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The Sony ICF-2002 (76000)

--- First Impressions

by Dennis Kibbe

This Sony receiver is going to be a very popular radio! Combining as it does overall good performance with a degree of operating convenience that can only be described as -- well, sinful!

If you haven't seen a picture of one, this short physical description will get you acquainted. The radio is the same size as the ICF-7600A (analog) model it replaces. That's 7 x 4½ inches, or no bigger than a copy of the DXM minus the masthead. Thickness is 1½ inches thin. Most of the controls are on the front face of the radio: speaker on the left half, digital readout and tuning buttons on the right.

If you are worried about getting used to push buttons in place of a tuning dial, let me say simply that you'll love it! Sony has provided a tuning method to please everyone. First, directly by keying in a known frequency. Second, by manually scanning up and down the bands, stopping as long as you want at each frequency. And third, autoscanning up the band, but you'll only catch the strong stations as the scanner skips over the weaker ones. Frequency coverage is 153-519 kHz in 3 kHz steps, 520-1610 kHz in 10 kHz steps, 1615-29995 kHz in 5 kHz steps, and 76-108 MHz in 0.1 MHz steps (US model will be 88-108 MHz). A fine tuning thumbwheel on the side of the case allows tuning between these steps. The radio does a credible job of tuning SSB. Although drift is minimal, sharper selectivity would be needed for listening in the crowded Amateur bands. Overall selectivity is better than any other stock portable I've heard. A two-position tone switch is also effective. Once you've tuned in your station, its frequency can be stored in one of the ten memories and can be recalled at the push of a button. The Sony will remember whether the station is AM or FM and switch automatically. As a bonus, these ten memories are completely tunable! Tune up or down as far as you like and then come right back to the preset frequency.

Other features are a built-in clock/timer, off lock, antenna, and recording jacks.

Before you think this reviewer is being paid by Sony, let me point out that this receiver falls short of being a true medium wave DX receiver on several counts. Sensitivity is less than on the Sony S-SW, and while images are few, strong shortwave signals sometimes show up in the AM band. Connecting an external longwire increases overloading, but a tuned loop such as the Wedge works well. Also, sensitivity is greater on AC than with batteries. For DXing, batteries are good for 1-2 weeks. For general listening they will last much longer. I should mention my ICF-76000 is one of the first ones out (a friend spent three enjoyable hours searching Tokyo's famous Akihabara electronics shopping district before he found one), but should be identical in performance to the ICF-2002 being sold in this country.

Overall, what this receiver lacks in MW performance it makes up for in convenience and shortwave performance. As I said, this Sony is going to be very popular!