



REVIEW

Performance HF antenna

By Bob Grove W8JHD

With the number of wide-frequency-coverage scanners on the market, it's a relief to see an antenna that is designed to enhance their shortwave performance.

At best, the little rubber duckies that come with these scanners pick up only the strongest shortwave broadcasters, and with propagation as meager as it is during this low in the sunspot cycle, we need all the signal we can get! Enter, the Performance HF antenna.

What you get

Shipped in a well-padded protective box, the Performance includes a black storage pouch which holds the antenna when not in use. The antenna is terminated at its base with an SMA connector to accommodate the smaller pocket scanners, but the also included are a BNC and PL-259 (UHF) adaptor for use with other receivers and scanners. A strain-relief ring is provided as well to bolster the adaptor, as is an Allen wrench for two set screws which secure the base connector.

Fully compressed, the telescoping antenna is only a little more than 12 inches in length, and can be reduced nearly half again for storage by unscrewing the antenna from the band-switching base assembly as shown in the accompanying photo. Protracted to its full extension, however, it is 40 inches long. It's a good thing it's light weight!

Two models

The Performance comes in two versions: SW (41, 31, 19, 16, 13 meters) and ham (80, 40, 20, 15, 10 meters). The switch labeling for these bands is for the convenience of the user who is most likely to select these listening ranges.

However, by com-

paring switches, full 3-30 MHz coverage is possible with either model. A handy, business-card-size, look-up chart is provided for recommended switch combinations.

Let's try it out

For the listening test, we attached the whip alternately to a spectrum analyzer and an AOR short-wave-capable, hand-held scanner. We compared it to both a conventional rubber ducky and to a 48-inch telescoping whip.

The Performance whip outperformed the 48-inch plain whip by 10 to 20 dB between 3

and 30 MHz. Retested both day and night to allow for propagation changes, the gain was the same. Clearly, the pushbutton band selection was a clear advantage.

Needless to say, the difference between the Performance HF and the rubber ducky was vast, often bringing noise-buried signals of the factory antenna up to full quieting with the Performance.

But there are limits

While it is tempting to use the Performance as a substituted VHF/UHF antenna as well, we found that as we went higher in frequency, the signal became progressively more degraded by the stray reactances of the switching circuitry. Our advice is, keep the Performance for shortwave and switch back to the scanner antenna for typical scanner use above, say, 50 MHz or so.

Also, while it may be tempting to use the Performance antenna on one of the little mobile HF transceivers, don't do it. The small-gauge wiring can't handle transmitter power.

Final comments

While the cost of the Performance antenna is comparable to rooftop discons, keep in mind that this is a patent-pending design with a calibrated set of coils. The price is right for shortwave listeners who need the best reception possible with the shortest unamplified antenna. We see it ideal for travelers, campers, and even tactical applications where reliable HF reception under compact deployment conditions is necessary.

The Performance HF shortwave scanner antenna is available for \$99.95 from dealers such as Grove Enterprises (800-438-8155; www.grove-ent.com) and from Performance HF (858-487-8050; www.performancehf.com).

