

# The KWM-1 and Its Competition

*An article about the Collins KWM-1 was featured in the January 2007 issue of QST. The KWM-1 story is continued here, focusing on the various rigs of the time.*

**Mike O'Brien, KØMYW**

**C**ollins wasn't the first commercial manufacturer of a single-box Amateur Radio station; its KWM-1 was soon joined by competing transceivers. In the late 1930s, RCA had offered the luggable 5 meter ATR-219 for \$20 (batteries, tubes and microphone extra). The same money would buy a Knight 5 meter transceiver from Allied Radio.

The Abbott Co introduced a 20 W 2 meter transmitter/receiver unit, the TR-4B, in 1946. A 2 meter "handie-talkie" was advertised in 1948 by an outfit named Sperti. Sonar Radio Co marketed 6 and 2 meter portable combo stations, the CD-6 and CD-2, in the early 1950s.

In 1953 Gonset began marketing its popular series of Communicator rigs for the 54, 144 and 220-MHz bands. The Communicator (affectionately dubbed "Gooney Box") was marketed as a "self-contained station." The receiver was tunable while the transmitter was crystal-controlled.

Hallicrafters was the first major American manufacturer of ham gear to put a rig resembling a transceiver for HF into mass production. Its SR-75, introduced in late 1950, actually was a modified version of the company's entry-level HF receiver, the S-38B. The SR-75 could put out a few watts of crystal-controlled CW on 80 through 10 meters.

In the August 1957, just as the KWM-1 was reaching retailers, Hallicrafters presented a full-page QST advertisement announcing its FPM-200, an even more ambitious transceiver than the Collins design. The FPM-200 had two VFOs, covered 80 through 10 meters and was mostly solid-state. Hallicrafters struggled with the FPM-200 over the next three years, and only a handful made it out of the Chicago factory.



**The Hallicrafters FPM-200. [Jim Garland, W8ZR, Photo]**



**The Cosmophone 35. This is one of several Cosmophones in Brian Harris, WA5UEK's collection. [Brian Harris, WA5UEK, Photo]**

The FPM-200 was eyed warily by Collins. Dennis Day, WØECK, was a young Collins engineer when he was handed an FPM-200 that had been acquired by the company and told to evaluate it. "It had some bold innovations with the use of solid-state components," Day recalls. "But it left a lot to be desired, especially with its selectivity and AGC curves."

In late 1957, Cosmos Industries completed a pilot production run of its Cosmophone 35. It offered two receivers

and a 6146-powered transmitter in one hefty cabinet, with a "tracking" feature that allowed the transmitter to follow the receivers. Although constructed to military standards, using Collins mechanical filters and other quality components, the Cosmophone failed to achieve widespread popularity.

Hallicrafters reverted to "hollow-state" technology in 1961 with the SR-150, an SSB transceiver that covered 80 to 10 meters using 19 vacuum tubes. And Gonset brought out the G-76 transceiver,

an AM/CW rig for 80 to 6 meters.

In 1962, the National Radio Company, known for high-quality receivers, announced the NCX-3, a transceiver that covered 80, 40 and 20 meters. That same year saw introduction of the first Swan transceiver, the SW-120, which covered 20 meters only.

In 1963, two well-known names in the ham marketplace, Faust Gossett and Leo Meyerson, formed new companies that debuted HF SSB transceivers. Gossett left behind the company bearing his name (minus the final "t") and started Sideband Engineers, introducing the SBE-33. Meyerson, whose World Radio Labs had produced the popular Globe line of transmitters through the 1950s, sold WRL to Textron and started Galaxy, with the Galaxy 300 transceiver its initial offering.

Heath, the Benton Harbor, Michigan producer of popular gear in kit form, came out with three true transceiver models for HF SSB in 1963, the Single-Bander series, for 80, 40 and 20 meters. Heath's first full-featured 80 to 10 meter transceiver, the SB-100, appeared in 1965.

The R.L. Drake Company jumped into the transceiver fray in 1963 with its TR-3, offering SSB, AM and CW on 80 to 10 meters. Another established manufacturer, E.F. Johnson, in 1964 expanded



The National NCX-3 Transceiver. [Jim Tripp, WA6DIJ, Photo]



The Sideband Engineers SBE-33. [Courtesy John Sielke, W2AGN]



The Johnson Avenger. [Mike O'Brien, KØMYW]

beyond its successful line of Viking transmitters and made a stab at marketing a first-class transceiver — the Avenger, a mostly solid-state rig with dual VFOs. Only about 50 Avengers were constructed, most kept by Johnson employees.

Hammarlund announced, but never produced, the Pro-200 SSB transceiver in 1963, then built but quickly withdrew the HXQ-300 the next year. Multi-Elmac, whose AM/CW transmitters and receivers were popular with mobile operators, announced an SSB transceiver, the ATR-4, but only a small pilot run was made in 1963. The Eico 753, a transceiver covering 80, 40 and 20 meters, was introduced in 1965.

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Mike O'Brien, KØMYW, an Amateur Extra class licensee, was first licensed in 1957 when he was 12. After 20 years as a newspaper journalist, he came back to ham radio and began acquiring the rigs he lusted after in his youth. Currently a college journalism instructor, he continues to write for newspapers and other publications. He has been published before in QST, writing articles on early Hallicrafters transmitters and the 1947 Gatti-Hallicrafters DXpedition to Africa. Mike currently lives in Springfield, Missouri.