

THE HAMMARLUND HQ-200 - A NOT TOO TECHNICAL REPORT
by Tom Garcia

This report is going to be a little one-sided as I have had very little experience with any quality receivers other than the old tube models of the 50's. Three years ago when I decided to buy a communications receiver, I made my choice based on published specifications as that was all that was available to me in central Alaska. Before any readers get the wrong idea, let me tell you that I do like my HQ-200. If the report seems to be mostly "gigs" against the receiver it's because of my lack of a comparison item and knowledge of other various makes.

The HQ-200 was in the \$250 price range when I purchased it new in 1970. It's in an attractive grey metal case and rather large and heavy due to its design as a conventional tube-type receiver. There is no built-in speaker and I am using the Radio Shack communications speaker which comes in a grey case that somewhat matches the HQ-200 style. An instruction manual with the receiver was written up as being excellent in one of the hobby magazines but I did not find this to be the case. Concerning IF alignment the manual refers to the wrong drawings several times. Four figures concerning antenna types look as though they were drawn by three different people and leave much to be desired considering antenna connection should be such a simple matter. Another item in the manual concerns the hook-up of a signal generator. You are told to attach it to the "bus lead of the 6BE6 mixer grid" when "pin 7 of the 6BE6 would have been much more to the point for those of us who don't know a bus lead from a control grid.

The receiver tunes in the range between 540 kHz and 30 MHz in four bands. Dial markings are at 50 kHz spacings on the broadcast band which is a poor setup for this important area of reception. Band-spread markings are available for ham bands only, markings of 0-100 must be used for other frequencies. Calibration on the BCB cannot be set up as if 1200 kHz is correct, both ends of the band will be off (un to 30 kHz) etc. Dial calibration instructions refer to "slugs and trimmers" but I haven't found the trimmers yet. A bank of slugs is used, one for each band. The cabinet top needs holes, or an access door, to enable you to pass tuning wands down to the RF coil slugs. It is very inconvenient to have to remove the receiver from its case for adjustments. Every time you move to a different section of the BCB you must calibrate against a frequency standard as mentioned above.

Local stations put the S-meter to 25 over S-9 and it has a total range of 60 over S-9. Strange as it may be, the S-meter is inoperative during SSB reception. The instruction manual directs the user to adjust volume during SSB reception by setting the volume control at maximum and using the sensitivity control as required for audio. The problem here is that movement of the sensitivity control causes a very slight frequency shift which causes you to lose the SSB signal or at least to shift it enough to make it sound like Donald Duck. SSB tuning with this receiver is very difficult on the higher frequencies. Ten meters is almost impossible as is 15 meters. This may be a combination of my tuning technique and my antenna but in three years I haven't been able to improve the situation so I am inclined to think that the receiver is partly at fault due to insufficient bandwidth at higher frequencies.

Two other comments...I don't like the position of the phone jack which is on the rear of the receiver. It would be better to have it on the front. And the noise limiter doesn't seem to have much effect on noise. All it does is reduce total audio volume. The reduction is so great that distant stations become unreadable when the noise limiter is selected.

I hope that these comments will be of use to the membership and once again I ask that you remember that I do not have other equipment available to compare with the HQ-200. Because of that I haven't attempted to report on sensitivity or selectivity and will leave that to other reporters. The major faults of the receiver are in connection with the dial calibration and the reception of SSB signals. The best feature is the Q-multiplier system which works very well on the BCB.