



2.4GHz wireless – the dream is reality

Like hungry vultures, audio professionals have long coveted new bandwidth. UHF is too crowded. We were told 2.4GB was too hard. Until now!

I tested the new Sabine 2.4 GHz wireless mic system, and can report this is a very solid leap forward for wireless. The 2.4 GHz band is freely available worldwide for low power domestic stuff like cordless phones and computer wireless local area networks. For this reason, professional wireless microphone makers have avoided the bandwidth and stuck with the more limited UHF frequencies.

Sabine's new system is called SMW7000, with True Mobility as the tagline. It comes in single or dual channel, and has two aerials so it looks like a standard wireless system. The receiver has a host of DSP stuff built in, which gives a clue to why the thing works.

Sabine won't say exactly how it works — they have a proprietary thing called "Smart Spectrum™". They tell us what everyone already knows: that 2.4 GHz is full of low powered stuff, that there are no high powered TV signals up there to blast users as happens with UHF and VHF before it. Smart Spectrum seems to be the secret of the century, because other major wireless makers have told me 2.4 GHz is far too hard.

The handheld mic transmitter has an Audix head and uses a single C cell battery. They claim 10 hours life and supply a rechargeable battery, plus the mic clip can even trickle charge the mic. Battery cost and drama is no more with this animal!

Because you get great battery life, it is almost inconceivable the transmitter is doing analogue to digital conversion. But the receiver has DSP onboard — it has a Sabine FBX feedback eliminator func-

tion, a compressor limiter and de-esser, and most interestingly, a thing called Mic SuperModeling™. This lets you switch from the standard Audix OM-3 sound to several models — including Shure SM 58 and Beta 58. Truth be known, I couldn't really detect much difference. There are four models onboard; I assume more will come later.

Sabine quotes extended frequency response, claiming 20 Hz to 20 kHz. It sure sounded natural, companding and compression were way less obvious than you get with any previous wireless system. The mic has 70 frequencies onboard, and a little window and readout tells you which channel you have chosen. Likewise, the receiver can be switched easily. It shows battery life remaining and has a five-segment signal monitor.

Hunting and pecking wireless frequencies isn't a lot of fun and it remains to be seen how many weird 2.4 GHz things may turn up — especially if your show is a corporate gig. But we endure problems with unauthorised UHF frequency intrusion too, so this would not be a new problem. One big aspect of any new system is wireless range. Sabine quotes 100 metres and that is what we got, line of sight. Strangely our AUD\$4,000 UHF comparison unit gave up after 70 metres. The UHF works better through walls and down corridors; the Sabine struggled once it got past the fourth wall. But with wireless, line of sight is everything. Overall, it looks like Sabine has stolen a match on the major wireless system makers. Their new system works very well, sounds natural, and with 70 new frequencies, it is set to make life easier for audio professionals everywhere.



Julius Grafton compared the new Sabine with a leading AUD\$4,000 UHF handheld. Provided 2.4GB proves generally useable in the field, then this is a winner!