

Catching the latest waves

Australian radio has gone digital and you can hear the difference for yourself with the latest receivers, writes **Stephen Fenech**

AUSTRALIAN radio is undergoing its biggest change since commercial FM radio began nearly 30 years ago, with the introduction of digital broadcasts.

Digital radio was first broadcast in Europe in 2006 but Australia's first experience with the new system will be using the recently introduced DAB+ (Digital Audio Broadcasting) standard, which provides better signal strength and reception quality than regular DAB broadcasts.

Commercial radio stations 2GB, 2CH, 2Day, Triple M, 2KY, WS-FM, MIX 106.5, 2SM, Nova and Vega have already begun DAB+ services.

The benefits of digital radio include clearer sound quality without the buzz and hissing, the ability to pause and rewind live broadcasts, and receive visual information such as song titles, competition phone numbers, news headlines and sport scores.

Digital radio is a free service but listeners will still have to invest in a new digital receiver to pick up the enhanced signal.

1 Grundig GDR700DAB

Price: **\$249**
From: **Grundig, 1800 509 394**
Web: **grundig.net.au**

Go back to the future with the Grundig GDR700DAB. The device has a retro design with an eye-catching wood finish and nostalgic black cloth speaker grille.

But behind the nostalgic styling is the latest technology to deliver the crystal-clear sounds of digital radio.

A small plastic panel on the bottom of the front face folds down to reveal the product's controls and two-line display.

There are 10 presets each for DAB+ and FM stations as well as auto tuning and an auto time update function so you know the time on the display is always accurate.

Users will also find a headphone socket and a jack to connect other audio sources such as a digital music player.

It also comes with slimline remote, which puts the device's complete functionality in your hand. And despite the fact it isn't exactly sized to be portable – it is 30cm wide – it is possible to take the device on the road under battery power.

The Grundig's audio quality from the two built-in speakers was pleasantly surprising and can easily fill a room with sound.

2 Bush BR10DAB

Price: **\$149**
From: **Bush Australia, 1800 509 394**
Web: **bushaustralia.com.au**

For anyone looking for an entry model to get into the new world of digital radio the Bush BR10DAB is a great place to start.

With a simple design, this small unit is as easy to operate as a regular radio. There is a two-line blue backlit display that shows the name of the station playing as well as a scrolling line of text – otherwise known as Dynamic Label Segment (DLS) – which is utilised in different ways by different stations. Users can store up to 10 preset DAB+ stations as well as another 10 available when the Bush device is used as a regular FM radio.

And being so small the product is also easily portable, thanks to the option of using batteries instead of the AC power adaptor.

For more discreet listening, it is possible to connect an earphone to the jack on the side of the unit.

Sound quality is respectable from the single speaker and is a suitable candidate to replace your ageing portable analogue radio,

although anyone looking for audio levels and quality to power your next party should look elsewhere.

3 Revo Pico DAB+

Price: **\$449**
From: **Revo, 1300 131 072**
Web: **revo.net.au**

The Revo Pico will be an attractive and stylish option for those who want a radio that is not going to take over desk or bench space, thanks to its small footprint of just 10.5cm by 10.5cm with a height just shy of 17cm.

A two-line display sits above a bank of controls and there's a jog wheel to scroll through menus and the list of stations.

Listeners can preset 12 DAB+ stations and another 12 FM stations and a remote gives complete control from an armchair. The single mono speaker provides a decent audio output but the Pico gives users the option of connecting the device to a better quality stereo speaker system via the connections on the back. There's also a headphone jack.

MP3 players can also be connected to the product through the 3.5mm jack tucked away on the front face of the device.

The radio has a non-removable rechargeable lithium ion battery so it can be powered up and used wherever you want for up to 12 hours before requiring a powerpoint. With its splash-proof design, you can even take the Pico into the backyard.

Fenech's favourite

4 Pure One Classic

Price: **\$249**
From: **Pure, 03 9722 2422**
Web: **pure.com.au**

Apart from the obvious advantages such as clearer audio and the stream of information on the display, digital radio also offers the ability to pause and rewind live broadcasts.

The Pure One Classic gives users this ability with its Revu function, which has an audio buffer that can hold the last 10-15 minutes of a broadcast.

After activating Revu a simple turn of the central knob on the front can direct listeners back to the point they want to hear again and even fast-forward their way through the buffer back

to a live signal. Users will find a white backlit screen that features the station's name, the scrolling line of information and a third line that displays the time and signal strength.

There is room for 15 presets for the DAB+ stations and another 15 presets for FM radio.

On the side of the device are a 3.5mm headphone jack, an analogue stereo input for an iPod or other digital music player.

There's also a USB connector that can be utilised for software upgrades.

The single speaker in the unit delivers a respectable sound with a good level of bass and hardly any distortion, even when it is played at quite high volumes.

This is a quality unit that will enable you to enjoy all the benefits of digital radio.

