

The Kenwood TS-530S HF Transceiver

— sophisticated performance
at a not-so-sophisticated price

Paul Grupp KA1LR
73 Magazine Staff

When Kenwood announced that the TS-520S was about to be discontinued and replaced with a new model, I was somewhat apprehensive. For many of us, the venerable 520 was an old friend, a perfect example of what

an economical transceiver should be—short on bells and whistles, but long on dependability and performance. Would the TS-530S be a worthy replacement? I had to find out, and you just might be interested in what I discovered.

For those who are not compulsive ad watchers, here is a brief description of the basic features of the new 530. As expected, all amateur bands (160-10 meters) are included. The output stages conform to the *de facto* industry standard for transceivers with tube finals—two 6146Bs and a 12BY7 driver. Both analog and digital frequency readout are provided. The digital readout is the traditional Kenwood blue and displays to 100 Hz; the analog dial is accurate to within a couple kHz. Speech processor, VOX, semi-break-in CW, XIT (transmitter incremental tuning), and full metering are all standard. The receiver section boasts a noise blanker with a variable level control, fast or slow agc, an rf gain control and attenuator, i-f shift, RIT, and a 25-kHz crystal calibrator. Not a bad inventory! The manual is typical of those packed with recent Ken-



Kenwood's TS-530S.

wood equipment—good operating instructions and enough schematics and block diagrams to get you into trouble. A complete service manual is also available.

Our 530 arrived in perfect working order, which is somewhat unusual for equipment from almost any manufacturer these days. We immediately installed it in the 73 shack alongside its more expensive brother, the TS-830S. The first thing that strikes you about these two rigs is their similarity. They are built on exactly the same chassis and housed in the same cabinet. Even the rear panel holes are punched in the same place, so the 530 has a few empty spaces where the 830 has jacks.

The similarities between the 530 and the 830 are more than skin deep, however. They share identical final sections, power supplies, vfo, digital readout, and rf boards. Almost all accessories are completely interchangeable, making the 530 a logical choice for a backup rig in an 830-equipped station. Moreover, most of these accessories will also mate with the diminutive TS-130S. Such interchangeability throughout their entire line of HF transceivers is a thoughtful step which might cost Kenwood a few sales of accessories to owners of two or more of their rigs. It will pay off because Kenwood will earn the loyalty of customers who don't wish to replace the entire station each time they upgrade to a new transceiver. Another blow against planned obsolescence!

The 530 is not quite a carbon copy of the 830. In the bells-and-whistles department, it has an audio rather than an rf speech processor, and it lacks the transverter jacks, VBT, tone control,

notch filter, and digital hold switch of the 830. On the positive side, the 530 allows both CW and SSB filters to be switched in and out at will. Its big brother only accepts one or the other. Performance? Kenwood rates the 530 receiver's i-f rejection and the transmitter's sideband suppression each 10 dB worse than the 830. All other specifications are the same.

How important these differences are depends entirely on individual operating habits and tastes. Some may miss the extra features of the 830 sorely, but others will balk at spending the approximately 125 dollars more that the 830 costs to get them. One thing's for sure—the 530 has a lot more to offer than the 520 did!

On the Air

We could talk about features and performance until I ran out of paper and you ran out of patience, but it would all be meaningless if the radio in question didn't "play." The 530 plays! The 530S held a position of honor (front and center on the operating desk) for its entire stay at the 73 Magazine ham station. One of the things that makes it so successful is the sensible layout of the front panel. Every control has its own knob—there are no concentric controls to fumble with. If you adjust the carrier control, you don't run the risk of messing up the setting of the mic gain control. Nor will you go through an operating session where the band appears to be dead, only to discover that you inadvertently turned down the rf gain control while adjusting the volume! This clean front panel layout should make the 530 an excellent choice for a contest station. Our test was in the summer activity doldrums, so the only contest we could run it in was the Field

Day weekend. The QRM, pressure, and excitement were all there, and it performed admirably.

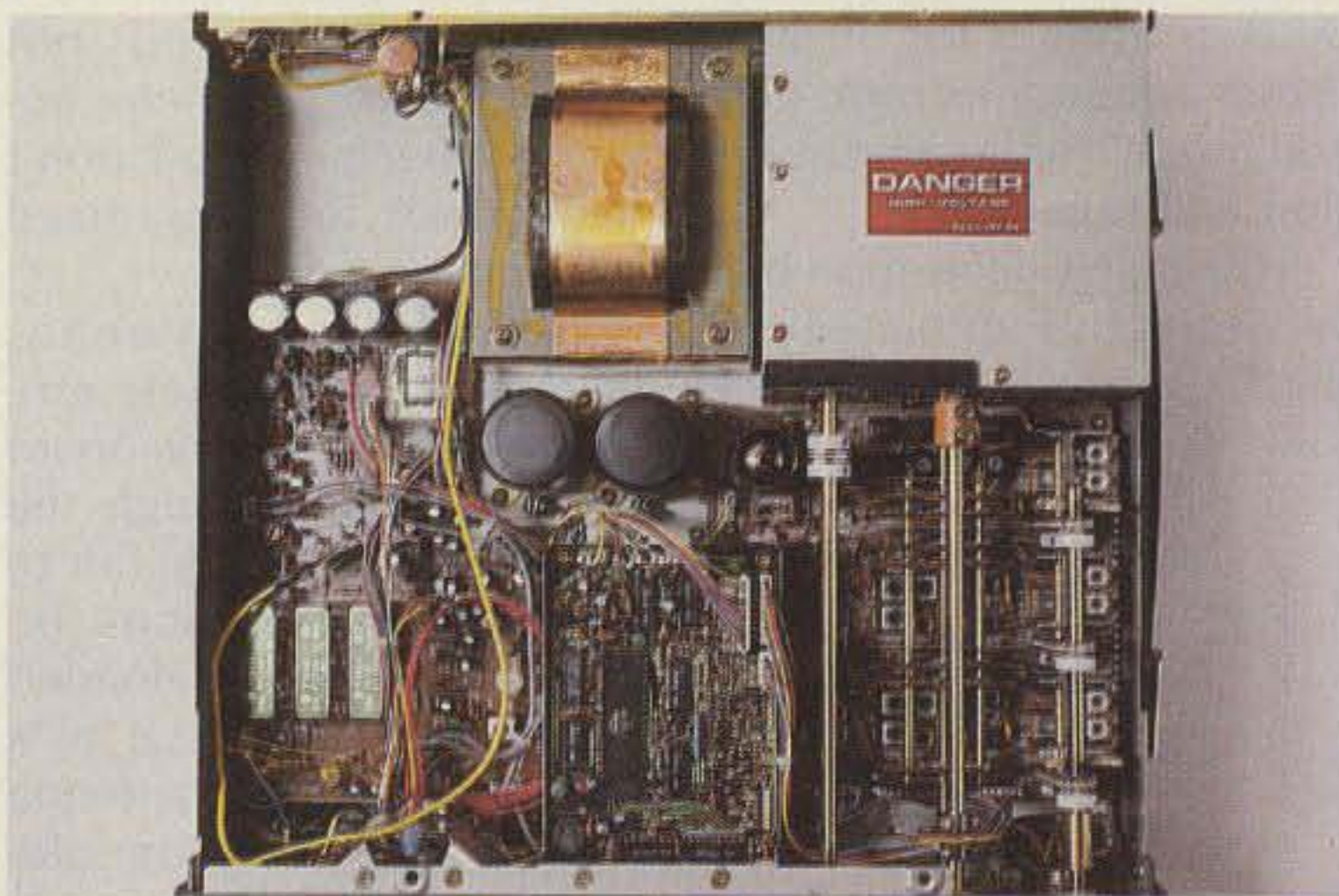
Receiver audio bears the distinctive Kenwood trademark of wide frequency response with a broad mid-range peak for added presence, with or without a good external speaker. Hams with good ears who have done a lot of listening to different transceivers could probably pick out the Kenwood every time in a blindfold comparison test.

I was very pleased at how easy the 530 is to tune up. I generally prefer solid-state finals, but the 530 is so easy to tune that I didn't mind a bit. Complaints? A particularly rabid CW operator (AG9V/1) felt that the 500-Hz filter didn't have enough ultimate rejection.

On the other hand, it is well known that he is hopelessly attached to the 250-Hz filter installed in his S-line at home!

Conclusions

What constantly surprised everyone here who used the 530 is how well it fares in comparison to Kenwood's top-dollar flagship, even though they are not necessarily designed to compete. The TS-520S would not compare as favorably, even though a digital-readout-equipped version retailed for quite a bit more than the 530 does! Kenwood has a worthy successor for the venerable TS-520S, a successor that has a lot to offer at a reasonable price. For more information, contact *Trio-Kenwood Communications, Inc.*, 1111 West Walnut, Compton CA 90220. ■



Top view of the TS-530S.



Bottom view of the TS-530S.