

G32-1-1

I've been having a ball during these summer doldrums eavesdropping on my near (and not so near) neighbors. Not up on some telephone pole with clip leads and headphones, but safe and hidden away with the radio. These new cordless telephones that are getting very popular put out a pretty strong signal. It's on the frequencies between the top of the AM BCB and the lower edge of the 160 meter Ham band. I've heard them around 1670, 1700, 1730 and 1750 kHz so far.

The modulation on these rascals is FM. It can be heard on the average radio by tuning one side or the other of center frequency. This is called slope detection. Much better results can be obtained with a true FM detector. I take the I.F. output from my R-390A and put it into a 455 kHz I.F. strip salvaged from an old FM SCA receiver. This particular unit incorporates a limiter stage and discriminator detector. The audio output is clipped before the speaker amplifier. This is done with a couple of diodes connected in parallel with the polarities reversed. A 250-2500 Hz audio filter is also used. This is pretty elaborate, but after 15 or so years in radio, my junk-box is full of these odd but handy bits and pieces. Good results can be had with lots less complication. Another thing: sharp selectivity does not work well. I use either the 8kc or 16kc bandwidth positions on the R-390A depending on signal strength. The 4kc and less positions just don't work.

Some changes in DXing habits are necessary. Sunset skip becomes after dinner DX. Instead of Monday morning sessions, Sunday afternoon and evening is prime time. Another bonus is no more bleary-eyed Mondays from staying up all night! An eye to the TV is handy as many a quick call is made during the commercials. "Log Book" is now "Phone Book". Verifications? Save your stamps. Not only is it illegal to disclose what you have heard to anyone or to make use of it, but you don't want them to know anyhow! They'd stop using the cordless and that would ruin the fun. Anonymity is much better here.

These cordless telephones are advertised as having a range anywhere from 50 to 750 feet. The receiver supplied in the handset can't be too great, so some of these things radiate a pretty fair signal. I have tentatively tried a couple of these at a range of better than two miles and were very understandable.

A couple of last random thoughts on this: If you or a close friend/relative have one of these-watch what you say on it. Remember that you're on the radio. If you live in an area with a lot of radio hobbyists in it, the 'phone call you make may have a bigger audience than some small radio stations! (or: "Hey! That's me in the Arbitron!") Another point is why the heck the manufacturers put the base unit transmitter in that part of the radio spectrum. Either in the 1750 meter band, 160-190 kHz, or up somewhere in UHF would be better. The handsets all use 49.3 to 49.9 mHz, which seems to be a good choice. The handsets can be heard on most police scanners, by the way. The only drawback to this whole thing is that you may find out what the neighbors really think of you. Enjoy!