

# MT REVIEW

## MFJ Model 1623 Window/ Balcony Mount Antenna

By Ken Reitz KS4ZR

Of the hundreds of thousands of hams and SWLers in the US, many thousands live under the oppressive rules of Home Owner's Associations or restrictions imposed by landlords, neither of which allow them to put up the antennas they'd like to have for their hobby. Many have found ways around such restrictions by using antennas disguised as flagpoles, black wires dangling out of apartment windows, and an assortment of commercially made antennas. Among those solutions are two from MFJ Enterprises – the models 1622 and the 1623.

### ❖ Laborious Procedures

The main difference between the two units is that the model 1623 has an attached antenna tuner with RF meter and costs \$199.95. The 1622 does not and costs \$100 less. If you have an older rig, you may benefit from the attached transmatch, but if yours is a newer transceiver with built-in antenna tuner, you would want the 1622. I tested the 1623 with and without the transmatch in several combinations with my transceiver and with a portable shortwave radio in two different locations: downstairs using a deck railing and upstairs using a window.

*MFJ-1623 Window/  
Balcony Mount Antenna features a 12' telescoping whip antenna, built-on antenna tuner, and retails for \$199.95. (Courtesy: MFJ Enterprises)*



Because this antenna may be used in close proximity to where people are likely to be (e.g. a deck), you'll need to review all the warnings MFJ has scattered throughout the slim owner's manual concerning touching the antenna element during transmitting, touching both counterpoise and antenna terminals while transmitting, possible arcing between the counterpoise and antenna terminals, stray RF in the shack, where to string the counterpoise wires (under rugs or carpets, they suggest), various grounding issues and last, but certainly not least, using the included safety rope so that, in event the antenna falls off your



*MFJ-1622 Apartment Antenna covers 40 through 2 meters has smaller telescoping whip, no tuner and retails for \$99.95. (Courtesy: MFJ Enterprises)*

balcony or window, the antenna won't hit anyone. You may get the feeling that this antenna is not easy to live with.

But, here's another problem: In order to transmit using this antenna, you'll need to set it up manually in a different configuration for each band you operate and, depending on how big the band is, different frequencies within the band. This procedure involves adjusting the antenna, counterpoise, and matching knobs as well as the loading coil jumper wire each time you switch bands. Not exactly user friendly. If you do go to all that trouble, I'd recommend using bits of colored tape to code where those settings are for each band you use.

Further, the review unit I received had quite a few items left out of the manual. There was no picture depicting the assembly of the unit and no mention of the loading coil or explanation of the coil tapping wire and how it's used. The coil and tap wire is essential to getting any kind of signal out of this antenna. I found that it was kind of like using a cat's whisker on an old Galena crystal radio set. This would be a real problem for beginners who need more instruction than is provided.

### ❖ Other Limited Space Options

The thing I liked best about this antenna was the general construction and components used. For instance, the mounting bracket was made of stainless steel and could be used in a number of configurations, depending on your window or balcony. The 12-ft telescoping whip with 3/8" x 24" threaded stub (MFJ-1956) can be bought separately for \$29.95 and used in a number of interesting antenna projects. So that got me to thinking about other limited space options which

may work better, particularly for SWLers.

The MJF-1020C Active SWL Antenna (\$89.95) is much smaller, cheaper, and very easy to use (see my review *MT* Aug. 2002). It's a better choice for SWLers because it has an antenna pre-amplifier built-in and the antenna can be detached and an external antenna of your choice connected.

*MJF-1020C Active SWL antenna is a better choice for SWLers with limited space. (Courtesy: MFJ Enterprises)*



In the September 2006 issue of *MT* I reviewed the MJF-932 Mini Loop Tuner, which uses a loop of wire or copper attached to a tuner which makes the loop resonate on the band for which the loop is cut. At the time I speculated that the 1622 might be a better choice, but after having used the 1623 with attached tuner I have to say it's not. The big advantage of the loop is that it can be rotated for maximum signal – something that you can't do with a vertical such as the 1622 or 1623.

### ❖ Final Word

Using either of these products is not easy. Having to re-tune the antenna for each band change can be a pain, finding a suitable place to mount either antenna is not easy. Those who will find success with either of these two products will be dedicated radio enthusiasts indeed. If you operate QRP (low power usually under 10 watts) on one frequency per band such as is common on PSK31 mode, this antenna may be more user friendly.

Remember, too, that no small antenna operated at low power can overcome poor band conditions, and we remain at or near the bottom of solar cycle 23. But, in the next 12 months band

conditions will rapidly improve, and if you live in an apartment or condo, products such as the MFJ 1622 or 1623 may make the difference between staying in the radio hobby and giving up.

### ❖ Specifications

According to the manufacturer, this unit tunes 80-6 Meters, though if the telescoping whip antenna is extended to its full 12 feet you won't have much of a signal on 80 meters. Maximum power capability is said to be 200 watts, but at such high wattage there could be considerable RF in the area of the antenna as you attempt to tune it.

The air-wound "bug catcher" style antenna loading coil is 8-3/8" long and 2.75" in diameter and has 50 turns. There is a 3/8 x 24 threaded stub at one end and a 3/8 x 24 threaded socket at the other and an alligator clip tap to adjust the resonance. Three counterpoise wires of different lengths with attached washer terminals are provided.

The counterpoise and antenna terminals at the top of the unit have several washers and lock washers and are kept in place by wing nuts. The terminals are mounted on a fiberglass plate which is inset into the top of the case. While unloosening the wing nuts it's easy to let all the washers fall into the recess. You'll need a magnet to retrieve them.

Telescoping Antenna: 12' (23.5" collapsed)  
Cabinet size (Tuner/RF meter): 2.5"(H) x 7.5"(W) x 3" (D)  
Weight (including antenna/mount and tuner): 6 pounds

## NetWorks and NetWorksGo from Tivoli

By John Figliozzi

Most of us reading the coming ads for these new products from **Tivoli Audio** likely will experience a *deja-vu* of sorts. "Travel the world and never leave home behind" reads the publicity sheet for *NetWorksGo*, Tivoli's portable internet/FM radio which – along with *NetWorks*, Tivoli's internet/FM table radio – is scheduled for a late 2007 release.

Yes, these descriptions formerly reserved for shortwave are now being applied to internet radios. And radios they are. There's no need to boot up the computer. With a wireless (WiFi) or Ethernet internet connection, thousands of radio stations – including many HD multicast and DAB – worldwide can be received literally at the touch of a button.

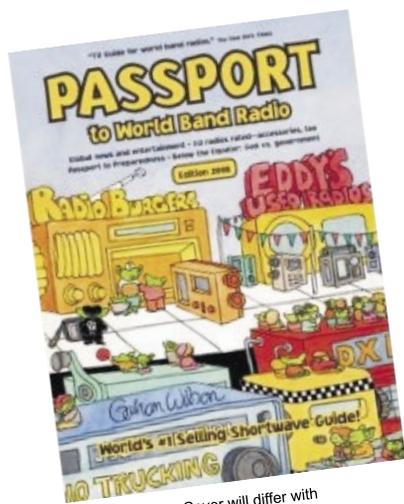
Both *NetWorks* and *NetWorksGo* decode WMA, MP3 and RealAudio and include an easy-to-read backlit display, digital clock, alarm and sleep timers. There's a USB input for connecting a compatible MP3 player or memory stick, a stereo headphone output, and an auxiliary input for iPod or similar audio device. Internet stations may be browsed by country and genre and selected via preset, menu or direct input of a station's call letters. Music files can be streamed from your PC and each model's software is easily and fully updateable as upgrades become available.

The *NetWorks* table radio is housed in a furniture grade wood cabinet with a 3-inch magnetically shielded full range driver. A right channel output allows for an optional matching stereo speaker and a compact remote control is included.

The *NetWorksGo* travel model goes a big step further by making internet radio truly portable. Along with its WiFi reception capability, six "C" cell batteries and a built-in charger for use with NiMH or NICADs provide for up to twelve hours of use without resort to mains power. It has a 2.5-inch magnetically shielded full range driver in weather-resistant housing with rustproof hardware.

And for those progressively fewer occurrences when internet access is not available, there's FM and FM RDS Data System reception with manual and auto seek tuning.

Release date is late 2007 and the retail price is yet to be determined. At the new product demonstration I attended in New York on June 22, each radio easily ping-ponged around the globe and provided a rich, full audio experience. I already know what I want for Christmas.



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