

wake you by getting progressively louder every fifteen seconds over a period of a minute. In practice you'll probably wake up immediately unless you're a very heavy sleeper!

Performance

The sensitivity on long, medium and shortwave is excellent. And if you live too close to a powerful station, the two-step attenuator reduces most of the overload problems. The radio has only one 6 kHz bandwidth filter which has been designed for the reception of stronger shortwave stations. Picking out the Bayrischer Rundfunk on 6085 kHz is not possible at our test site in Holland due to the presence of Radio Luxembourg on 6090 kHz. You can certainly do that on more sophisticated receivers with narrower bandwidth options. The ATS606 also has no provision for single sideband reception.

The ATS-606P is being sold in North America for around US\$170. That is about the same or just under the price of the larger ATS-808. In Europe we found it at around £122 and in Australia at AU\$249. The new smaller radio comes complete with more accessories for the same price as well as better memory tuning functions. But remember the older ATS-808 can tune in 1 kHz steps on shortwave and offers two bandwidths on shortwave rather than one. The similarly priced Panasonic RF-B45 has better fine tuning than the Sangean ATS-606P and can pick up single sideband signals. In short, if it is important to you that the radio is compact then the new ATS-606P is seriously worth considering.

SONY ICF-SW30



In August 1993 Sony started shipping a new shortwave portable receiver for the budget end of the market. It costs 199 DM in Germany (slightly more than advertised in some German DX magazines during July 93), 249 Guilders in Holland. We checked with several US dealers. Universal Radio in Ohio gave us a typical price. They sell it for US\$130. Sony says the SW-30 is the smaller brother of the ICF-SW33...in fact, it is much better value.

The radio is a pocket size format covering mediumwave, FM stereo from 76 to 108 MHz and 10 shortwave bands between 3700 and 21950 kHz. Stereo on FM is only via the headphones of course. A version including longwave is on sale in some parts of Europe (e.g. UK & France). Note that the shortwave coverage is not continuous...there are some gaps. But Sony has learned from mistakes it made with the ICF-SW15 & ICF-SW-2. The

shortwave bands run from 3700- 4200, 4650-5150, 5800-6300, 6950-7450, 9375-10000, 11525-12150, 13375 - 14000, 14975-15600, 17475-18100, 21320-21950. There are a few stations operating on frequencies outside those ranges, but not very many.

Tuning

The tuning steps on the radio are 50 kHz on FM. The steps on mediumwave are either 9 or 10 kHz depending on how you set a switch in the battery compartment. On shortwave the radio moves up and down in 1 kHz steps and that is excellent. Many more expensive sets from Sony and other manufacturers only move in 5 kHz steps which, in our opinion, is much too coarse. The SW-30 has a built-in 60 cm telescopic antenna - there's no provision to connect an external antenna. The set measures 16.5 by 11 by 3.5 centimetres and, when the 3 penlight batteries are installed, it weighs 462 grams. There's a simple time chart printed on the stand designed to tilt the radio towards you as it sits on the table.

The radio has a dual-time clock which is displayed when the set is switched off. You can set the radio to wake you up in the morning or play for 60 minutes to send you to sleep. Pressing a button lets you see the status of the battery. But there is no light to illuminate the liquid crystal display. That is a nuisance if you want to use the radio by the bedside for night-time listening. Sony have put a tiny red light emitting diode on the front panel which is supposed to be a tuning indicator. Listening on shortwave in Europe the light stays on all the time; your ear is a much better judge of whether or not a station is properly tuned in. A recessed switch prevents the radio springing to life in a suitcase if you packed the radio amongst clothes.

No Keypad

Sony has managed to keep the price down by keeping the number of buttons on the front to a minimum. There is no keypad for direct frequency entry. Instead, there is a rocker switch which allows you to move up and down the dial, in the case of shortwave in 1 kHz steps. If you keep your finger on the "UP" side of the switch then when you hit the high frequency end of, let's say, the 49 metre band on 6300 kHz, the radio drops back to 5800 kHz and you start scanning the 49 metre band a second time. To get to the 41 metre band you have to press two buttons at once, and then you start scanning within the range 6950-7450. So although the SW-30 looks simple to operate, a keypad solution is really much easier to use. But Sony have had to cut costs to make this radio in the US\$100 range. The radio offers 5 memories on SW, 5 on mediumwave and 5 on FM. In short, to jump from one end of the dial to another may take a bit of getting used to.

All digitally tuned radios have an internal synthesizer and this often creates a level of background noise which masks weak stations. The noise level on the SW-30 is remarkably low for a radio of this price...in fact it is a lot better than sets which are six times the price. The dual conversion design does result in a smaller number of unwanted ghost signals that you find on single conversion sets in this price range. The Sony SW-30 has one 5 kHz bandwidth filter in it and no provision for single-sideband. We think it has average selectivity.

All in all Sony has packed a lot of power into a US\$130 package. In December 1993 we found the radio selling for DM199, UK£100 and ¥19,800 in Germany, UK and Japan respectively. There are compromises when it comes to jumping quickly from one end of the shortwave spectrum to another. But the receiver design is the best we've tested for this price range.