

The 2013 Grundig Satellit 750

By Larry Van Horn N5FPW, MT Review Editor

When Etón Corporation released its long awaited Grundig Satellit 750 LW/AM/SW/FM portatop radio, *Monitoring Times* was one of the first organizations to put this radio through its paces. We published our review of this radio in the December 2008 issue of *MT* in our *First Look* column.

Etón's CEO Esmail Amid-Hozour commenting on the release of their new radio said, "The Grundig Satellit 750 is a model of what shortwave radios should be and Etón is proud to offer this high-quality Grundig product to our discriminating shortwave listeners." They billed this new radio as their company "flagship radio" and many equated it as the replacement for their Grundig Satellit 800.

In my final thoughts in my December 2008 review I wrote, "Overall, signal sensitivity appears to be very good for a receiver in this price category and there are some other neat featured I like on the 750. But some of the other issues may make these points mute to some. Time and the marketplace will be the final determination whether the Grundig Satellit 750 lives up to its billing as the new flagship of the Etón receiver line." We gave the radio only 2 ½ stars out of five back then.

Needless to say some folks were not happy with our review of the 750 including Etón. In retrospect, over four years later, I would not change one single word I wrote in that review. I believe we honestly gave a fair assessment of the unit that was shipped to us for review.

If you read my previous review closely, you would see that most of my concerns back then had to do with quality control issues and most in our industry fully acknowledge that we were seeing some nasty stuff coming out of China back in 2008.

So, in this edition of *MT's First Look*, let's fast forward to the present and see if Etón has done anything to improve a model that has had time and space in the marketplace.

❖ Opening up the Box

First, let me say when I first pulled this radio out of its display box back in 2008, it was the first time I had seen it, and my initial impression was of a radio with a bit of a retro look back to an earlier era. I have owned a number of portables through the years (my personal favorite is a Panasonic RF-2200) and this radio's general appearance reminded me of some of the beefier portables manufacturer from the late 70s and early 80s.

The unit has two large handles on each side of the radio, a hard plastic carrying handle on top of the radio, and a rotatable ferrite

coil antenna for longwave/broadcast band reception. The signal strength indicator is an analog meter, not the normal LCD segmented meter you see on portables offered in today's marketplace.

The Satellit 750 offers complete coverage of long wave, medium wave and shortwave radio frequencies. Shortwave coverage includes the reception of the single sideband (SSB) mode, allowing the reception ham radio operators, maritime and shortwave aeronautical stations. You can select either wide or narrow selectivity to reduce co-channel interference and you can tune stations using the conventional tuning knob, quick keypad entry or via the 1000 memories that the user stores.

The 750 also receives the VHF aeronautical band (118-137 MHz), and the FM broadcast band (stereo reception available via the headphone jack).

❖ Inside the Box – The 2013 Version

The radio was well packaged in its display box and it comes with an AC/DC wall wart, owner's manual, and warranty registration card. The case is made of a hard, black plastic

and construction appears to be solid.

Overall ergonomics are still good, nothing has changed here. Number buttons and other major control buttons are large and have a good feel. The display is large and easy to read, especially with the amber backlighting turned on. There is a minor quirk with the volume knob I will cover later.

When I applied power and turned around in the AM/FM bands the radio provided good audio quality and volume. Reception on the FM broadcast band in our rural area, even on the internal whip was "very good." VHF civilian air band reception was excellent.

AM broadcast band reception was good, but I had to cut off all the laptop computers in the shack. Signals on the AM band except for local stations were completely covered up by extensive computer interference. I do not have this issue with most of my other radios or portables in my radio shack.

On the plus side I did note that the 750 has a lower noise floor than on some previous Etón radios of that era, specifically the E1XM. That probably had more to do with the type of display used on the 750 than anything else.

The signal strength of single side band (SSB) stations in the HF spectrum was good, especially compared to some other portables we have tested in recent times.

I'm still disappointed with the way you have to tune SSB signals with this radio. While it is nice to have your mode selection setup on one push button (similar to the later model Drake tabletop radios), the additional tuning required using a BFO was a step backward. I would have liked to see some fine tuning steps included with this radio and then you could have eliminated the BFO control.

The base and treble controls allowed for a wide range of adjustment to set that audio just right for the station being received. The wide/narrow selectable filters regardless of mode on all bands, except Air, is something you normally don't see on most portable radios and is a welcomed feature.

One of the other common complaints from radio hobbyists about the feature set on this radio was the lack of synchronous detection. Honestly, that doesn't bother me at all. Synch detection over the years got way more hype by some as a must-have feature than it truly deserved.

I would have liked to have seen an automatic loudness control (ALC) and/or automatic gain control (AGC) feature in this radio. You will be riding the volume control quite a bit as you tune around with this unit due to the lack of an ALC control. It appears that the AGC is set for a slow recovery and it is not adjustable.



MT First Look Rating (0-10 scale)	
Audio Quality.....	8
Audio Levels.....	8
Sensitivity.....	6
Back light.....	7
Display.....	7
Battery Life.....	6
Ease of use.....	6
(due to memory page setup)	
Feature Set.....	6
Keyboard/Button/Control Layout.....	6
Manual.....	3
Overall Construction.....	7
Overall Reception.....	7

MT RATING: 3 3/4 STARS



Overall: 3.75 out of 5 stars

❖ Some Final Thoughts on this 2013 Version

Overall, I still have mixed feelings about the Grundig Satellit 750. I still feel that, contrary to how some have characterized this radio, it is not a major improvement over the old Grundig Satellite 800. And, as is the case with most radios, there is room for improvement, especially at the suggested MSRP of \$400.00 (street price is currently around \$300).

First, the manual still gets an "F." It is not well written, has some obvious errors (i.e., Passport to World Band Radio has not been published in several years), uses very small type for its 3 1/2 by 6-inch size, and it is printed using grey ink, which makes it a real pain to read.

The instruction in the manual on how to setup memory channels is well, let me be nice and say – challenging!

Like the earlier unit we tested, when tuned to stronger SW radio signals when connected to an external antenna, I did notice several instances of dynamic compression. The radio just could not handle the amount of signal being fed to it. When we would switch from the external antenna to the whip, the signal strength would improve dramatically, in some cases 20db or more.

Like its predecessor, the Satellit 800 and the initial 750 we tested, it looks like there may still be some minor quality control issues. The VFO knob still wobbles and is entirely too loose. When we did our initial test, a quick check with some other radio enthusiasts who owned the 750 indicated that their units also have wobbly tuning knobs.

In the past, owners of the Grundig 800 noted that this condition over time manifest itself with the tuning knob falling off. I have not heard of any recent reports that this is an issue with the 750, but a tuning knob that wobbles is not very comforting for me as I am heavy tuning knob kinda guy.

Also, I am not a fan of the battery contacts in the battery compartment. The D-cell "+" side uses a coil of wire rather than a metal plate like a lot of other radios. It is only a matter of time before the batteries will have a problem maintaining contact and providing power. We have seen this on more than one model of portable radios in the past that use these wire coils for the positive contacts.

Another issue is the battery compartment cover. It still looks a bit delicate to me. With heavy D-size batteries on the inside, you really have to be careful that everything is seated properly so you won't have an incident with breaking the battery cover or spilling out the batteries.

Another power issue is that this radio uses a wall wart that is center pin negative. Yes, the shield is hot of the incoming wall power. You really need to keep this in mind if you are going to use an alternative power source or need to replace the AC/DC wall wart at any point.

The AM/LW rotatable antenna works well for its size. Do not expect to null out you local AM radio stations with it, it just doesn't have that kind of capability. The issue with your hand effecting reception has apparently been addressed as we did not note any problems during this test as we did in the last one.

The radio still exhibits a chuffing sound when turning the tuning knob at a moderate tuning speed in the AM mode using the fast tuning steps.

Finally, from an ergonomic point of view, the volume control is not where you would expect to find it. Call me old fashion and, yes, certain habits are hard to break, but I tune with my left hand and ride the volume knob with my right. Granted I am right handed, but most radios put their volume controls on the right hand side of the radio. The bass, treble and volume controls are all on the left front side of the radio. Given the lack of an ALC, and my constant riding of the volume control as I tuned around, it was a constant nuisance reaching across the radio to turn that knob up or down.

Overall, signal sensitivity appear to be very good for a receiver in this price category and there are some other neat features I like on the 750. Many who buy this radio swear by it. A lot of my BCB DXing brethren really like this radio and overall, it is a good radio in that arena of monitoring.

❖ Bottom Line

Ultimately, Etón has chosen to stick with this radio even with all the bad press it got back in 2008 (I wasn't the only one who was critical

of it). Other than maybe the tuning knob issue, it appears that quality control has gotten better which was my chief concern back in 2008.

The unit we tested this time around is a better radio than the one we tested four years ago, and that is probably why it has a loyal following within the radio hobby community. Most radio hobbyists are happy with their choice of the Grundig Satellit 750 and overall we are much happier with the 2013 version also.



FEATURES/SPECIFICATIONS:

- Manufactured in China
 - Frequency Coverage: Longwave 100-519 kHz; AM 520-1710 kHz (US/Canada)/522-1620 kHz (selectable); SW 1711-30000 kHz; FM 87.5-108.0 MHz (US/Canada)/76-108 MHz (Rest of the world); and Air band 118.0-137.0 MHz
 - Tuning rates

	FM	AM	SW	Air Band	SSB mode	
Fast	1 MHz	10 kHz	5 kHz	5 kHz	.025 MHz	5 kHz
Slow	.01 MHz	1 kHz	1 kHz	1 kHz	.001 MHz	1 kHz plus manual tuning with BFO
 - Selectable 9/10 kHz AM broadcast band tuning steps
 - Selectable/tunable Single Side Band (SSB) reception
 - Auto/Manual/Direct frequency key-in and station memory tuning
 - Control knobs: Bass, treble, volume, SSB BFO, squelch, RF gain.
 - Antenna Attenuator: 0/-10/-20 db
 - Auto Tuning Storage function (ATS) for AM/FM/LW
 - 1000 station memories (50 memories (MW/LW) 100 memories (FM/SW/SSB), and 500 customizable)
 - Bandwidth button: Wide/narrow selections for all bands except Air
 - Dual alarm clock function
 - Audio: Four inch, eight ohm speaker at two watts audio output
 - External audio jack: 1/8 inch (3.5 mm) stereo reception
 - Power consumption: 80 mAh (without backlight)/90 mAh (with backlight)
 - Power: Four alkaline D size (UM1) 1.5 volt batteries or four 1.2 volt rechargeable batteries; and AC/DC wall wart: 120VAC/6VDC 500 mA center pin = negative polarity
 - 3.5 mm line in jack on front of the unit that will enable you to use the radio speaker for MP3 playback)
 - Left/right RCA line out jacks (radio broadcasts can be transferred to recording device/audio amplifier)
 - External antenna jacks:
 - External 50 ohm BNC jack for FM
 - External 50 ohm BNC jack for SW
 - External 50 ohm 3.5 mm jack on the ferrite antenna for AM reception
 - External 500 ohm nominal (antenna clips for a random wire antenna (red clip) and ground connection (black clip)
 - Internal whip antenna for FM/SW reception
 - 360 degree rotatable ferrite antenna for AM/LW reception
 - Internal/External antenna switch (LCD display indicates what position that switch is in)
 - Dimensions: 14.65"W (372mm) x 7.21"H (183 mm) x 6.02"D (153 mm)
 - Weight: 5.9 lbs (2.66 kg)
 - Includes owner's manual, warranty card
 - One year parts and labor limited warranty (North America) and two years parts and labor limited warranty (Europe)
- * Specifications subject to change