What's the Scoop on the Lazy Loop?

Here's how multiband wire antennas measured up in real-world comparisons.

Ed Van Overloop WA2UGT 106 N. Fifth Street Park Ridge NJ 07656-1024

wenty years ago, I installed my first 80-meter full-wave horizontal loop antenna, called "The German Quad" by DF3TJ in his article (73 Magazine, June 1978). Since that time, I have continuously used this type of antenna as a standard of comparison for all other antennas used at my QTH. Although several construction and computer analysis articles have been written about full-wave horizontal loop antennas, there has never been an article in which the realworld performance of these antennas was compared to other wire antennas. In this article, I will try to share what I've gleaned from my many years of antenna experience.

For the record, my QTH is located in northern New Jersey, and is approximately 300 feet above sea level. My square, coax-fed, 80-meter loop is located approximately 40 feet above the ground. I also have a pentagonal 160-meter full-wave loop, fed with 450-ohm open-wire, at approximately 60 feet of elevation.

I have used my horizontal loop antennas for many years, enjoying thousands of contacts with amateurs who used a large variety of antennas, and have had hundreds of in-depth discussions with other hams who use loop antennas. Both of my loop antennas are solid performers on their fundamental frequency, and the 80-meter version provides excellent performance on eight amateur bands (10–80 meters).

I am a casual DXer and an avid ragchewer, and my two loops have helped me to earn WAS and WAC on all HF bands. I also have more than 100 countries confirmed on each of six HF bands, and over 60 countries on each of the rest. One highlight on 160 meters was an "S-7" from a VK5, in southern Australia, 10,000 miles from my QTH. He reported that my "cloud warmer" was giving him the only signal he could hear well enough to work at that time. The following advantages have been noted by most users of horizontal-loop antennas:

 Better than average performance on all HF and SWL bands.

•Simple, low-cost installation which does not require traps, baluns, or tuning and pruning. Just install it according to the measurements in **Table 1**.

•The antennas are inconspicuous, and provide good performance at lower heights than most other wire antennas.

•SWR of less than 3:1 (see Fig. 1) at some point in every HF band, allowing the built-in automatic antenna tuners in most new HF rigs to provide a proper power transfer to the antenna.

Continued on page 18

| Band | Length of Each Side | Total Length of Wire | Minimum Height Above Ground 20 feet | |
|-------|---------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| 40 m | 35 feet | 140 feet | | |
| 80 m | 70 feet | 280 feet | 40 feet | |
| 160 m | 135 feet | 540 feet | 60 feet | |

Table 1. Construction details for full-wave multiband horizontal loops.

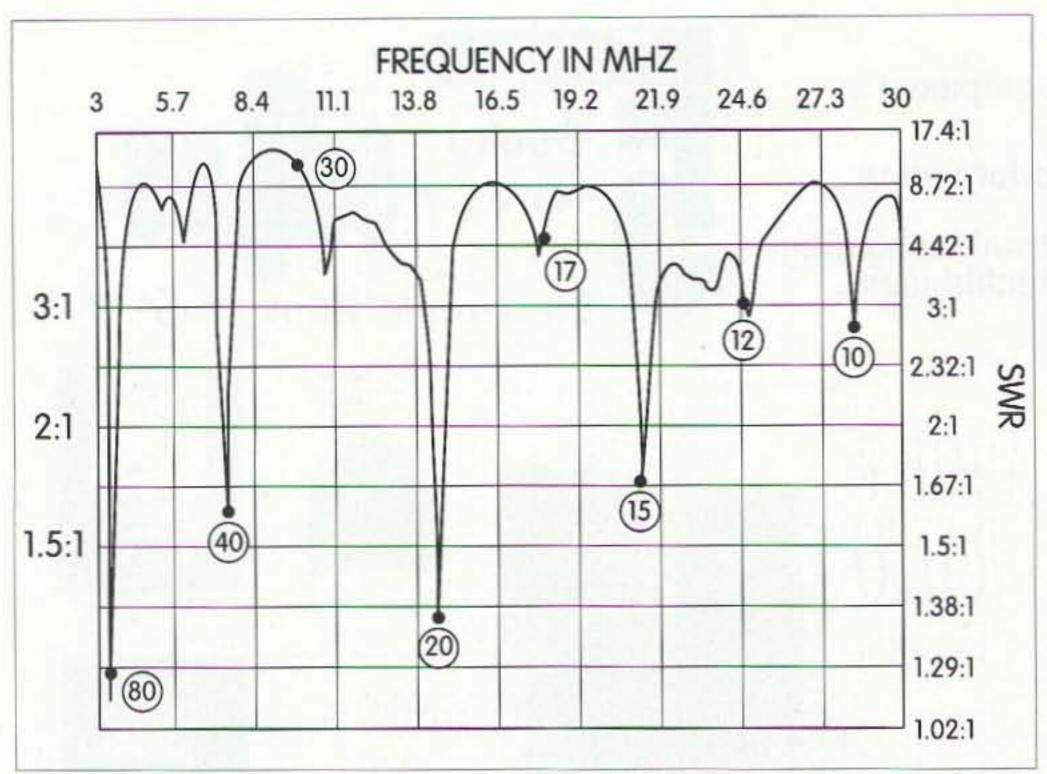


Fig. 1. All bands chart. Relative SWR vs. frequency for the 80 m loop, as measured with a Hewlett-Packard 3577A Network Analyzer.

 Some noise cancellation, due to the closed-loop design, when compared with open-ended type antennas.

 High-Q with low feedpoint impedance (20 to 200 ohms) and good bandwidth.

 Large capture area with less QSB or fading.

•High efficiency with 3- to 18-dB apparent gain over other simple wire antennas.

There are few disadvantages, and these are usually related to the individual preferences of the owner or the physical constraints created by his location. The disadvantages most often mentioned are:

 Large size (up to 140 feet per side, and 200 feet diagonally, for the 160meter version).

 The need for four convenientlyplaced tall supports.

Some sort of inline tuner is necessary.

 The radiation pattern is more or less omnidirectional.

About a decade ago, I gave an antenna lecture at a local radio club.

During the question-and-answer phase, I was given a friendly challenge to prove my statement that an 80-meter horizontal loop provided good DX performance on the 75-meter phone band. That challenge lead to a series of real-world comparisons of loops, single-and multiband wire antennas, and a couple of beams. I hope that reporting these actual results will dispel the commonly-accepted myth that horizontal loop antennas, at their fundamental frequencies, are cloud warmers useful only for local contacts.

Several local hams agreed to join in the antenna tests. During the first test, we were all located within five miles of each other, each had his antenna in the clear, and our elevations were all between 200 and 300 feet above sea level. To keep the results as fair as possible, we all agreed to use a power level of only 100 watts. My antenna was the 80-meter loop at a height of about 40 feet above the ground, test antenna #1 was a 75-meter dipole at 60 feet above the ground, and test antenna #2 was a 75-meter inverted vee at approximately the same height.

Our first contacts were with hams located 75 to 100 miles from Park Ridge (New Jersey). We found the loop to have as much as a 40 dB advantage over the dipole and inverted vee, proving that the loop certainly does have considerable high-angle radiation. Next, a group of five hams scattered around the Midwest volunteered to help in our tests.

| Rank | Antenna Type | Performance Characteristics: | | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|--|
| | (mounted at 40 feet) | Ground Wave | Short Skip | Long Skip | Short Term Fade | |
| 1 | Full Wave 80 m Horizontal Loop | fair | excellent | good-excellent | very good | |
| 2 | Centerfed Zepp | poor | very good | fair-good | poor | |
| 3 | Inverted "L" (130 feet long) | good | good | fair | good | |
| 4 | Windom | fair | very good | fair | poor | |
| 5 | Multiband Trap Dipole | poor | very good | fair | poor | |
| 6 | G5RV | poor | good | poor | poor | |
| * | 2-Element Multiband Quad | very good | good | excellent | very good | |
| * | Trap-Type Triband Yagi | good | fair | good-excellent | fair | |
| * | Half Wave Vertical | excellent | fair-good | good | poor | |

Table 2. Wire antennas, ranked by all-around performance. (*) indicates the antenna referred to is not a wire antenna; used for comparison only.

The transmitted signals from the loop averaged one and a half S-units better than the other antennas. On that static-prone night, my receive capability was Q-5, while my friends were having some trouble copying the Midwest stations through the static crashes. West Coast stations who had been following the test from a distance of approximately 3,000 miles agreed that the signal from the loop had a one S-unit advantage over the dipole and inverted vee.

We then turned our attention to Europe and beyond, working stations up to 5,000 miles away. We contacted hams in several different countries, in an attempt to eliminate any advantages in directivity one antenna may have had over another. The loop still exhibited at least a 3 dB advantage over the dipole and inverted vee, and in some cases was up to one S-unit better, according to the stations we worked.

The evening ended with a discussion on two-meter FM, as we analyzed the results of our tests. We all agreed that the 80-meter loop was the clear-cut winner and had a distinct edge over the dipole and the inverted vee at all distances. Since that time, one of the testers has installed his own 80-meter loop and has achieved similar results when comparing the loop and the inverted vee at his home.

The results on 75 meters prompted me to think that we should expand our testing to include all HF bands and many of the popular multiband wire antennas. Approximately five years ago, I organized several members of the State Line Radio Club of New York and New Jersey to help with the testing program. We spent several months of our spare time on this project, and in the process made hundreds of SSB contacts on all HF bands, at all times of the day and night, with stations both near and far.

We tried to eliminate the effects of QSB by having each station make several short transmissions of its callsign, repeating the process until the receiving station was certain that it could rank each antenna type against the others. Many times stations who were listening to our tests would break in with

The NiCd Lady - N6WPA

Individual Cells - Replacement Packs - Lead Acids Rebuilding Service - O.E.M. Assembly

for

*Handheld Radios *Laptops *Cellular Phones *Camcorders
*Portable Scanners *Test Equipment *Power Tools

Check into our rebuilding service - Substantial Savings over NEW! Convert your pack to NiMH! Same size pack - HIGHER capacity!

VISA

Call for a price list or visit our website: www.nicdlady.com P.O. Box 1485 Perris, CA 92572-1485



(909) 789-0830 email:nicdlady@deltanet.com FAX: (909)789-4895

CIRCLE 141 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Amplifiers, ATV Down Converters & Hard to Find Parts

LINEAR AMPLIFIERS

HF Amplifiers

PC board and complete parts list for HF amplifiers described in the Motorola Application Notes and Engineering Bulletins:

| AN779H | (20W) |
|--------|--------|
| AN779L | (20W) |
| AN 762 | (140W) |
| EB63 | (140W) |
| AR305 | (300W) |
| AN 758 | (300W) |
| AR313 | (300W) |
| EB27A | (300W) |
| EB104 | (600W) |

2 Meter Amplifiers (144-148 MHz)

(Kit or Wired and Tested) 35W - Model 335A, \$79.95/\$109.95 75W - Model 875A, \$119.95/\$159.95

(Kit or Wired and Tested)
Model ATV-3 (420-450)
(Ga AS - FET)
\$49.95/\$69.95

ATV Down Converters

Model ATV-4 (902-926) (GaAS - FET) \$59.95/\$79.95

HARD TO FIND PARTS

- RF Power Transistors
- Broadband HF Transformers
- Chip Caps Kemet/ATC
 Metalclad Mica Caps Unelco/Semco
 ARCO/SPRAGUE Trimmer Capacitors
- We can get you virtually any RF transistor!

 Call us for "strange" hard to find parts!

For detailed information and prices, call or write for a our free catalog!

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Heat Sink Material

AR347

Model 99 Heat Sink (6.5" x 12" x 1.6"), \$24.00 CHS-8 Copper Spreader (8 "x 6" x 3/8"), \$24.00 Low Pass Filters (up to 300W) for harmonics Specify 10M, 15M, 20M, 40M, 80M or 160M HF Splitters and Combiners up to 2KW



Add \$4.50 for shipping and handling

Communication
Concepts Inc.

508 Millstone Drive • Beavercreek, Ohio 45434-5840
Phone (937) 426-8600 • Fax (937) 429-3811
E Mail: cci.dayton@pobox.com Web site: www.communication-concepts.com

CIRCLE 99 ON READER SERVICE CARD

THE ORIGINAL WD4BUM HAM STICKTM ANTENNAS for HF MOBILE OPERATION

\$1995 each

The only lightweight HF mobile antenna recommended by noted author Gordon West, WB6NOA

- Monobanders for 75 to 6 meters.
 Very rugged fiberglass & stainless
- Telescopes for easy adjustment.
 3/8 x 24 TPI base fits most
- Low profile & low wind load.
 Needs no springs or guys.
 Complete tuning & matching
- instructions included.

 Approximately 7 ft. tall.

600 watts. Band Cat.# Cat.# Band 15 meters 9115 9175 75 meters 12 meters 40 meters 9112 9140 9110 10 meters 9130 30 meters 9106 6 meters 20 meters 9120 9117 17 meters

ALL 100% MADE IN USA

!! AT LAST!!

2 METER ANTENNA NO GROUND REQUIRED

· Boats

-

• R.V.s • Fiberglass

roof vans
• Plastic cars

Bicycles

Motorcycles

 Can be used with ground plane

\$44⁹⁵

Lakeview Company, Inc.

3620-9A Whitehall Rd., Anderson, SC 29626 • 864-226-6990

FAX: 864-225-4565 • E Mail: hamstick@hamstick.com • www.hamstick.com

CAT. # HW-1

NMO base mount

Power rated at

• 3 Db Gain

Only 40" tall

• 17-7 ph stainless steel whip

 Adapter and fully adjustable marine mount available.

Patent Pending

Add \$7 per order for S/H

LICENSE PLATE (

- Mounts behind license plate
- Mount is constructed of type 304
 Stainless Steel
- Complete with S/S hardware
- For Antenna's with 3/8" x 24 Thread
- Accepts PL-259 Direct
 Cround stress included.
- Ground strap included
- Complete mounting instructions included

100 % MADE IN USA

\$44⁹⁵ CAT. #TM-1

Tri-Magnetic Mount

MODEL 375
Only \$3995



Now with no-rust all stainless steel hardware

Holds all Harmstick
 Antennas and
 many others.
 Over 400# of

12" x 14" foot print.

holding power.

3/8 x 24 thread mounting.
15' RG 58 coax

15' RG 58 coax
w/PL-259.
No rust aluminum

construction.

CIRCLE 275 ON READER SERVICE CARD

reports from other areas, and we would record their results as well. We felt that accepting all reports from any area would help equalize any directivity exhibited by any of the antennas in our test group.

After several weeks of testing, certain patterns began to emerge from the accumulated data. We were quite surprised to discover that some types of antennas performed better than we would have anticipated and some performed more poorly. In some cases, we repeated the tests when two or three antennas appeared to be nearly equal in performance, so that we were able to definitively rate the antennas. Some other hams who joined our test program had quads, yagis, or vertical antennas, and their results were included for comparison to the multiband wire antennas.

As the tests came to a close months later, we were excited to sift through the many reports and come up with our rankings. Tables 2 and 3 show the results of our real-world tests. Please remember that the wire antennas and beams used in our tests were average antennas erected by average hams.

Of the multiband wire antennas, the 80-meter horizontal loop was the best all-around performer. In fact, not one of the other multiband wire antennas outperformed the loop on any band or at any distance. At times, one or another of the antennas would equal the loop in performance, but not on a consistent basis. As you can see, each antenna had its short-comings, and some of the more widely-publicized antennas do not even come close to meeting their reputations.

Our on-the-air testing has allowed me to offer the following tips if you want to install your own horizontal loop antenna:

 A four-sided quad provides better multiband harmonic performance than a three-sided delta. Rectangles or pentagons also work well. •The loop seems to work better when corner-fed with 75-ohm coax instead of 50-ohm coax. (Varying the feedline length may improve multiband matching.)

 A multi-turn coaxial-coil RF choke placed at the feedpoint of the antenna works well to keep RF off the shield.

•450-ohm open-wire used as a feedline for the 160-meter loop provided dramatically improved performance over coax when this antenna was used on 20 meters and higher.

 Higher is not necessarily always better, but the loop should be at least 1/8wave above ground on the fundamental frequency.

One final test may be of interest. A fellow club member purchased and installed a new 70-foot tower and one of the better-rated linear-loaded triband beams following our initial tests. His old trap tribander on a 50-foot tower had been outperformed by my loop on several occasions, and he was looking

| Antenna Type (40–50 feet above ground) | Cost | Radiation Pattern | Feed Line | Optimum Results | Tuning Requirements | Notes |
|---|-------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| Full Wave 80 m Horizontal Loop | Low | Many lobes and nulls on higher bands | Coax or open line | 10-80 m; very broad-banded | T-match with balun | Needs 4 supports. Excellent low-noise antenna, including SWL. |
| Centerfed Zepp | Low | Varies with band | Open wire | On several bands | Balanced-wire tuner | Classic multiband antenna. Used over 60 years. |
| Inverted "L" | Low | Varied lobes and nulls | Coax | Only on a few bands | Wide-range tuner | Quite directional on higher bands. |
| Windom | Low | Varied lobes and nulls | Open wire or coax and special balun | Only on a few bands | Wide-range tuner | On some bands, open-wire portion is part of antenna. |
| Multiband Trap Dipole | Low to Medium | Bidirectional | Balun or coax | On several bands, when mounted high above the ground | None, if properly made | The old standard. Fair for DX. |
| G5RV | Low | Varies with band | 450-Ω wire line to balun and coax | On resonant band | T-match | Compromise antenna, poor for DX. |
| 2-Element Multiband Quad | Medium to High | One main lobe | Coax | On a maximum of 5 resonant bands | Built-in match at antenna | Needs tower and rotator. Height not as critical as with yagi. |
| Trap-Type Triband Yagi | High | One main lobe | Coax | On resonant bands; 10 m, 15 m, 20 m | Built-in match at antenna | Needs tower and rotator. Higher is better. |
| Half Wave Vertical | Medium | Omnidirectional | Coax | 10–20 m | Built-in match at antenna | Good for limited- space applications. |

Table 3. Results of antenna comparisons.

20 73 Amateur Radio Today • September 1998

for revenge! As we scouted the 20meter phone band, we located a Tasmania (VK) station who was willing to compare our signals, and as we started testing, a local "Big Gun" asked to join the test. We agreed, thinking that his participation would provide for more interesting results. The Big Gun was definitely a Big Gun superstation. He had stacked monobanders on a 110-foot tower and a three-tube Alpha capable of 3 kW!

The first report from the VK showed that the kilowatt-fed tribander and the 80-meter loop were S-6, and the Big Gun was S-9 in Tasmania. When the Big Gun turned off his Alpha, we were all S-6! Now, who do you think got the most satisfaction from these reports? My friend with the new \$1,200 tower and tribander, the Big Gun with his \$10,000 antenna system, or me with my \$20 horizontal loop?

You may disagree, but after 20 years of general hamming, DXing, and occasional contesting, I am extremely satisfied to have accomplished so much with such a minimal investment. My 80-meter horizontal loop antenna consistently outperforms all other simple multiband wire antennas and usually holds its own on the higher bands when compared with ordinary yagis installed at ordinary heights. If you decide to try one, you will not be disappointed!

As a final note, I would like to thank all the local and worldwide hams who have made this article possible through their patience and enthusiasm for our antenna testing project.

Radio Bookshop

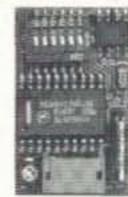
Phone 800-274-7373 or 603-924-0058, FAX 603-924-8613, or see order form on page 64 for ordering information.

Crystal Set Building

This book is packed with 168 pages of easy home crystal radio projects. Your batteries will never wear out with these radios. They might even make a great science fair project. These projects are reprinted from Volumes 6 and 7 of The Xtal Set Society Newsletter. They do have some tube sets and TRF's too. Great weekend projects. \$16.

- DIP switch programmable
- Miniature in size
- 37 EIA tones, 27 non-standard tones from 33.0 to 254.1 Hz included
- Reverse Burst built-in
- Easy 3 wire hookup

SS-64 CTCSS Encoder .66" x 1.08" x .21"



- Fully enclosed CTCSS encoder
- All 32 EIA tones from 67.0 to 203.5 Hz included
- Perfect for mobile / base applications



5.25° x 3.3° x 1.7°

Eight programmable,

selectable messages

via included keypad

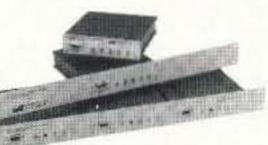
Meets all FCC

· Fully field programmable

identification requirements

\$49.95

SS-64 DIP Switch Programmable CTCSS Encoder



- 51 CTCSS Tones
- 106 DCS Codes
- Supports 157 Repeater Subscribers
- On-Line Computer Help
- Repeater CW ID
- · Air Time Loading & Analysis Graphs . Signalling Formats: CTCSS

TP-3200 Shared Repeater Tone Panel

TP-3200D Table Top Version TP-3200RM-A Single Rack Mount version TP-3200RM-B Triple Rack Mount version "Holds up to three TP-3200s

Call or write to receive our full Product Catalog or visit our Web site for complete information at: http://www.com-spec.com

DCS & DTMF \$269.95 each \$279.95 each \$279.95 each



ID-8 Automatic Morse Code Identifier

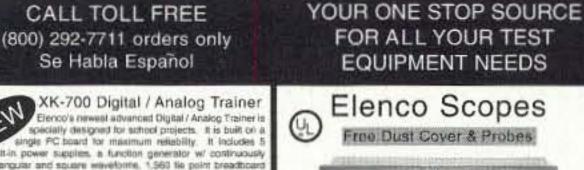
1.85° x 1.12° x .35° ID-8 Automatic Morse Station Identifier \$69.95

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALISTS, INC. 426 WEST TAFT AVENUE . ORANGE, CA 92865-4296

TE-32 Multi-Tone CTCSS Encoder

14) 998-3021 • FAX (714) 974-3420 Entire U.S.A. (800) 854-0547 • FAX (800) 850-0547

CIRCLE 10 ON READER SERVICE CARD



built-in power supplies, a function generator w/ continuously ine, tripopular and square waveforms, 1,563 tie point breadboar area. Tools and meter shown optional. (Mounted in a profession (utem barrohier of reinforced metal)

XK-700 Assembled and Tested \$189.95 XK-700-SEMI Kit Assembled and Tested 5174.95 XK-700K - Kit

DMM 914

DMM 916

Model 70III

Model 73III

Model 75iti

Model 77III

Model 79III

Model 390

Model 391

Made in U.S.A.

S-1325 25MHz

Delayed Sweep S-1330 25MHz 5-1340 40MHz S-1345 40MHz \$569 5-1360 60MHz S-1390 100MHz Delayed Sweep DIGITAL SCOPE SUPER SPECIALS

CALL OR WRITE FOR OUR NEW FREE 64 PAGE CATALOGI (800) 445-3201

4 Functions in One MX-9300

\$459.95 Features One instrument w/ four test leads ing systems.

- 1.3GHz Frequency Counter
- 2MHz Sweep Function Generator
- Digital Multimeter . Digital Triple Power Supply





DMM 912 \$369 \$179 \$229

Fluke Multimeters

B&K Precision Multimeters

Model 83

Model 85

Model 8719

Model 863E

Model 867BE

Model 2707

Model 2860A

Model 5370

Model 5390

\$85

\$115

\$139

\$175

\$109

\$127

\$143

\$195

\$265

Digital Multimeter

Model M-1740

Free Holster

Counter to 30MHz. · Linear and Log Sweep 5MHz - Model 4011

\$26

M 10000 10MHz - Model 4017 \$309 \$399

DIGITAL LCR METER

Model LCR-1810

Capacitance 0.1pf to 20MF

Resistance .01w to 2000Mir

Temperature -20°C to 750°C

DiodalAudible Continuity Test

10% OFF ON ALL

STANDARD

AMATEUR

RADIO

PRODUCTS

Inductance to H to 20H

Frequency up to 15MHz.

Signal Output Function

3 1/2 Digit Display

DC Volts 0-20V

PRODUCTS ON SALE!!

Fluke Scopemeters Technician Tool Kit TK-1500 \$1695 \$1696 \$2095 105B NEW 82495 ALL FLUKE 28 tools plus a DMM conlained in a large flexible tool \$49.95

B&K High Current DC Power Supply

Current Limiting Model 1686 12A Andel 1688 26A

\$239 88X 13.8V Fixed DC Power Supplier Quad Power Supply Model XP-581 Four Fully Regulated DC Power Supplies in One Unit DC Voltages: 3 Fixed;

case with a handle ideal for

everyone on the got

\$89.95 ATZY @ 1A Variative 2.5 - 25V 49.5A



11 functions including freq to 000 Including 20MHz, cap to 20m F. Meets Accessories UL-1244 safety specs. Kit Corner over 100 kits available

Model AR-2N6K 2 Meter / 6 Meter Amateur Radio Kit

35mm Camera Kit Model AK-540 Learn all about photography



UPS SHIPPING: 48 STATES 5%

IL Residents add 8.25% Salm Tax

OTHERS CALL FOR DETAILS



Model AM/FM-108K Transistor Radio Kit \$29.95

Radio Control Car Kit Model AK-870

 7 Functions Radio Control nduded \$24.95

No Soldering Required C&S SALES, INC.

150 W. CARPENTER AVENUE

WHEELING, IL 60090 (647) 541-0710 • FAX: (847) 541-9904



12 Functions Freq to 4MHz Inductance Capacitance Repair System Soldering and

Elenco LCR & DMM

Model LCM-1950

\$69

Desoldering Station Model SL-916 Top-of-the-line repair system will handle desoldering. Temperature controlled soldering from 300°F to 790°F (150°C to 420°C), desoldering temperature range 410°F to 900°F (210°C to 480°C). The system is based on principle of vacuum absorption of the solder from the PC board.

Counter F-2800 1MHz - 2.8GHz 16 segment RF signal strength bargraph MHHz - 2.BOHz 16 segment PVF signal strength bergraph. 6 hour NiCal battery operation. . High speed 250MHz direct court for high

Specifications Input Sensitivity (Typical)

Amplifier Impedance Range <1.5mV @ 100MHs 5mV @ 250MHz StriV @ 1GHz <100mV @ 2.4GHz

15 DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE **FULL FACTORY WARRANTY** PRICES BUILDEST TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

CIRCLE 184 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Most major credit

cards accepted.