

## Radio Shack's Accurian 7" Portable HDTV Set

By Ken Reitz

One of the surprise realizations of the digital TV conversion taking place over the next six months is that all of our cheap, portable, analog TV sets will no longer be functioning after February 17, 2009, the day analog TV in America is scheduled to disappear. That means that portable TV sets we planned to use during power outages would just give us snowy screens after that date.

Low-power TV (LPTV) stations, translators and boosters are exempt from the "drop-dead" date, though they too will eventually have to make the switch. Still, it has left many, particularly those in hurricane-prone states, wondering what they'll use during next year's hurricane season. They can give up on tuning in on radios and scanners previously capable of tuning TV audio, because that's now part of the digital signal as well.

### ❖ The Shack's Little Video Jewel

Radio Shack is one of the first to hit the market with a portable digital TV that not only gives you a miniature HDTV picture, but passes analog signals, making it useful for tuning in LPTV stations as well. This small set is packed with great video features, but it has a couple of drawbacks, too. First, let's take a look at the features.

This TV has a large screen compared to its overall size. The screen is 7" (measured diagonally), yet the whole set is only 7.3 inches wide and 5.8 inches high, and only 1.3 inches thick. It's also very light weight: just 1.3 lbs (including built-in battery pack).

When tuned to an HDTV channel that uses the full 16:9 aspect ratio, the picture is stunningly clear. Watching a standard definition signal is a little less clear, but quite easy

viewing. Small print at the bottom of the screen, for instance, is easily readable. Even while watching standard definition digital weather channels, the small type-faces for temperatures were easily discernable. The worst video pictures were from LPTV analog stations – which serve to show us, if nothing else, how far picture quality has come in digital portable TV sets.

The Accurian features an automatic scan that searches and stores NTSC (analog) as well as ATSC (digital) off-air signals. All secondary digital channels, in addition to the main HDTV channels, are added. There's an editing mode in the menu that lets you delete channels you don't want to watch. An on-screen guide lets you see what coming up for hours ahead. It also has closed-captioning, a sleep timer and zoom mode to select screen size: auto, wide, zoom and cinema.

The TV comes with a credit card-sized remote control that does everything except control the audio. That's done with a thumb wheel on the left side of the set. There's also has a brightness thumbwheel just below the volume control. All the other controls are push-buttons mounted on the front panel, including power, menu, input selection, wide/zoom mode, and channel up/down button. The front panel also houses the two 1-inch speakers for the kind of audio you'd expect from 1-inch speakers.

### ❖ Now, the Drawbacks

The built-in 29-inch telescoping antenna does a fine job tuning in local channels when you're within 10 miles of the transmitters. Twenty miles away, it took some serious



hunting for a place to put the set and adjust the antenna to get even an analog picture from a very strong station. But, with the TV on my desk and attached to an amplified UHF antenna at 25 feet, it picked up 25 stations in the first scan. I was watching HD channels from better than 60 miles away. The tuner is great, but like all HDTV tuners, it needs a lot of help from a good antenna system.

The non-replaceable, built-in battery pack is good for only 100 minutes, according to the manual, on a four hour charge. That means you'll have to be frugal in your viewing during a power outage. And, you can forget about taking it to the stadium to watch the game; it'll poop out before half-time. But, you could take it with you tailgating; just plug it into the cigarette lighter.

In power outages, hooked up to a car battery, you should get many hours worth of viewing. In long term emergencies (several days or a week), you might be able to charge the internal batteries during the day with a solar panel such as used for charging car batteries. Radio Shack engineers said that under laboratory conditions they might get



400-500 charge cycles out of the battery pack, but consumers should expect less.

### ❖ Final Word

Those of us who were used to seeing ever cheaper portable TV sets will be shocked to see the \$199.99 price tag on the Accurian. Call it digital inflation. But the trade-off here is a more versatile portable TV with a far better picture and access to additional channels. This would be a fun little TV to take on vacation. Small, lightweight and versatile, it's everything you need ... except cheap.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Signal System:  
NTSC (analog) and ATSC (digital tuning)  
Screen Size:  
7" (measured diagonally) 16:9 aspect ratio  
3-way Power:  
9 v dc (wall transformer, built-in lithium-polymer battery, auto accessory plug-in).  
Note: TV plays for 100 minutes on 4 hours charge.

Connections/controls:  
Headphone jack (mutes speaker when plugged in)  
75  $\Omega$  antenna input  
1/8" input for DVD player or video game  
LED lights green when TV is on, red when charging  
Volume thumbwheel control  
Brightness thumbwheel control

Accessories:  
Comes with 9 v wall transformer, rechargeable battery pack and auto accessory plug.  
Video accessory cable: 1/8" to 3 RCA (yellow, red and white)

Miscellaneous:  
Credit card-sized remote control  
Built-in 29" telescoping antenna  
Fold-out stand, non-slip rubber feet, 1/4" threaded mount to attach to tripod or stand  
Warranty: 3 months labor, 1 year parts  
Weight: 1.3 lb.  
Dimensions: 7.3" x 5.8" x 1.3"  
Made in China

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