

# HAVING FUN ON HF DIGITAL MODES . . .

By Kay Craigie WT3P

Images by Dave Laustsen W3LAW & Kay Craigie WT3P



. . . has never been easier or cheaper! No longer must you fill up the shack with huge, clanking teletype machines that sound like you put a load of rocks in the clothes dryer. No longer must you buy a terminal node controller (TNC), though a TNC is still useful for VHF packet when you want to connect to the local DX PacketCluster node.

With a reasonably recent computer and a good sound card, which you probably already have in the shack, you can get on HF digital modes. You can home-brew or purchase what's needed to set up for transmitting without spending a lot of money. You'll be astonished at the quality of the shareware software available for download from the Web.

What's better still, you won't need to spend more money when they invent more digital modes. Once you're set up for one of these modes, you're ready to rock 'n' roll on whatever comes next, because they're all using the sound card these days.

Another good point about the newer digital modes, such as PSK31 and MFSK16, is that they operate beautifully on flea power. QRP aficionados quickly picked up on this fact. Hams who have QRP rigs that will do SSB as well as CW are able to add digital modes to their operating fun.

You can even assemble a PSK31 transceiver from a kit and add the fun of building to the fun of operating.

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Grid Locator: HH07ra

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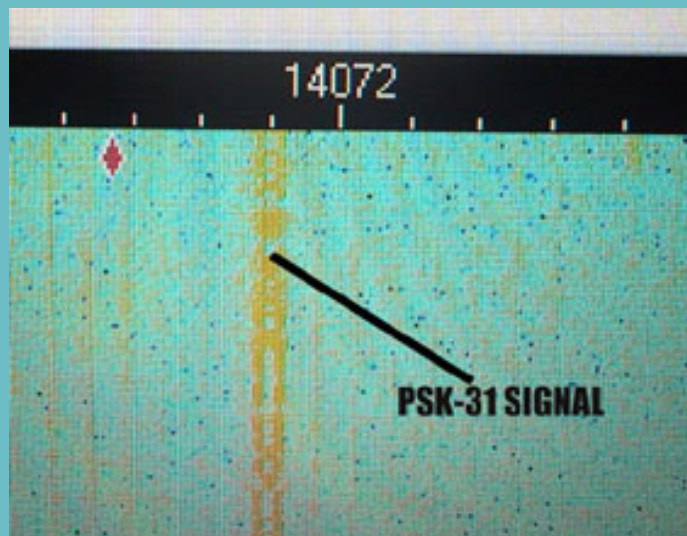
Confirming QSO with	Date			UTC	Band	2XMode	Report
	D	M	Y				
WT3 P	11	01	2001	01:35	20M	MFSK-16	599

73. *[Signature]* Tnx QSL/Pse



What kind of operating is on HF digital? Well, what do you want? There are occasional contests. There is DX. There are rag-chews. It's all out there.

Says Dave W3LAW, "Yes, I spilled something on this card, but it does show that you'll get interesting contacts on PSK31. I've talked to this guy several times, never with more than 7 watts. Yes, you can believe in magic!"



The far left photo shows a PSK31 signal on the computer monitor. Clicking the mouse on the signal would bring the little red diamond to the center of the signal, and wham! you're copying PSK31.

The photo above, right, shows a dedicated PSK31 transceiver for 20 meters, the PSK-20, by Small Wonder Labs of Newington, CT. Read all about it in "A Panoramic Transceiving System for PSK31," pages 31-27 of June, 2000, *QST*. Another dedicated PSK31 rig, designed by Dave Benson NN1G of Small Wonder Labs and available as a kit from the New Jersey QRP Club, is described in "The Warbler - A Simple PSK31 Transceiver for 80 Meters," pages 37-41 of March, 2001, *QST*.

To wrap it all up ... today's HF digital modes don't require bulky, noisy, expensive hardware or costly computer programs that are difficult to understand. The hardware costs very little. You can buy it or build it. The software is free. Learning to use the software is easy. You can work the world on extremely low power and simple antennas. If you have a Novice or Technician + HF license, you can work PSK31 at 28.120 MHz until the sunspot cycle crashes, by which time you'll have upgraded to General so you can have more options. **THIS STUFF IS FUN AND YOU CAN DO IT!**

Here are some links to help you get started on the HF digital modes.

Intro to digital modes	<a href="http://www.teleport.com/~nb6z">www.teleport.com/~nb6z</a>
Information on digital modes	<a href="http://www.qsl.net/z11bpu/">www.qsl.net/z11bpu/</a>
MFSK creator's site	<a href="http://iz8bly.sysonline.it/index.htm">iz8bly.sysonline.it/index.htm</a>
PSK31 software - DigiPan	<a href="http://www.digipan.net">www.digipan.net</a>
PSK31 software - WinPSK	<a href="http://www.qsl.net/ae4jy/">www.qsl.net/ae4jy/</a>
RigBlaster interface	<a href="http://www.westmountainradio.com">www.westmountainradio.com</a>
Interface from DigiPan authors	<a href="http://members.home.com/hteller/digipan/">members.home.com/hteller/digipan/</a>