WSM owns it at night.
- 655 El Salvador. Surprisingly poor at night; much better in Pensacola.
Nothing during the day.
- 660 Haiti. Very good and atop at night.
Cuba. R. Progreso the one during the day.
UNID. Weak unID LA here weakly all times.
- 670 Cuba. Liberacion atop days; 500 Hz het.
Venezuela. Rumbos dominant nights; //570.
- 680 Cuba. Liberacion best during the day.
El Salvador. Fair in Cuban null during daylight.
NC, Raleigh. WPTF good at night.
- 690 Cuba. Liberacion good all times.
Honduras. Fair under Cuban at night; LV de Honduras ID's.
- 700 Jamaica. R. One best of the lot day and night.
Cuba. R. Liberacion audible under Jamaica all times.
OH, Cincinnati. WLW intermittent and weak at night.
- 705 Honduras. LV de Olancho very good nights; much better than Pensacola. No sign of St. Vincent.
- 710 FL, Miami. WGBS the only station audible at any hour; good signal
- 720 Jamaica. R. Jamaica barely dominant days.
Cuba. Liberacion good in Jamaica null.
UNID. Fair strength LA audible but unreadable days.
- 725 Surinam. Not audible; perhaps not on the air.
- 730 Cuba. Liberacion rules the frequency day and night.
- 735 Ecuador. R. Melodia very good; better than Pensacola.
- 740 Cuba. Liberacion dominant day and night.
- 750 Jamaica. Good nights; replaced by next two during day.
Nicaragua. R. Sandino fair days.
Venezuela. R. Caracas poor to fair during daylight.
- 760 Cuba. Reloj best all times.
Colombia. Good in partial Cuban null all times; LV de Barranquilla.
- 765 El Salvador. R. Universal no problem nights.
- 770 Jamaica. Good days.
Panama. LV de Herrera fair at night.
- 775 Expected R. La Prensa (Ecuador) to be easy; no sign of it.
- 780 Colombia. R. Almirante alone day and night.
- 790 Jamaica. Owns 790 but didn't hear R. Central ID's.
FL, Miami. WNWS fair under, all times.
- 800 Cuba. R. Progreso superloud always; obliterating all else.

- 810 Colombia. Sutatenza loud nights, poor days.
Cuba. Progreso weak-fair, days.
- 815 Ecuador. Fair nights, nothing during the day.
- 820 Cuba. Progreso dominant at all times.
Nicaragua. Weak but readable during daylight.
- 825 Panama. Good at night with Peninsula ID's. No St. Kitts.
- 830 UNID. Only one extremely weak LA audible, strange.
- 834 Belize. Easy around the clock.
- 840 Haiti. Ruled 840 most nights.
Cuba. Best during the day; Progreso.
Nicaragua. R. Noticias making it on groundwave days.
UNID. Another LA daytimer unreadable.
- 850 Cuba. Liberacion (not progreso) very strong always.
- 860 Cuba. Metropolitana dominant all times; nothing else audible.
- 870 Cuba. Progreso good days, fair nights.
LA, New Orleans. WWL better of the two during the night.
- 880 Cuba. Progreso loud, masking all else.
- 885 Montserrat. Poor nights with intermittent audio.
- 890 Cuba. Musical Nacional always strong; nothing else in.
- 895 Haiti. Trans Artibonite readable day and night.
- 900 Nicaragua. R. Tiempo in well during the day; a mix of many at night.
- 905 El Salvador. Radiopolis very good nights; only a carrier days.
- 910 Cuba. R. Cadena Agramonte dominant all times.
UNID. A "R. Caribe" here days only but nothing listed.
- 915 Ecuador. "C-R-O" poor nights; typical Pensacola reception is better.
- 918 Nicaragua. Fair-good evenings.
- 920 Cuba. Progreso at good level at all times but audio distorted.
- 925 Nothing.
- 927 UNID. Very weak carrier nights.
- 930 El Salvador. YSTG here during the day; no Montserrat ever.
- 930.5 Cuba. The off-frequency Reloj loud nights.
- 940 FL, Miami. WINZ owns 940 at night; good in Cuban partial null days.
Cuba. Reloj fair.
- 944 Honduras. Panamericana in well at all times.
- 950 UNID. Was awaiting an ID after a lengthy monologue by SS male but audio suddenly stopped leaving only an open carrier which remained for days. Cuba?
- 960 Cuba. Reloj dominant day and night with a 200 Hz het; nothing else.
- 970 FL, Tampa. WFLA atop nights.
American Virgin Islands. WSTX in poorly during daylight.
- 980 Cuba. Atop though only fair.
UNID. Upbeat LA mx day and night but never an ID.
- 988 UNID. But I bet it was the Cuban.
- 990 Ecuador. Radiodif. Tarqui one of the better daytime catches, though poor. Nothing dominant at night, just GY-like hash.
- 995 Ecuador. R. Mil very good at night.
- 1000 Cuba. Owns it days; good nights.
American Virgin Islands. Very poor days under Cuba.
OK, Oklahoma City. Was a bit surprised to find KTOK the best most nights; it's usually only fair in Pensacola.
- 1006 UNID. Very weak carrier nights.
- 1010 Cuba. R. Guama good around the clock; only unreadable hash under.
- 1020 Cuba. Guama dominant days.
Nicaragua. R. Reloj poor but readable days in Cuban null.
Venezuela. R. Calendario takes over channel at night; no KDKA.
- 1025 Colombia. Just a little better than usual Pensacola reception; fair.
- 1030 Cuba. Guama good days.
Turks and Caicos. Presumed the one at fair level in Cuban null
Caribbean EE; audible all times.
Colombia. Here at night at good strength; RCN.
- 1035 Haiti. No sign of.
- 1040 Cuba. No Guama listed but // 1010, 1020, etc.; good day and night.
Colombia. R. Tropical battling Guama at night; CARACOL.
- 1045 Panama. Very poor nights; no Haiti.
- 1050 Cuba. Dominant all times and //1010, 1020, etc.
UNID. EE station weak under Cuba.
- 1055 Colombia. LV del Centro very poor nights.
- 1060 Cuba. CMKS owns the channel all times.
- 1070 Cuba. Atop the frequency day and night; //1060.
Colombia. Em. Atlantico fair days (gone nights); 1 kHz het.
- 1080 Cuba. Good days and // 1060, etc.
FL, Coral Gables. WVGC fair under Cuba days; nights are a messy mix of many stations.
- 1090 Cuba. Atop the channel days and // 1060, etc.
AR, Little Rock. KAAV owns it at night.
Guatemala. R. Mil Noventa fair in KAAV null.
- 1100 Cuba. R. Angullo atop days.
Colombia. R. Reloj just under Cuba days and atop channel nights.
- 1110 Cuba. R. Angulo near top days.
FL, Tampa-St. Pete. WTIS almost equal to Cuba days.
NC, Charlotte. WBT takes over at night.
- 1120 Cuba. R. Angulo the winner during daylight.
MO, St. Louis. KMOX dominant nights.
- 1125 Costa Rica. Quite good at night.
- 1130 LA, Shreveport. KWKH only ID'able station at any time.
- 1140 Cuba. R. Bagamo excellent at night.
- 1141 FL, Miami. WQBA very loud days.
Cuba. Jammer extremely weak (worse than in FL) and not affecting WQBA.
- 1150 Cuba. R. Bagamo the one day and night.
- 1160 Cuba. R. Bagamo best days and nights.
Nicaragua. R. Dario fair-poor days under Cuban.
- 1163 Honduras. Weak nights.
- 1165 Antigua. Very good at night.
- 1170 Colombia. LV de la Heroica dominant at all times.
- 1175 El Salvador. LV del Pacifico poor nights.
- 1176 Colombia. HJKK good at night and hetting 1175.
- 1180 FL, Marathon. VOA very loud days.
Cuba. Reloj weak all times.
- 1190 Colombia. LV de la Costa here during daylight; CARACOL.
Colombia. A Todelar station here weakly at night; frequent "en Manizales" mentions; nothing listed.
- 1200 Cuba. R. Sancti-Spiritus good days.
Colombia. Good but repeated "en Barranquilla" at ID's a mystery (nothing listed); no calls or slogans heard with certainty.
- 1205 Cayman Islands. Almost good around the clock.
- 1210 Cuba. R. Sancti-Spiritus good days; R. Rebelde atop nights.
- 1220 Cuba. Very strong day and night.
Colombia. LV de Colombia weak under Cuba during daylight.
- 1230 Cuba. Atop nights with 1 kHz het; //1220.
FL, New Smyrna Beach. WSBB surprisingly dominant nights.
- 1240 Bahamas. ZNS-2 weak but atop days.
Cuba. Second during daylight; //1220, 1230.
Nothing dominant nights.
- 1242 UNID. Weak carrier here nights, looped E-W.
- 1250 Cuba. Dobleve dominant days.
Cuba. Another Cuban weak under, days; nothing but noise nights.
- 1260 Cuba. Reloj her and dominant days.
Colombia. R. Prosperidad atop nights, RCN; never heard in FL.
- 1270 Cuba. Reloj dominant night and day.
- 1280 Cuba. Reloj atop nights, weak during day.
UNID. EE station fair with soft jazz, on ELT; nights only.
UNID. Larry King here but weak; WNPT? WGBF?
- 1285 UNID. Very poor SS looped HC, nights; HCVN4?
- 1290 American Virgin Islands. WRRR poor days with soft-spoken female.
Colombia. R. Sur also here days but weak.
Venezuela. R. Puerto Cabello the one nights.
- 1300 Colombia. Owns it days; many Antillas ID's.
Only hash at night.
- 1310 Cuba. R. Caribe dominant during daylight.
Cuba. Dobleve weak, days.
Colombia. LV de la Patria atop nights; many UNID's under.
- 1315 Dominican Republic. R. Bani fair at night.
- 1320 Nicaragua. R. Maravilla fairly good at night; nothing days.
- 1330 Cuba. Owns it days. A heavy het obliterates channel at night.
- 1340 Cuba. Atop days and //1330 but with 1 kHz het.
Colombia. R. Olimpica rules at night.
- 1350 UNID's. Two unknown SS stations here during day and a "R. Inter-nacional" audible at night.
- 1360 Cuba. R. Cadena Agramonte loud during the day; was privileged to hear such fare as "Disco Mambo," destined to be a classic for sure.
- 1370 Nasty 1 kHz het days masking everything.
Colombia. R. Sabanas poor at night; CARACOL net.
UNID. An EE station here at night.
- 1380 FL, St. Pete. WNSI dominant around the clock.

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- 1390 Guatemala. R. Istmania fair days; nothing dominant at night.
- 1400 Colombia. R. Universal amazingly good days; dominant nights.
Cuba. Agramonte fair days under Colombia.
- 1410 Cuba. Agramonte the only one during daylight.
Ecuador. R. El Tiempo in briefly one evening; a nice surprise.
UNID. EE C&W station audible nights, WUNI?
- 1420 Guatemala. TGRP here weakly during the day.
Colombia. CARACOL dominant nights.
- 1430 Cuba. R. Surcos fair days; GY hash at night.
- 1440 Cuba. Fair and //1430 during the day.
UNID's. Many, many at night.
- 1450 Nicaragua. R. Eco de las Brumas audible during day; nothing at night.
- 1455 UNID. Mostly a carrier only at night; looped E-W. Haiti-1456?
- 1460 Turks and Caicos. In day and night but poor.
- 1465 UNID. Carlier here nights looped HC; HCIC6?
- 1470 FL, Ft. Lauderdale. WRBD dominant all times.
- 1480 Cuba. Agramonte dominant days.
UNID. A "R. Fortuna" here nights; no ideas.
- 1483 UNID. Fair carrier looped SE; HJHQ?
- 1490 UNID. EE C&W station audible at night (???)
- 1500 DC, Washington. WTOP weak but audible nights; nothing days.
- 1503 UNID. Poor SS male looped Ecuador at night; HCV3?
- 1505 Anguilla. Never a sign of.
- 1510 Guatemala. R. Centroamericana here days; very poor.
TN, Nashville. WLAC good nights, covering all else.
- 1520 Colombia. R. Minuto dominant nights; at least 3 UNID's days.
- 1530 Cuba. R. Moron loud during the day.
OH, Cincinnati. WCKY good at night, atop.
UNID. A "R. Latina" weak at night, looped N-S.
- 1540 Bahamas. Owns it around the clock.
- 1550 Colombia. R. Portena easily atop at night; RCN.
Cuba. Weak but audible under the Colombian.
- 1555 Cayman Islands. Superloud at all times; even splashes some.
- 1560 UNID. EZL fare days; no ID's ever.
UNID. Someone testing here with 1 kHz tone most nights.
- 1570 Mexico. XERF owns it at night; nothing during the day.
- 1575 UNID. A really loud SS split but QRN horrible and soft female vocals impossible to read; nights.
- 1580 Cuba. Agramonte atop the channel during the day.
FL, Ft. Lauderdale. WSRF the main one at night.
UNID. A "R. Carve" or "R. Cafe" located "en Colombia" here weakly at night but nothing listed.
- 1590 FL, St. Pete Beach. WRXB poor nights; many unID'd LA's with it.
- 1600 FL, West Palm Beach. WPOM good days; a LA hash at night.
- 1606 UNID. A real mystery and a heart-breaker---I really wanted this one. Level was poor-fair and voice (male and female announcers) was undermodulated. Uses a cuckoo lead-in to ID's at the half-hour and plays moderate LA mx. Seemed to loop SE/NW. Also noted in Pensacola after return and direction was SE. Possibly WLWZ or HIEG off frequency.
- 1610 Anguilla. Loud at night.

Phew! Well, there you have it. Roughly 250 loggings from the island of Jamaica. Needless to say, the number would have been much larger had I seriously worked sunrise and sunset skip and had stuck with the numerous unID's. Still, I'm pretty satisfied with the sessions I spent DX'ing and would like to give it another shot some time.

All too soon it came time to head back to the states and as I sat aboard the plane my mind was consumed by thoughts of Jamaica's natural beauty and the cordiality of the people; the attractions of Negril Beach and the great reggae music which pervades the island. I also recalled, with some resentment, the innumerable Cuban stations which ruled the band and made even some local Jamaican stations difficult to enjoy. As I was pondering the Cuban "pest" problems both in Jamaica and at home in Florida, a voice announced from the front of the plane, "This is your Captain speaking. If you'll look out your windows, you'll see the island of Cuba just ahead; we'll be passing directly over it in just a minute."

The Captain had more to say but I was no longer listening. My face had donned a mischievous grin and I was hurrying to the rear of the plane, and the restrooms.

73's---GT