

Eton Elite Executive Portable Receiver

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While not a “pocket” radio, the Eton Elite Executive packs a lot of functionality into a package that is just 6.6 × 4.1 × 1.2 inches. This compact receiver covers the following frequency bands: long wave (150 to 285 kHz), AM broadcast (520 to 1710 kHz), medium and short wave (1.711 to 29.999 MHz), FM broadcast (87.5 to 108 MHz), and aeronautical (118 to 137 MHz). Receiving modes include AM, FM (in stereo if you’re using headphones or earbuds), and SSB.

The Elite Executive sports a 31-inch telescoping antenna. For AM broadcast and long wave, however, it relies on an internal ferrite rod antenna. If you want to attach an external antenna, the Elite Executive accommodates that option with a 3.5 millimeter jack on the side of the enclosure. An adjacent **DX/LOCAL** switch reduces front-end gain to avoid overload when you are using an external antenna.

The receiver includes a 2-inch diameter loudspeaker next to a sizable amber digital display. Main tuning and volume controls take the form of knobs on the side of the case. The entire area below the display is devoted to buttons for accessing the various functions, as well as the memories.

It is interesting to note that in addition to the earbud/headphone jack, the Elite Executive also offers a separate **LINE IN/OUT** jack (see Figure 3). Not only does the radio provide a fixed, line-level audio output signal at this port for recording purposes, or for routing audio to a separate amplifier system, it also allows you to feed audio to the radio for listening through its internal speaker. Considering the proliferation of wireless ear-



buds and speakers these days, I suspect this input would see little use. Regardless, it is still handy to have available — just in case.

The Elite Executive arrives with a nicely designed faux-leather partial case secured to the radio by magnetic disks. When folded back under the radio, the case

Bottom Line

The Eton Elite Executive is a portable receiver that covers a number of different bands, including SSB capability on the HF amateur bands. The audio quality is quite good, especially when listening to the FM broadcast band with stereo headphones.



Figure 3 — The left side of the receiver has an external antenna jack, a DX/local switch to reduce gain if the receiver overloads, a stereo headphone jack, and an external power jack. The right side includes tuning and volume controls and a line in/out jack.

serves as a platform if you wish to position the receiver horizontally with a slight upward tilt. It reminded me of the magnetically attached keyboards and covers you frequently see with tablet computers and other mobile devices. Of course, the covering can be removed completely if you wish.

I powered the Elite Executive with four alkaline AA batteries and enjoyed considerable operating time. Alternatively, you can purchase rechargeable NiMH batteries and charge them when needed with the charger supplied with the radio. While you can also power the radio directly from the charger, the user manual cautions against this, warning of potential “interference.” This is true. The dc provided by the module no doubt gets the job done in terms of charging batteries, but it is not well filtered, and the result appeared, at times, as a noticeable buzz.

On the Beach

I was fortunate to have the Elite Executive in my possession during what may have been one of the best times for conducting this type of review — a beach vacation. It gave me ample time to explore the features of the radio and enjoy many relaxing “test sessions.”

Being right at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, I dared to hope that I’d be able to receive long wave signals from Europe. It was not to be. During my first evening attempt, I quickly discovered that the internal ferrite rod antenna, which the Elite Executive defaults to for this band, just wasn’t up to the task. Long wave listening is a challenge even with the best antennas, so this did not come as a surprise.

AM broadcast listening with the internal antenna offered a much better experience. The radio seemed sufficiently sensitive and selective. As on all bands, you can tune manually, or command the receiver to scan and stop on the strongest signals. You can also enter frequencies directly via the numeric keyboard buttons on the front panel.

Shortwave and Amateur Bands

Extending the telescoping antenna, I was eager to cruise the medium- and short-wave bands. The Elite Executive divides this range into several frequency segments according to wavelength. Repeatedly pressing the **METER** button steps you through the bands.

Naturally, I began by exploring the amateur bands. I pressed the **METER** button to access “41 Meters” and then tuned manually into the 40-meter ham band from there. With the SSB mode enabled (and lower sideband selected), I was able to eavesdrop on several conversations. To successfully tune SSB signals, however, you must first navigate in 1 kHz steps until you get close to the desired signal and then press the tuning knob to enable 10 Hz fine tuning.

While the user manual mentions the **WIDE** and **NARROW** bandwidth buttons, it doesn’t provide detail about the bandwidths available. As it turns out, you can select a bandwidth as narrow as 500 Hz when listening to short wave frequencies. The selected bandwidth is indicated by the small icon on the screen, adjacent to the equally small S-meter display.

With the receiver in the SSB mode and the 500 Hz bandwidth selected, I prowled for CW activity and wasn’t disappointed. Propagation conditions were mediocre at the time, but I was able to copy signals on various bands, even while using only the telescoping antenna. I attached a 50-foot wire to the external antenna port and, of course, the improvement was dramatic.

To enhance short wave broadcast enjoyment, the Elite Executive offers a synchronous AM mode with selectable sidebands. The purpose of synchronous AM is to mitigate the effects of selective fading by substituting

an internally generated carrier signal for the fluctuating carrier you are attempting to receive. Synchronous AM performance can be a mixed bag among consumer grade receivers, and that was the case here as well. The Elite Executive's synchronous AM feature reduced distortion, but it often did so at a significant cost to the overall fidelity of the signal. When the goal was to make a signal at least listenable, the radio's synchronous AM mode made a major difference, but for the sake of better audio quality, I frequently chose not to use it.

FM Broadcast Band

The FM broadcast listening experience with the Elite Executive was outstanding. With headphones the stereo audio was full bodied with excellent channel separation. When traveling it is helpful to make a quick scan of the available FM signals. To that end the Elite Executive provides ATS — Auto Tuning Storage. With a button press the radio will race through the FM broadcast band and store every signal it encounters into one of seven memory locations in each of its 99 memory “pages” (the radio offers a total of 700 memories). ATS is only available in the FM broadcast band.

The Elite Executive's memory feature is highly versatile. You can copy and paste memory contents from one slot to another, for example. You can also assign alphanumeric labels to each memory, which becomes awfully convenient after you've stored a slew of frequencies and can't remember the station names or call signs.

While browsing the FM broadcast band I came to appreciate the Elite Executive's RDS decoding capability. Known formally as the Radio Data System, RDS is a stream of digital information that many FM broadcast stations in the United States include with their analog transmissions. When decoding RDS data, the Elite Executive will display whatever text is in the stream, such as the station call sign, song title, artist, and more. With the press of a button, you can select the type of information you prefer to see, such as song titles only.

Aeronautical Band

No exploration of the Elite Executive would be complete without venturing into the aeronautical frequencies. These transmissions to and from aircraft use amplitude modulation on frequencies between 118

and 137 MHz. Exchanges are often short but interesting. During an episode of severe weather, I listened to pilots as they responded to air-traffic controllers guiding them around areas of heavy precipitation. Even when using just the telescoping antenna, there were always aviation signals to be found. For this band, the Elite Executive includes a squelch function, which made monitoring much more enjoyable.

Finally, like many consumer receivers, the Elite Executive provides a clock and multifunction alarm. You can awaken to your favorite FM broadcast station, or even to one of the National Institutes of Standard and Technology stations such as WWV, although that wouldn't be the most pleasant way to greet the morning.

Conclusion

The Eton Elite Executive is a well-made portable receiver with a number of convenient features. It is well suited for traveling or casual listening at home. The radio can also double as a test receiver for those times when you need to diagnose a problem with a transceiver.

Manufacturer: Eton Corporation, 1015 Corporation Way, Palo Alto, CA 94303; www.etoncorp.com.
Price: \$150.

