

ANTIPODEAN DX ODYSSEY

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This past summer, I had the opportunity to visit Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. I took along my SONY ICF-2010 in order to attempt some DX listening. Some comments on my travels follow:

Australia

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA: My first stop on the trip was Melbourne, in the first week of July. Using the ICF-2010, 6 Australian states were audible here in the evening. South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania, Queensland, Victoria and Australian Capital Territory. The east coast of Australia stretching from Adelaide in the south up to Brisbane in the north east could be heard without much difficulty.

Without looking for them, I stumbled upon 3LO/3AR, part of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, (the A.B.C.) at the corner of William and Lonsdale Streets downtown. As well, 1278-3AW was around the corner at the corner of William and Latrobe Streets. At 3LO/3AR, I was able to arrange a special tour of Radio Australia. Radio Australia's studios are a few minutes north of Glen Waverly train station, 35 minutes east of downtown; just grab a "Glen Waverly" train from Flinders Street Train Station. I was given an interesting tour by announcer Michael Taft. Radio Australia had a large room full of promotional paraphernalia. However, I was not interested in lugging stickers and letterhead around in my back pack for two months! As it turned out Radio Australia was the only radio station I bothered to visit during my 2 months in the South Pacific. Incidentally, the A.B.C. also has a shop, that sells books, records and souvenirs, in the Victoria State Bank Arcade at the corner of Elizabeth and Bourke Streets.

As for the commercial stations in Metropolitan Melbourne, the formats appeared to be as follows: 531-3UL CHR, 855-3CR Ethnic, 822-3YB Oldies, 927-3UZ Talk, 1026-3TT AdCon, 1179-3KZ AdCon, 1278-3AW Talk, 1377-3MP MoR, 1422-3XY Adult Rock, and 1503-3AK Talk/Sports. 3XY and 3TT billboards may be seen all over "The Met", Melbourne's transit system.

ALICE SPRINGS, NORTHERN TERRITORY: Quite a difference going from Melbourne (population approximately 3 million) to Alice Springs (population 22,000). If for some reason you wish to visit the one commercial station in Alice Springs, the studios of 900-8HA and FM 8CCC are easily found on the west side of The Stuart Highway (Highway 87) between the airport and downtown. 8HA's format is Pop music. The A.B.C. station, 783-8AL (and short wave VL8A on 2310 & 4835) are found downtown in The Todd Mall.

DXing in Alice Springs was quite different from Melbourne. Most of the 50 kW A.B.C. stations from the eastern Australian states, such as 576-2FC in Sydney, were audible. A few of the lower powered privately-owned and public broadcasting stations, mostly from South Australia, were heard as well. One such station that got out well was 585-2WEB in Bourke, New South Wales, with Rock music and carted slogans, such as "Rocking the Outback, 2-W-E-B".

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA: From a DXer's standpoint, Adelaide was quite similar to Melbourne. Western Australia and Northern Territory could not be heard, but the rest of the country,

particularly along the east coast, could be heard. It was remarkable how well some of the 2 kW stations from Queensland and New South Wales carried!

The local Adelaide radio dial was as follows: 531-5UV Educational, 765-5CC Oldies, 972-5DN News/Talk, 1125-5MV CHR, 1197-5KA "Greatest Hits", 1323-5AD AdCon, and 1386-5AA AdCon. 5UV, incidentally, is located on North Terrace, across the road from the Museum and Art Gallery.

PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA: From Perth, some of the 50 kW eastern Australian A.B.C. outlets were audible at night, but not much from closer distances, such as South Australia. I would imagine this would be akin to a DXer in Vancouver being able to hear 940-CBM (Montreal) and 1580-CBJ (Chicoutimi), but very little between the Rockies and the Great Lakes. A few of the lower powered private stations were heard, including 1341-3GL (Geelong, Victoria) and 1575-200 (Wollongong, New South Wales), although 200 had to contend with the Voice of Free Asia/Voice of America relay in Thailand. Incidentally, the Voice of Free Asia was heard loud and clear with an English newscast at 1500 UTC and relaying VOA in English at 1530 just as per the schedule in the WRTH. Perth seemed like a much more interesting place to attempt Short Wave DXing. I noted 15 Radio Republik Indonesia outlets on the 60 and 90 meter bands during the local evening hours.

For the radio station promotional item collectors, the A.B.C. (720-6WF and 810-6WN) was located on Hay Street a couple of blocks from the Sheraton Hotel next to a bowling alley just east of downtown.

BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND: The Brisbane radio dial, at least as much as I noticed: 693-4KQ AdCon, 882-4BH Oldies, 1008-4IO AdCon, 1053-4EB Ethnic, 1296-4BK Classic Hits. In the "not visited, but noticed" department, the local A.B.C. stations 612-4QR and 792-4QG are located on Coronation Drive west of downtown near the Toowong Train Station (if you see a Sizzler Steak House, you will have gone too far). 104.1-4MMM-fm has a shop in the Meyer Centre on the Queen Street Mall that sells T-shirts, sweatshirts, beach sandals, bumper stickers etc. "FM 104" features a Kangaroo playing a guitar for their logo. Only in Australia...

The DX in Brisbane was pretty good. Lots of stations from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria dominated the dial, but also a few surprises, such as 558-7BU in Burnie, Tasmania. R.F.O. New Caledonia on 666 and Wellington, New Zealand's 1035-2ZB were also audible.

CAIRNS, QUEENSLAND: The local radio dial consisted of 531-4KZ (AdCon) and 846-4CA ("Hits and Memories") as well as the requisite A.B.C. relays. The bulk of the stations audible in the evening came from Queensland, but 1278-3AW (Melbourne, Victoria), 1386-5AA (Adelaide, South Australia) and 1530-2VM (Moree, New South Wales) were among the few that crept in from farther afield. I suppose hearing a 2 kW Adelaide station from Cairns would probably be the equivalent (distance wise) of hearing a 2 kW Houston station (if such a thing existed) from Maine.

AUSTRALIA, IN GENERAL: After you got by the A.B.C., which often

F96-2-a

meant hearing the same Australia-England cricket match every 9 kHz up the band, the majority of the Australian commercial stations appeared to playing a variation of popular music, Contemporary Hits, Soft Rock, Adult Contemporary, Oldies or a mixture. In other words, Paul McCartney's My Brave Face and Don Henley's End Of The Innocence were fair game on just about every station, including the A.B.C. outlets when there wasn't any cricket going on. Sports Talk is also very popular in the cities, although instead of baseball, the topics discussed are usually Australian Rules Football and Rugby.

New Zealand

Unfortunately, I only had 10 days in New Zealand and I didn't spend too much time using the ICF-2010. As a generalization, it appeared that from New Zealand you could count on hearing New Caledonia on 666 as well as some of the east coast Australian 50 kW A.B.C. outlets, such as Sydney (576-2FC) and Grafton, New South Wales (738-2NR).

Aside from the Radio New Zealand outlets, the remainder of the stations in New Zealand appear to be Contemporary (e.g. Auckland's 1476-1XA ~ "Radio Hauraki") or religious (e.g. Christchurch's 1503-3XG ~ "Radio Rhema"). As an aside, in Auckland there seemed to be quite a few Christian book shops, usually right next door to the Adult cinema and book stores!

I had no intention of visiting any radio stations in New Zealand, but I did notice a few in my travels. If you have the time to visit the country I strongly recommend you skip the visits unless you have exhausted every other possible cultural activity. Nevertheless, I will mention a few that I passed by:

WELLINGTON, NORTH ISLAND: Radio New Zealand, Radio Rhema and Radio Windy (891-2XW) are all located in the downtown core in the area between the Parliament Buildings (known locally as "The Bee Hive") and The Cuba Street Mall. If you are walking along Lambton Quay, you should have no trouble find these three stations.

AUCKLAND, NORTH ISLAND: If you take the bus out to the Zoo or the Museum of Technology, you will pass right by 1332-1XI ("Radio i"). Auckland's Radio Rhema studios were on Queen Street up the hill south of Town Hall. I'm sure that I saw Radio Hauraki's studios as well, but I didn't really care enough to note the address.

Fiji

I didn't listen very much to the local radio in Fiji aside from the commercial "FM 96" in Suva, the capital city. FM 96 sounded fairly current and professional, although the Rick Dees Top 40 program that aired on a Sunday evening was at least 3 weeks behind the rest of the world. And 4 hours of the same "Juicy Fruit" commercial at every break can be irritating after a while!

Fiji is an interesting place to DX from. Several Australian and New Zealand stations are heard each night, ranging from the strong A.B.C. and Radio New Zealand stations (e.g. 657-2YC in Wellington; 846-2CY in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory) to the weaker private commercial stations (e.g. 1071-3CV in Maryborough, Victoria and the aforementioned Radio Hauraki in Auckland on 1476 kHz). Tuvalu on 621 (signing off at 0900 UTC),

Tonga on 1017 (signing off at 1000 UTC) and American Samoa (WVUV) on 648 are also easily heard. Probably the best signal on the band, however, comes from New Caledonia on 666. Incidentally, R.F.O. Nouvelle-Caledonie is supposed to have an English newscast at 0700 UTC (7 p.m. in Fiji & New Zealand) if you believe the WRTH. I never heard anything but French programming.

Tahiti on 738 was attempted, but not heard because of Australian 2NR in Grafton, New South Wales. I also spent some time hunting for Western Samoa on 747, Kiribati on 846, Hawaii on 870 (KAIM-Honolulu), and Vanuatu on 1125 without any success. I did hear traces of religious music on 870, which I would like to think was KAIM, but never any IDs. The difficult-to-hear Short Wave outlets of Tonga (5030 kiloHertz and apparently undergoing repair) and Kiribati (14802 or 14918 or who-knows-where) also eluded me. On the other hand, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands are all easily logged on their Short Wave frequencies.

So there you have it. Obviously with a little more time and better locations I would have heard more. Nevertheless the South Pacific radio dial makes for a nice change from Larry King or Guns n' Roses every 10 kiloHertz!