

### The Kenwood VC-H1

The April issue of *QST* magazine carried a full page advertisement from Kenwood for their VC-H1 portable slow scan TV (SSTV) unit. After reading the ad and looking at the photos, I thought perhaps this was someone's idea of an April fool joke. But I figured someone like Kenwood would not do that and began a search for more information on the unit.

During my annual visit to the Rochester, New York, hamfest I looked up the Kenwood folks to see what they could tell me. Guess what: they were showing the VC-H1! No larger than many VHF hand held transceivers, this fantastic piece of equipment floored me.

#### ■ The Old Days

I had built an SSTV unit back in the mid 50s when the idea of SSTV was first conceived. That original system required two tables to hold all of the gear. I used a flying spot scanner to send my pictures, which meant the best I could do for my first picture was to write my call, name and location (QTH) on a piece of cellophane. Eventually I managed to have a friend make a 5 x 7 inch transparency of a photo of me in my shack. During the years I had this set-up I managed no more than a dozen two-way SSTV conversations (QSOs). But, the idea of sending photos had bitten hard, and I continued to run SSTV and updated the rig every few years.

#### ■ Used to be Expensive

The major drawback to SSTV has been the cost. Until the advent of SSTV software for the home computer, the average set-up cost about a kilobuck plus, if you were going to have a decent one. And for the most part, it was a bit complicated getting good photos to send as most cameras were not easily portable, and storing photos was time consuming. While using the home computer is definitely easier, there is still the problem of getting the image into the computer for transmission.

Kenwood has sure changed all this with

the VC-H1. This portable SSTV unit operates off four AA batteries or an AC power pack. The VC-H1 has a self-contained, detachable, CCD camera (which stands for charge coupled device), and a 1.8 inch thin film transistor (TFT) display which produces a really sharp image.

#### ■ VC-H1 Features

You can view incoming pictures and transmit images in all popular SSTV formats and the new fast FM mode. In addition, the VC-H1 has a video input terminal so you can use images from a digital camera or 8mm videotape recorder (VTR); a built-in memory allows storage of ten photos. It also functions as a speaker mike to make operation very easy.

The VC-H1 connects to your computer via the RS-232 port allowing you to store images and modify them using standard cut and paste software and even superimpose text on your photos. Using just the VC-H1 it is possible to superimpose your call sign.

Connecting the VC-H1 to your rig is quite simple. Of course Kenwood has available connectors for attaching the unit to any of their rigs. Hooking up to other rigs will require making your own connector; however, Kenwood provides complete information so the job is fairly easy.

Kenwood, as usual, provides a complete and easy to understand operating manual with the VC-H1 with clear, easy to follow instructions, drawings and photos.

The most exciting thing about Kenwood's SSTV unit is the price; list price is just under \$600 but the unit is going for well under \$500. In fact, The Ham Station of 220 N. Fulton Ave, Evansville, Indiana 47710 was selling the VC-H1 for \$479.00 at the Rochester hamfest; their order line is 1-800-729-4373 if you would like to order one or get more information.



#### ■ An Exciting Future for SSTV

The VC-H1 is going to make the field of Slow Scan TV a lot easier to get into for everyone. I expect to see SSTV activity expanding from the present handful of frequencies on HF to include all bands. No reason why novice and tech operators shouldn't have a ball with this unit on VHF/UHF, too. This unit will add a new dimension to the hobby for all hams.

Can you imagine connecting the VC-H1 to your handheld and sending photos of interesting subjects while on your

daily walk, jog or bicycle ride? Or take a shot of the new baby, puppy, toy or whatever to show to friends across town or the world. Public service events will benefit from SSTV, too. (One picture is worth a thousand words.)

In case you were wondering, I love the VC-H1 and hope all of you will, too. Soon we can add a whole new meaning to the phrase, "BCNU." Great job, Kenwood.

#### ■ Conditions

I have been told there were some very good six meter openings this past summer; however, I did not manage to hit any myself. I did catch some excellent two meter openings during July and worked stations all up and down the East Coast as well as some 8 and 9 land QSOs.

This time of year the HF bands are beginning to produce a lot of good DX. Look for VK (Australia) and ZL (New Zealand) on 160, 80 and 40 from and hour or so before sunset to about an hour after; and again from an hour before sunrise to an hour after.

20 meters and up has been very hot all summer long and a lot of DX has been worked on 15 and 10, it can only improve with the increase in sunspot numbers.

Till Next month, 73 es DX de N3IK