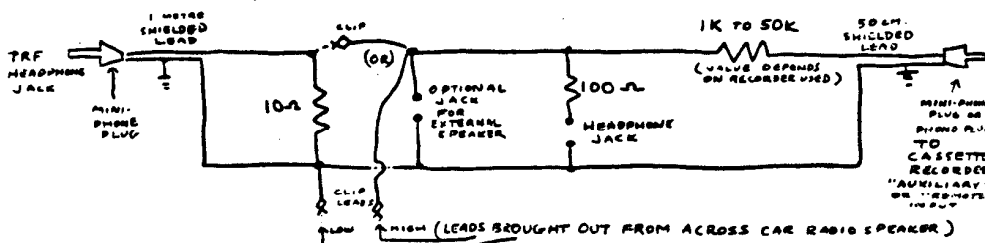


SPECIAL FEATURE

THE TRAVELLING DXER

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The purpose of this article is to give some insights into DXing away from home, something that most of us like to do, whether we're on holiday or business trips. DX activities may only be a quick tune on the car radio or they may mushroom into a full-fledged DXpedition (in which DXing becomes one of the primary activities of the trip). The DXpedition, long popular among hams, is gaining momentum among WDXers; witness the "beverage beach parties" held by Portver & friends in Westport, WA and by John Alchin in Te Araroa, New Zealand. My activities on trips to southern NJ, Long Island, Maine, Nova Scotia, and Ireland fell between these two extremes. The following equipment should be adequate for a serious "on the road DXcursion": Realistic TRF (modified for loop if possible), SM2 or other amplified loop, interface fixtures for tape recording (to be described below), FM/SW/LW receivers if desired, headphones, extension cord, wire for longwire antenna, longwire tuner, small speaker, portable cassette recorder, 12-volt adapter for recording in the car, extra batteries, cassettes, and a logbook. A common problem is breakage of leads, especially those to battery terminals; it would be advisable to carry a small repair kit with a pencil-type soldering iron, solder, "dikes", longnose pliers, wire, clips, clip leads, electrical tape, and screwdrivers. Reference literature such as the NRC log, IRCA foreign logs, World Radio-TV Handbook, Vane Jones log, NRC pattern book, and recent issues of DX News & DX Monitor should be brought. Don't forget a credit card for emergency trips to Radio Shack. Accessories that could prove useful would be a switchable battery-operated 10 kHz./100 kHz. fundamental crystal calibrator and an accurate LCD digital watch. If possible, drill a hole in the back of your TRF to allow trimmer-capacitor "tweaking" with a screwdriver without opening the radio. The following diagram shows how I tape from a TRF or car radio:



The 100 ohm resistor cuts down the audio to the headphones to allow a comfortable listening level while permitting adequate audio levels for recording. The recorder should be located far enough from the receiver and the loop to minimize the introduction of erase-head bias harmonics. The interface recording fixture may be assembled on a small "vectorboard" or in a metal "mini-box".

A frequent problem encountered in "motel-room DXing" is outrageous TV QRM/mains QRV. So don't rule out the possibility of DXing from the car. Leads should be brought out off the car radio speaker and out from the 12 volt supply if taping is to be done. DXing from the car allows the selection of a good location such as a beach or a mountaintop, away from power lines and buildings. Taped receptions should be logged in tabular form by 1. frequency 2. station/station location 3. programming heard 4. signal strength/interference data 5. time 6. date 7. tape counter index. Local stations as well as DX should be taped; this will help in ID'ing these when you try to get them back home. A useful tool is the "bandscan tape": the receiver is slowly tuned from the bottom of the band to the top. Stop and leave 15 seconds of silence on the tape every 100 kHz. for AM and every 1 MHz. for FM scans. Run bandscans at different times such as midday, sunset, midnight, and sunrise. Play the tapes at DX get-togethers. Other DXers may hear tell-tale nets, SAH's ID's, jingles, ads, & slogans that you missed-especially

if they live in the area you visited. Gather radio/TV related material on your trips: newspaper radio/TV sections, survey charts, car stickers, etc. Use your camera: pictures of station facilities, radio advertising billboards, and TV identifications may be desired by other DXers, or keep your own DX photo-album. Visiting a station that you heard hundreds of miles away at home may impress the station's personnel; good will towards the DX hobby could be promoted. Before leaving home, define objectives for your travel-DXing, such as times to listen and specific stations for which to try. Size up the TA, TP, and LA possibilities of the location to be visited. Perhaps you'll want to get your hometown stations from a distant site. This can be quite satisfying as I can attest to from listening to WJLH-850 loud and clear with Boston news, sports, and weather while I was in Ireland. Check propagation forecasts. Establish a packing list before you go. If flying, don't overload the DX gear-just bring the essentials: TRF, portable recorder, interface fixture, headphones, batteries, reference books, and cassettes. Use batteries instead of cumbersome overseas AC adapters - you can buy more batteries almost anywhere. I mention the TRF as a good DX portable. The PRG7 & DX160 can be used as portables in conjunction with a loop. Avoid "oneaple" multi-band portables: on many of these, shortwave images become a real problem in areas where MW signals are weak. Run a full test on your travelling system before departing. And above all, share your experiences with your fellow DXers through contributions to the columns in the club bulletins.



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