

## Sharp Ears – the Fanfare FT-1AP

[CHALK HILL, Texas] Sometimes you discover something that is “expensive, but worth it.” The Fanfare FT-1AP Reference Quality Translator Receiver is one of those things.

At \$1,649, it is a little pricey, but this is no consumer grade tuner. I am sure even the pickiest “golden ear” will want one once they hear it—it is that good. And it is not that expensive when compared with other purpose-built translator receivers.

### REACHING OUT TO LISTENERS

KZQX-LP ([www.kzqx.com](http://www.kzqx.com)) is a 74 watt noncommercial community broadcaster licensed to Chalk Hill, an unincorporated neighborhood about 10.5 air miles from downtown Longview, Texas. It features a music heavy format of Great American Standards, which means that audio quality is important to the station.

The station gives good coverage for the 10,000 or so residents who live around the south side of Lake Cherokee and vicinity, but as with many small stations, as people drive to work, school, shopping, etc, that ten miles or so stretches the station’s coverage beyond its abilities.

A couple of years ago, some friends of the station applied for construction permits to rebroadcast this community radio station in Longview and Kilgore. To almost everyone’s surprise, the FCC granted them.

### STRAINING FOR THE SIGNAL

Now came the challenge of actually building them. Translators in the non-reserved band are required to get their signal off the air. An existing tower location had been

chosen in Longview, but reception was not always as reliable as desired; the desired signal – no powerhouse – was 104.7, another station on 104.5 can also be received in this location and an LPFM was coming on 104.9.

We used a Winegard FM (10 dB gain) antenna mounted about 50 feet up the tower, feeding a well respected translator receiver. The single bay transmitting antenna was mounted another 65 feet or so above the receive antenna on the same tower.

After installing the receiver, we got a nice stereo signal. But with the transmitter on, the RF field swamped the front end of the receiver. Inserting a 10 dB pad on the antenna input brought reasonable Signal to Noise results in mono, and “nearly acceptable most of the time” results in stereo. The problem is “most of the time” does not cut it.

Some hand made filters were ordered to try blocking the offending transmitter signal. They helped, but did not cure the problem. As a result, we ran the station in mono until we could find a better solution.

### A DIFFERENT RECEIVER

Then somebody suggested we try a Fanfare receiver. I called the factory, and found them to be more than helpful. Within a couple of days I had a receiver in hand to evaluate.



When you first open the shipping container, you realize this is not an ordinary product. As tuners go, it is massively built, weighing in at 16 pounds. The Fanfare people do not seem to be bothered if you open the unit up to see what makes the wheels go ‘round. You will not void your three year warranty, but you will find very high quality construction throughout. You even get a pair of white gloves to use, if so inclined.

The unit has a variety of outputs; including stereo balanced XLR’s and two pairs of line level unbalanced stereo RCA jacks. Even the RCA jacks are extremely high

quality gold-plated chassis mount design. They are quite unlike the cheesy PC board mounted jacks you will find on most of today’s equipment. Better yet, the power cord is a standard IEC type that is easily replaceable. No wall-warts!

### WELL THOUGHT OUT FEATURES

A convenient BNC Composite (MPX) output with its own level control is on the rear panel. A thoughtful touch is the presence of a knob on the control shaft – much better than a tiny pot behind a hole in the chassis. Matching levels with your transmitter is a piece of cake, even when the unit is tightly packed into a rack with poor access to the rear.

The composite output has a relay connected to it, operated by Fanfare’s “Carrier Sense” circuit. It will mute the composite output if the signal drops below the 10 uV (20 dBf) level for more than 120 seconds. (A low cost upgrade allows the user to adjust the desired mute level however they desire.)

At the same time the output is muting, an auxiliary BNC connector provides 12 volts to activate a transmitter control relay for either instant or delayed shut down. (Carrier drop outs, if they occur, are usually for a short time, so running dead air for a few minutes to see if the situation clears up might be more desirable than a total loss of signal.) This will keep your translator legal.

### MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

So how did it work? Very well, thanks. The change-over to the Fanfare receiver only took a few minutes. The FT-1AP’s super sharp filters gave us the desired signal and none of the first adjacent. We are now able to run the station in stereo all the time. We did not need the 10 dB pad to keep the front end from being swamped by the transmitter.

It has been super stable and reliable. I like things that do not require a lot of hands on attention. In fact, I liked this enough that I convinced the translator owners to purchase another one for the Kilgore station. They donated the original receivers to the LP station, which now has two really good EAS receivers.

I love it when a plan works out.

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