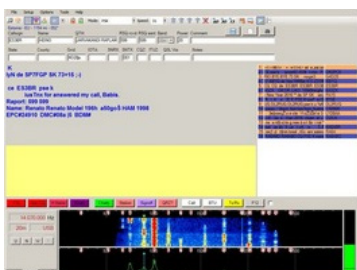


DATAMODES AIRLINK EXPRESS

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Airlink Express is a compact piece of software designed for Rx/Tx of PSK and RTTY.

I downloaded it last year but never really got to use it much - written by KR1ST, I believe the code from the original Digipan was re-worked resulting in a much more flexible tool for decoding PSK/RTTY (certainly more colourful)

Having never previously used it, I thought it might be useful familiarising myself with it and posting my thoughts here.

I used my TS590S for the tests, and under setup/audio, and radio soon had it displaying stations on the waterfall (note: using a USB connection, so no interfacing needed) and showing the correct band and frequency.

Those already familiar with psk/rtty software will have an idea how they work, and the usual logging fields are displayed at the top of the screen - (see Fig 3).

FEATURES

One of the useful features of many psk programmes is the ability to quickly grab callsign data to fill the log fields and Airlink does this efficiently with a double click of a callsign in the reception window, (once you have set up the QRZ.Com lookup section) it will instantly fill most of the required log fields - saving a lot of clicking and time wasting.

The waterfall and spectrum display is at the bottom of the screen and I usually set my radio's initial bandwidth to 1500Hz, then once having found a station to call, I usually invoke a narrow filter, which greatly helps suppress adjacent signals and improves the decoding.

MACRO'S MACRO'S MACRO'S...

MY NAME IS...

MY QTH IS...

MYLOC IS...

DON'T fall into the trap of using continually repetitive messages by the use of macro's - so many times I see on screen many stations conducting the same QSO's using the very same macro's over and over - you need to type at least 'some' live text into your QSO to give the other station (and listening stations) the impression that you are actually sitting at the keyboard, and that they are not talking to a Robot ! QSO's can be conducted wholly from macro's, but careful choice of wording will help make it sound real, and not repetitive - make a point of changing your macros often, especially personal and station details.

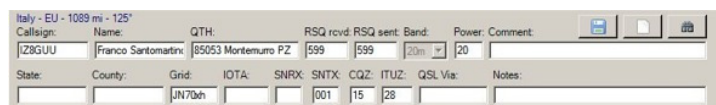
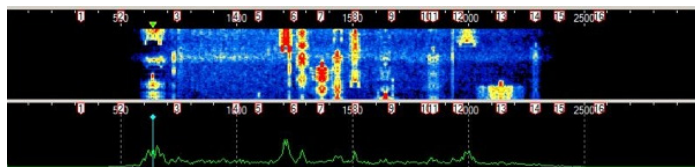


Fig 3.



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Macros follow the usual (right-click on the Macro button) to bring up an editor in which you can easily change the macro contents, button colours, it's title etc... this is straight forward.

There are two sets of x12 macros - the second set is activated by checking the box to the right of the last macro and using the shift-F1 F2 F3 etc... once set up you can create macros for psk / rtty / or contesting and save them for future use, or however you use them.



DIRECT CONTROL

The bottom left hand corner has a box displaying tags for Volume, Radio, Grab - these are for direct control of the volume input, your radio's band/frequency, and Grab - where heard callsigns can be collected - this a live thing where if you see a callsign you wish to call you can double click and go the the exact channel, this can also be achieved by clicking a "Super Browser" which lists up to 16 stations being monitored simultaneously (PSK) or 4 RTTY stations.



THE PROGRAM IN USE

Ideally, you will have set up the programme to your liking, and if you, like me, prefer to play around in monitoring mode to familiarise yourself with how it all works - my initial tests proved quite positive and it decodes very well compared to the top heavy "Big Gun" HRD/DM780 - even Fldigi with all it's extra modes, "Bells & Whistles". I find it to be smaller and lighter on resources, and quite responsive - I currently run it on a netbook using 2G of ram under W7 - I found it pretty easy to set up and get going using my Kenwood 590 (Make sure you have the correct drivers for your radio) ? using this programme has actually re-awakened my interest in PSK, I might even have a go at some RTTY, to date I have only worked 1 on RTTY and that was 7X...

Programme customisation is a breeze under the options tab - colours can be re-selected to your own spec (whatever takes your fancy) there are selections for band configuration, FSK serial port setup, Audio, various others - you can send data included in a file if you wish, (I have actually worked a certain Italian station and he regularly gives his life story which MUST be in a file) Hi... Takes an age to complete Yawn...! (Worse than macro's).

The help tab gives access to most of the things you'll need, and updates seem to be about every 6 months or so (ish)...

CONCLUSIONS

Great little piece of software-pity it's not on Linux, though it might run under the influence of "Wine" (Spanish of course)!

Google it - Download it - Give it a try.

Have Fun
Peter G4NKX