

Monitoring the "Scanner Bands" with a Non-Scanning Receiver
Presented to the Radio Monitoring Net on Tuesday, September 1, 2026
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WHAT ARE THE "SCANNER BANDS"?

These are frequency ranges that scanners can receive. The widest frequency coverage for most current scanners is 25 MHz to 1.3 GHz.

However, this is a bit wide for old tunable receivers. A more useful range would be 30 to 512 MHz. These frequencies were not covered in a continuous band by tunable receivers, or even by early scanners.

The common coverage bands were usually:

- 30-50 MHz VHF Low Band
- 118-136 MHz VHF Air Band (the band was extended to 138 MHz fairly recently)
- 148-174 MHz VHF High Band (the amateur 2 meter band was not usually included)
- 450-470 MHz UHF Band
- 470-512 MHz UHF T-Band

WHAT CAN THESE TUNABLE RECEIVERS HEAR NOWADAYS?

They can receive any signal within their coverage area. Naturally, only the ones in analog FM are intelligible. On one of these old receivers, anything else is just noise.

I refer you to the document *What Can I Still Hear Without a Digital Scanner?* here in the Useful Goodies archive.

DO YOU KNOW ANY GOOD TRICKS?

Yes, I do.

Trick #1 Monitoring more than one frequency at a time. OK, this is not much of a trick. It turns a technical flaw into a useful feature. If two or more frequencies are close enough together, the relative lack of selectivity allow for them to be heard from a single dial position. This is OK when things are relatively quiet, but when they are all active at the same time, it can be hard to pick out one conversation even by tweaking the tuning slightly. Then again...

Trick #2 Simulated priority monitoring. This takes advantage of the FM capture effect. By tuning directly to a particular frequency (or just closer to it than any other nearby frequency if the incoming signal strengths are about equal), you can prioritize that frequency. A transmission there will capture the receiver even if another nearby frequency is also being used.

NOTE: Trick #2 does not work with aircraft frequencies because AM does not "capture", it heterodynes.