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QST Issue: Sep 2007
Title: "Live" SSTV
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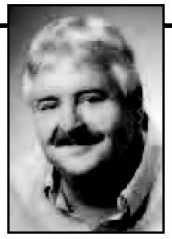

WB8IMY

ECLECTIC TECHNOLOGY

"Live" SSTV

Hams have been swapping Slow Scan TV (SSTV) images on the HF bands since the late '60s. I saw my first demonstration not long after I was licensed in 1971. The repetitious musical signal was strange enough, but the real show was taking place on a homebrew monitor crafted from an amber cathode-ray tube that had previously seen service in a radar console. The low-resolution image appeared slowly (they call it "slow scan" for a reason), painting from the top of the screen to the bottom. As the last of the image solidified at the bottom, the top was fading out of existence. Then, the cycle would resume at the top of the screen. The resulting picture was terrible by today's standards, but to see it created before my eyes from a radio signal was magic as far as I was concerned.

Fast forward to 2007. The old radar screens are long gone, replaced by computers and monitors. Sound cards handle the tasks of decoding received signals and encoding transmitted signals. Everything is done in software and the images we exchange are now in glorious color. In additional to traditional analog SSTV, we also have digital SSTV, or *DSSTV*. Different software is used for DSSTV, but the sound card is still acting as the modem.

Getting started with SSTV is vastly simpler today than it was decades ago. All you need is an SSB transceiver, a computer with a sound card and a sound-card interface to act as the liaison between your computer and your radio (interfaces are sold by several *QST* advertisers). If you are active on the HF digital modes, you're about 90% there already.

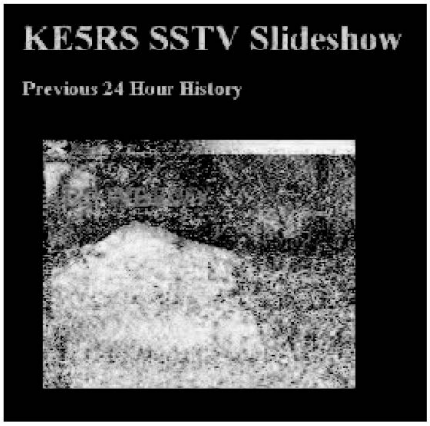

Figure 1 — My test transmission was received at KE5RS, but not very well. It was captured and displayed on his Web site in all its noisy glory.

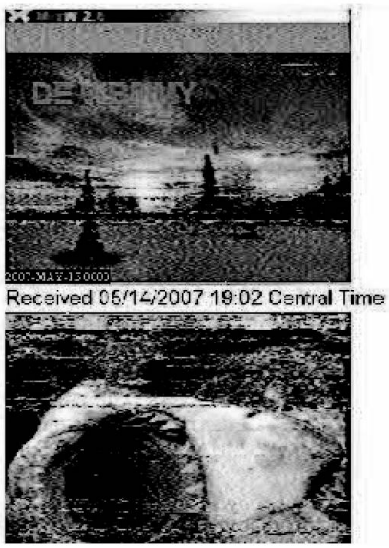

Figure 2 — KE3Y captured my second test transmission with some noise (upper left image). KE3Y's Web site displays multiple images.

SSTV software is available at no charge. For analog SSTV, download *MMSSTV* at **mmhamsoft.amateur-radio.ca/**. For DSSTV, you can try *HamPal* at **www.kb1hj.com/hampalbig**, *DigTRX* at **paginas.terra.com.br/lazer/py4zbz/** or use the image feature of the free *WinDRM* digital voice software at **n1su.com/windrm/**.

Smile! You're on the Internet!

So what does all this have to do with our topic, "live" SSTV?

Well, perhaps you've heard of so-called *remote receivers* that monitor specific HF frequencies and stream their audio over the Internet. A number of hams have established these around the world and they are convenient tools for checking how well your signal is reaching various destinations.

Now the same remote reception ability is available for SSTV. Enthusiasts refer to it as "live" SSTV, or "SSTV cam."

If you know your way around Internet file transfers, setting up an SSTV monitoring station is straightforward. KE5RS wrote a neat little *Windows* application that automatically grabs received SSTV images and uploads them to your personal Web page, or any other Web page. You'll find it at **www.ke5rs.com/sstv/create.html**. All a monitoring station needs is a receiver connected to a sound-card equipped computer running SSTV software. KE5RS's application takes care of the rest. Since everything is handled automatically, the monitoring station can operate unattended.

Each time the monitoring station receives an SSTV image, the KE5RS application immediately transfers it to the Web. Depending on the Web page design, you may see a single image frame that is "refreshed" with new images as they are received. Or, you may see a page that archives multiple images received over, say, the last hour. There are even Web sites such as the one maintained by PE2SWL at **pe2swl.sprinterweb.net/worldwide-sstv-servers.htm** that display "live" image captures from a dozen stations or more.

Gadget geek that I am, I had to give this a try. I parked my radio on the 20-meter analog SSTV frequency, 14.230 MHz, loaded an image into my SSTV software and clicked the TRANSMIT button. Within 60 seconds after ending my transmission, my test image started popping up on various live SSTV Web sites. KE5RS picked me up, in fact, although not very well as you can see in Figure 1. Reception was much better at KE3Y, as shown in Figure 2.

The sheer ingenuity of our Amateur Radio brethren never fails to impress! QST

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