

Review – Tecsun PL-330

with Craig Seager and Phil Ireland



The travel portable segment is quite competitive, with several models vying for supremacy from the likes of Sangean, Eton, XHData and Tecsun. Back in the 70's, 80's and 90's, Dxers (and casual listeners) would have relished the opportunity to carry around sets with the compact form factor of today's offerings, which often boast DSP technology and multiple bandwidths.

Whilst it has to be said that there is sometimes variability in the performance in different examples of modern Chinese manufactured radios, there is absolutely no doubt that many are well kitted out, and provide a complete solution to those of us who desire a lightweight addition to check-in luggage when travelling domestically, or overseas (as we will once again, post-Covid).

Enter stage left the Tecsun PL-330, a PLL DSP multiband receiver with SSB and synchronous detection, at moderate cost. Myself and Phil Ireland put one of these through its paces recently, courtesy of member Gary Cratt, proprietor of the local importer, Tecsun Radio Australia. Our impressions follow.

Let's start with the positives:

- Sensitive on most bands except LW (see CON)
- Good selectivity via the various DSP bandwidths available
- Numerous functions available for the user (timers, alarms, memories etc;)
- FM stereo only available through the headphones so no degradation of FM sensitivity via internal speaker as FM is mono only.
- ETM feature makes storing available stations easy and allowing easy access to stored stations.
- Charging of internal battery via USB input
- SSB available (selectable)
- SYNCH detector available which works despite some degradation of audio
- Display bright and easy to read.

Some Cons:

- Reasonably flimsy case, most flimsy of the radios compared and the volume control and rotary tuning control feels flimsy
- Poor sensitivity on LW, common to many small portable receivers

- Some audio degradation when in SYNCH and SSB however a VAST improvement to the poorly implemented SYNCH on the PL-880
- Audio through the internal speaker is somewhat tinny but still quite listenable.
- Signal strength display, typical of recent Tecsun models, may not meet with approval of everyone.
- Fairly short telescopic antenna for SW
- SSB needs to be calibrated (as does SYNCH) as there is a large discrepancy in frequency when on LSB. USB is ok. May be particular to the example reviewed
- No back stand but the radio does sit upright well.
- A noticeable amount of soft muting apparent which unfortunately cannot be turned

Some Features:

Synchronous detection & SSB

SSB (USB / LSB) fine tuning steps at 10 Hz

ETM+ (Create time-specific memories for LW/MW/SW)

Antenna socket (3.5mm) for FM / SW

FM stereo / mono selection

Alarm by radio

Snooze function – 5 minutes

Sleep timer from 1 - 120 minutes

LCD backlight (always-on or auto-off)

AM bandwidth settings: LW/MW: 2.5, 3.5, and 9.0 kHz; SW: 2.5, 3.5, 5.0 kHz; SSB: 0.5, 1.2, 2.2, 3.0 and 4.0 kHz

Frequency Range: FM: 64 – 108 MHz; MW: 520 – 1710 kHz; WW: 1711 kHz to 29999 kHz

Tuning is via direct keypad entry, auto scan, manual dial tuning or recall from some 850 memory positions.

In keeping with other Tecsun models, there is a USB charging system for the inbuilt lithium (Li-ion) battery

In summary, the PL-330 packs in a lot of features into a small space, and many will find that it does enough for their needs, and won't spend the extra for the larger PL-880 or PL-990 (see review last ADXN). There is a lot to like in this set, and it is a worthy upgrade to the earlier PL-310. The ARDXC thanks Tecsun Radio Australia (<https://www.tecsunradios.com.au>) for the opportunity to put this release under the microscope.

SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity:

FM (S / N = 30dB) < 3uV

MW (S / N = 26dB) < 1mV/m

LW (S / N = 26dB) < 10mV/m

SW (S / N = 26dB) < 20uV

Selectivity:

FM > 60dB

MW / LW > 60dB

SW > 60dB

SYNCH lock range: +/- 1kHz

IF Frequency (DSP):

AM: 45 kHz

FM: 128kHz

FM Stereo Crosstalk: 35dB

Output Power: Approx. 200mW

Unit size 139 x 85 x 26 mm (W x H x D)

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