

Uniden BC125AT Scanner

By Larry Van Horn N5FPW

When you pin down experienced scanner radio hobbyists and ask them to share some of their secrets of success, there are usually one or two items that will top their list. Depending on their listening interest, most will probably tell you that the more scanners you own programmed for specific listening targets, the better chances you will have of hearing what you want to hear.

Instead of cramming everything into one or two radios, spreading them around to several radios programmed with similar frequencies will produce better listening results.

This equipment technique also translates well when the hobbyist wants to scan major field monitoring opportunities such as air shows, automobile races, maritime monitoring near major ports and rivers, etc. These “events” lend themselves well to a more focused and concentrated load out of frequencies directly associated with that particular event.

And that brings me to the focus of this review – the Uniden BC125AT, a handheld, bargain-priced scanner. The BC125AT is Uniden’s latest scanner and is loaded with a lot of great features. It is touted as an “event scanner” with a focus on being used at air shows and racing events. However, this scanner is much more than that. This is a great analog, conventional scanner for VHF-High band, civil and military air bands.

The Bearcat BC125AT is an affordable 500 channel (ten banks of 50) analog scanner with great features. The unit’s frequency coverage is 25-54, 108-174, 225-380 and 400-512 MHz. This unit is intended for general purpose listening to non-trunked public safety, business, railroad, ham, CB, civilian and military aircraft, and other analog communications.

The BC-125AT comes with two NiMH AA batteries, a belt clip and hand strap, a flexible BNC antenna, USB cable and a printed owner’s manual.

❖ Loaded with Higher End Features

Many of the features that are included with this unit, you would only expect to see in a higher priced scanner which makes this unit a great bargain at just \$130 plus shipping.

The Priority Scan with Do Not Disturb function lets you program one channel in each bank (10 in all) and then have the scanner check each channel every two seconds while it scans the banks so you don’t miss transmissions on those channels. Each of these channels can be alpha-tagged.

Do Not Disturb keeps the scanner from interrupting transmissions during receiving. You can also lock out up to 200 search frequencies (100 temporary frequencies and 100 permanent frequencies) in custom search, service search, Close Call search, or quick search modes.

The BC125AT has Uniden’s Close Call® RF Capture Technology that instantly tunes to signals from nearby transmitters. The Priority Scan function scans the channels you have designated as priority channels. The Delay function helps prevent missed replies during 2-way conversations.

There are ten service banks with preset frequencies for police, fire/emergency, amateur radio, marine, railroad, civilian air, military air, CB radio, FRS/GMRS/MURS, and racing banks to make it easy to locate specific types of calls and search any or all of these banks.

You can program a CTCSS or DCS frequency into the BC125AT to monitor systems using a CTCSS or DCS tones. This radio does support NFM (narrow FM) for all the conventional channels that are heading toward federally mandated narrow banding by 2013.

The backlit full frequency LCD display makes for easy night time operation. Operation is from two AA cells providing flexibility in choice of batteries – alkaline for long life and rechargeable (supplied) for economy. The batteries charge while in the scanner. The included NiMH AA batteries may be charged from a USB power source (such as a PC) or the optional MCM-MW858 USB AC adapter via the included USB cable.

❖ Bottom Line

First, let me get the negatives and perceived negatives out of the way. I have heard a lot of complaints among some hobbyist on Internet newsgroups about the lack of coverage from 380-400 MHz (the new Department of Defense land mobile radio sub-band).

As the author of the yearly *MT Air Show Guide* I’m sensitive to issues like this. As I

pointed out in the September 2012 *MT Milcom* column, there are approximately 70 aeronautical frequencies left that we have identified in this frequency range. This includes 384.550 MHz which is used by several military flight demo groups. So does this diminish my enthusiasm of this unit as a possible air show scanner? Not one bit and it will be listed in the next *MT* air show equipment guide.

I really only have one chief complaint regarding this unit. I really would like to have seen some sort of attenuator function on this scanner. In high RF environments such as air shows or automobile races this can be an important feature to handle strong signal overload.

I like the large LCD. You can see your alpha tag, frequency/channel number, mode, tone, and signal strength on the screen at the same time. I do wish I could dim that display sometimes to save on batteries.

The scanner is very easy to program and operate. Audio is very good and the speaker has a clear tone and is loud enough in the car to be heard over road noise.

So the bottom line is this: If you need a great “event based” style scanner at a great price, I strongly recommend the BC125AT from Uniden. This scanner is available from Grove Enterprises (SCN58) for \$129.95 plus shipping.

BC125AT SCANNER SPECIFICATIONS

- 500 Alpha tagged channels in 10 banks
- VHF Low, VHF High, UHF, civilian and military air bands
- Narrowband steps
- Close Call® RF capture (instantly tunes to signals from nearby transmitters)
- Close Call® Do not disturb mode (prevents close call checks during a transmission)
- Service search banks
- Squelch: CTCSS and DCS
- Priority search with do not disturb
- Backlit LCD display
- Weather alert (no NOAA SAME alert)
- PC Programming port (charge batteries from PC via USB)
- Signal strength indicator: Bargraph

Detailed Frequency Coverage (MHz)	
25.000 - 30.000	Amateur band 10 meters
30.000 - 50.000	VHF Low band
50.000 - 54.000	Amateur band 6 meters
108.000 - 137.000	Civilian aircraft band
137.000 - 144.000	U.S. Military Air/LMR
144.000 - 148.000	Amateur band 2 meters
148.000 - 150.800	U.S. Military Air/LMR
150.800 - 174.000	VHF High band
225.000 - 380.000	Military aircraft band
400.000 - 420.000	Federal government
420.000 - 450.000	Amateur band 70 cm
450.000 - 470.000	UHF Band
470.000 - 512.000	UHF “T” band

