



The

# Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

## The Listening Post

### The Emerson RP6251

## Decent Performance at a Bargain Price



*By Kevin Raper*

*[February 2012] Kevin Raper is a broadcast engineer who is also an avid DXer. As such, he is always on the prowl for a good radio, the more sensitive and selective the better. Here, Kevin shares his opinions on another popular radio, the Emerson RP6251.*

I had been hearing some good reports about the Emerson RP6251 AM-FM-Weather Radio with Digital Clock, and decided to check it out.

My first reaction was "Emerson???" All they make is Drug Store-grade junk and are very low-end, but at a friend's urging, I picked one up. I figured with an MSRP of \$24.95 and a "Street Price" of \$15 to \$20, what did I have to lose?

### **SURPRISING BUILT**

The radio does make a good first impression.

The fit and finish is much better than I expected from a radio of this price range. It comes in Earth-Friendly packaging and is RoHS Compliant so it contains no hazardous materials.



**The Emerson RP6251**

I did notice that the radio is *not* UL Listed, but it is ETL Listed (Electrical Testing Labs – founded by Thomas Edison in 1896). It is marked as double insulated and meets all OSHA standards.

The knobs and switches have a nice, solid feel to them and the radio has a real attached AC line cord – not some wall wart that I would expect of something in this price range. It will also run on four AA batteries. I also like the fact that the power switch is separate from the volume knob.

I could not find any published specifications for the radio, other than a list of the basic functions. The "Owner's Manual" is just a single sheet that

is folded up and is in English only, but then how hard is a basic radio like this to operate?

## **MORE THAN EXPECTED**

On the AM side, the Emerson RP6251 actually is a good radio. On the low end of the band, it is slightly more sensitive than the Sony ICF-38, but is less so on the upper end of the band. On the crowded upper end of the band, it is not quite as selective as I would like.

The AM Sound Quality is very good. The audio from the three-inch speaker is amazingly good. But plug in headphones and prepare to be really impressed. While this is only a mono radio, the headphone jack is a stereo jack, so you get audio for both ears when using Walkman-style headphones.

My only complaint about the AM is the dial calibration was a bit off on the upper end of the band and, matched with the small area of the dial, it makes tuning pretty touchy.

Likewise, the FM also seems to be a darn good. It is every bit as sensitive and selective as my Sony ICF-38 and has good audio, but again the small dial makes it very touchy to tune around the crowded FM band.

The clock has a nice, crisp display, and has a calendar function, but no alarm function. It has an internal capacitor so it does not lose the time while you are changing the batteries. The light switch gives the clock's LCD display a nice, even indigo blue backlight that lasts for about eight seconds, but does not light the radio dial.

## **ON THE OTHER BAND**

The big selling point of this radio, as marked on the box, is the Weather Band reception. So that was the first thing I tried out - and I was not impressed.

The weather tuning is accomplished by a knob on the back of the radio - to me, it looked like an after-thought.



**A look at the back of the Emerson RP6251. The knob on the back is for Weather Band tuning.**

With the built-in antenna fully extended, it would just barely get one weather station, but it was not my closest one! Hmm, the CCRadio2 right next to it was getting weather stations on all seven weather channels.

Also, if the radio is turned to the "off" position and you hit the Weather bar, it comes on at full volume. You can only adjust the volume if you turn the Power Switch "on." Then the volume adjusts normally. Also, the volume on Weather Band is much less than you get from AM or FM; it does not have a Weather Alert function on it.

The following day, I took the radio to Greer, SC where you can see the ETV Tower on Paris Mountain about ten miles away, where the transmitter for Weather Station WXJ-21 is located. Even there, the reception of WXJ-21 was noisy and was picky about the position of the whip antenna.

In short, if you are buying this as an Emergency Radio for the Weather Band, I would keep looking. This is not the radio for you.

## **THE TRANSMITTER ROOM TEST**

In the WCKI Transmitter Room RF Torture

tests, the radio worked very well with no ill effects from being just feet from an AM Transmitter that is on the air.

It also worked equally well when operated near 100 kW FM Stations: While next to the 100.5 WSSL tower, the radio was able to pull out 99.9 WKSF from some 67 miles away!

Over-all this radio is well worth the \$15 price as a Shop Radio, or a portable to take to a BBQ, but it is *not* the Emergency Radio that it is marketed to be.

Nor, due to the touchy tuning, is it really a very good radio for the elderly.

On the other hand, it does seem an exceptionally tough radio. Some of my friends took one camping, and it was rained on with no ill effects. In fact, it even was dropped into a fishing lake and dried back out – and it still worked!

While accidents do happen, and it is always best to keep your radio clean and dry, it is good to have a radio that will forgive a few “oops” events anyway.

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