

Monitoring Times HD Radio Report, Part 3 Sangean HDT-1: The Component Approach

By Ken Reitz

While all the other HD Radio manufacturers are introducing HD table radios, Sangean's HDT-1 presents the component stereo approach. This sophisticated looking radio has no built-in amplifier, no speakers, and no antenna. It's intended to be the HD Radio component of your stereo system. This means that your expensive analog stereo receiver won't become obsolete when, or if, a "drop dead" date for analog FM becomes a reality.

❖ Top Drawer Features

Sangean has designed the tuner to be part of any quality home stereo system and so there's been no effort to cut corners to keep costs down. It has the kind of features many tabletop set manufacturers would like to have, but can't in order to meet discount price points. For instance, the large front panel leaves plenty of room for full sized, generously spaced buttons; the blue LCD display takes advantage of all HD Radio and analog RDS display modes; separate tuning functions for analog and HD Radio lets you automatically tune through the band stopping only on HD Radio signals.

The back panel has the fewest connections possible: two antenna inputs ("F" connector for 75 ohm FM coaxial cable) and spring connectors for AM external antenna, left and right RCA jacks and the AC power connector. That's it. I found the AM connectors perfect for the Radio Shack AM tunable loop antenna. It allowed me to move the loop to a convenient place for tuning and peaking the signal. The tuner generates virtually no heat and could be placed just about anywhere without worrying about air circulation. Of course, you don't want to put it directly on top of a big heat producer such as your stereo amp.

The HDT-1 comes with a credit card sized remote control which duplicates all front panel functions, including the information display, direct frequency entry or preset station recall. You can do HD seek from the remote as well.

As does every other HD Radio made, this radio comes with the standard folded dipole "T" FM antenna and a ridiculous AM loop which



Front view of Sangean's HDT-1, the first and, so far, only component HD Radio available. Clean layout design and well-considered functions complement the receiver's capability. (Courtesy: Sangean)

is nearly worthless. Of course, we can't expect Sangean (or any other HD Radio manufacturer for that matter) to supply amplified FM Yagis and tunable AM loop antennas, but if you're going to have success tuning HD Radio stations outside of urban locations, that's pretty much what you'll need.

❖ The HDT-1 at Work

There are 20 FM and 20 AM station presets on the HDT-1 which should be enough in most areas to assign presets for your favorites. Keep in mind that multicasting stations will each need a preset. For example, if your local public station has regular programming on their first channel and news/talk on a second channel, you'll use two presets for that one station and its two signals.

Setting and retrieving the presets is a little quirky. You have to press the "preset" button before actually trying to retrieve a station. It's a cumbersome extra step that takes a little getting used to.

The clock is set manually with the unit plugged in but not turned on, *i.e.* in the "standby" mode. I found that for some reason the clock ran about 5 minutes slow, a peculiarity Sangean was unable to explain. Of course, it's not necessary to have the clock functioning, but it seems odd to me that if you have a digital data stream being transmitted, that a clock setting bit is not part of that stream. No current HD Radios can set their own clocks yet. Perhaps that will be a function in future sets.

The HDT-1 is the most sensitive HD FM receiver I've used. It was able to tune distant HD Radio signals not heard on most tabletop sets using the same antenna. It's hard to know how it will perform on AM, because during the time I had it there were no AM HD Radio stations in my area (there

are still only a few hundred nationwide). As an analog performer it did well, especially with the tunable AM loop antenna.

Listening to HD Radio signals on the HDT-1 is a real pleasure, but it will only be as good as the stereo you have it plugged into, and for even better sound I'd like to see a fiber optic output on a next generation receiver. Multicasting is now more common as stations explore the possibilities of having a second program channel at their disposal. During this introductory period, the FCC is not allowing second or third channels to carry commercials, which makes for some truly enjoyable listening. That's not going to last, however, except on the non-commercial stations.

The HDT-1 lists for \$199.99 and is one of many HD Radios involved in the national HD Radio rebate program which gives you \$40 off the retail price. Full details and a rebate form can be found on the HD Radio web site www.hdradio.com/2007_HDRadio_Rebate.pdf. The promotion ends 7-3-07.

WHERE TO BUY:

C. Crane: 800-522-8863 www.crane.com
Crutchfield: 888-955-6000 www.crutchfield.com
Universal-Radio: 800-431-3939 www.universal-radio.com



Rear view of the HDT-1. Minimal connections are needed to turn your expensive older stereo into the latest thing. (Courtesy: Sangean)

MANUFACTURER SPECIFICATIONS

Frequency range:
AM 520-1710 kHz
FM 87.50-108.10 MHz
Antenna input:
FM 75 ohm "F" connector
AM 300 spring terminals
Main Power: 10 watts maximum (120 v AC)
Battery (remote control): 3 v DC (CR2025 battery)
Dimensions: 17" W x 2.75" H x 10" D
Weight: 5.75 pounds