

Bill Robertson muses on the increasing use of computers and smartphones for accessing scanner audio and reports on the new ARD300 digital audio decoder from AOR Japan. He brings you an update on CHIRP and introduces you to Zello.

Well, we're now into the New Year and if you are one of the many readers who've received or downloaded a copy of the massive ShopWatch and PubWatch list, I hope you've been having some interesting listening! However, as I write this, the festive season is still ahead of me and I'm looking forward to meeting up with family and friends across the UK. As I mentioned in last month's column, I will be spending Hogmanay in Edinburgh and I imagine the PubWatch channels where I'll be on the evening of December 31st will be rather active! For readers who might have missed this list, it's available for download via the link on the RadioUser Latest Issue web page. www.pwpublishing.ltd.uk/?page_id=629

Scanner Listening and PCs

Mac from Cockenzie dropped me a line in the post, regular readers will have seen photos of his very impressive listening post in previous columns and it's also pictured in *Scanners 7*. Mac told me he's one of the 'old guard' but he's finding that there's more and more intrusion of PCs coming into the hobby. I must say that I do also like 'real radio'. I do still have and use each day (for nostalgia's sake), my tuneable desktop radio which besides the broadcast bands also covers the 136 to 174MHz VHF and 450 to 470MHz UHF FM bands. However, now I also find that PCs can be a very useful adjunct to our listening

■ by Bill Robertson
■ An in-depth look at the world of scanning

Add-ons and Apps

hobby. For example, with marine band listening, the use of software such as ShipPlotter lets you graphically see the position of boats and ships within your VHF marine band radio listening range, by decoding the automatic identification system (AIS) radio bursts from them. Likewise, for civil airband monitoring, a program such as PlanePlotter lets you see the location of the planes you're listening to. In addition, another use is PC control of your scanner, including automatic logging and audio recording of activity.

AOR ARD300

Yes, it had to come and now the well-known scanner radio manufacturer AOR Japan has come up with the add-on, standalone, AOR ARD300 digital audio decoder for scanners. Described by AOR as being a, "*Versatile and powerful digital voice decoder/demodulator for your trusted analog receiver!*", it decodes digital private mobile radio (dPMR446 and Tier 1), NXDN (6.25kHz mode only), APCO P.25 and popular amateur digital modes from Icom (D-STAR), Alinco and Yaesu. It's fully compatible with AOR's legacy AR8600-MK2, AR5000(A/+3), AR-ONE, AR2300, AR5001D and AR6000 receivers. In addition, it can also be used with any other make of receiver that has either a 10.7 or 45.05MHz intermediate frequency (IF) output. It's powered from a nominal 12V DC supply and has a built-in speaker for audio output.

It's the scanner receiver equivalent of a digital TV set-top box! However, experienced scanner listeners might

have noticed that it doesn't feature digital mobile radio (DMR) or terrestrial trunked radio (TETRA) which, arguably, are probably the two most-used digital two-way radio modes in Europe on VHF and UHF. Nevertheless, hopefully these modes will be incorporated, possibly as a firmware update, sometime in the future, we'll have to wait and see.

DMRDecode

For those of us interested in decoding DMR, Ian Wraith recently released Build 70 of his DMRDecode program. It adds a feature where you can see from the decoded data the system informing radios of activity on other channels on a MOTOTRBO Capacity Plus system. If you have internet access, you can download this latest build via the following link.

<http://borg.shef.ac.uk/dmrdecode>

I've also arranged for it to be included in this month's *Software Spot* collection.

Baofeng UV-5R and CHIRP

Paul kindly dropped me a line to say 'thanks' for the inclusion of details on CHIRP in last month's column. Paul told me he had trouble with the Baofeng supplied software and he still hasn't made it work. Yet CHIRP has been a doddle. He doubts that his problem was isolated either and he suspects I'll hear from other elated Baofeng users too. I'm glad I could help Paul! On his 64-bit machine running Windows 7, he downloaded the latest driver for the Prolific PL2030 cable, installed CHIRP and was using it straight away after checking on 'Devices and Drivers' to see



The AOR ARD300 digital audio decoder.