

Classic Radio

Atlas Radio: A Memorable Manufacturer of Early Solid-State Amateur Radios

Atlas Radio was the first successful manufacturer of solid-state amateur radio equipment. The company was founded by Herbert "Herb" Johnson, W6QKI (SK), in 1974. Johnson was also the founder of Swan Electronics (see "Classic Radio" in the May 2022 issue for my article on the history of Swan Electronics). Johnson was on a quest to manufacture quality amateur radio equipment at a reasonable cost so he could sell his products throughout the world. Atlas Radio was in stark contrast with the Swan Electronics equipment that Johnson manufactured. When his solid-state radios hit the market, they were revolutionary, and production proceeded at Atlas Radio to meet customer demands. Tube radios would soon be phased out, as the efficiency and size of these modern solid-state radios made them very popular.

The People Behind the Design

Atlas Radio started producing their solid-state transceivers in 1974. Johnson started his new amateur radio manufacturing venture with the assistance of the most credible and knowledgeable solid-state engineering firm in the world: Southcom International, Inc. Located in southern California, Southcom was a premier manufacturer of military and commercial SSB equipment. Les Earnshaw, engineer and founder of the company, was (at that time) considered to be the foremost authority in solid-state design around the world. This gave Atlas Radio an

opportunity to showcase their new radio, as a world-class transceiver with excellent quality control and service, to their customers. Earnshaw and Johnson set new standards for delivering a dependable and reliable solid-state radio, which is evident in the fact that many are still in use today. Johnson always considered his Swan Electronics line of amateur radio equipment as his first generation of HF transceivers, and the Atlas Radio solid-state equipment as his second generation.

Introducing the Atlas 180 SSB Transceiver

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear (GM):
You are cordially invited to examine the new Atlas 180 SSB Transceiver. This is an all solid state (i.e. now being delivered to our dealers, and is the initial product of our newly formed company, Atlas Radio, Inc. There are so many features to talk about, both in circuit design and packaging, we can only touch on the high points in this introductory ad.

One of the big things going for us (and you) is the license agreement between Atlas and Southcom International, Inc. Southcom manufactures military and commercial SSB gear, and their chief engineer, Les Earnshaw (ex 2L1AAJ) is considered to be one of the foremost solid state engineers in the world. Thus we are able to bring Les' advanced solid state designs to the amateur radio market.

Another important point, it is our sincere intention to provide quality control and customer service second to none.

For complete information, see your Atlas dealer or write: 73 Herb Johnson W6QKI

SOLID STATE 4 BAND SSB TRANSCEIVER

- Covers 20, 40, 80 and 160 metres • 180 watts P.E.P. input, and CW input • All solid state, including 18 transistors, 4 LC's, and 14 diodes • Internal speaker, calibrator, S-meter, and sideland selector, with provision for addition of other accessories • Operates on 12-14 volts DC, 0.15 amp. Rec., 16 amp peak Trans • Modular construction, plug-in circuit boards, easy servicing • Only 3 1/2" high, 9 1/2" wide, 8 1/2" deep, yet has full size knobs and dials • Accessories include plug-in type mobile mount, and AC power supply. Sold only through Atlas dealers.

Net price \$ 479

ATLAS RADIO INC.
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An Atlas 180 transceiver introductory advertisement from the December 1973 issue of *Ham Radio* magazine.



The author's 1976 Atlas 210X, along with the Atlas 200 power supply.

