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## RemoteShack RBC-212 Remote Station Controller

Hams have been experimenting with remote station control for decades. Until recent times this aspect of the hobby was only for the select few, the hams with the chops necessary to figure out how to make stations respond to commands sent over radio links or telephone lines. Not only did these intrepid amateurs have to establish reliable control of their rigs, they also had to figure out a means to get the audio back and forth.

Today the requirements are the same — rig control and audio management — but with the advent of microprocessor-based transceivers and the Internet, our options have expanded tremendously. This has been a boon to amateurs who suffer under severe antenna restrictions. Where they once were off the air completely, they can now enjoy Amateur Radio simply by using remote-controlled stations.

The most common means of remote station control is via the Internet. For example, imagine a remote station with a high-speed Internet connection and a computer connected to the transceiver. The computer may also be connected to the antenna rotator and other devices. By using the proper software, the remote user can access the computer and operate the station as though he were seated right in front of the radio.

While this approach works well, it usually requires a computer and an Internet connection at both ends of the path. Onthegodevices LLC has created a less complicated alternative.

### Control by Telephone (or Radio)

The RemoteShack RBC-212 is a device that allows remote station control over telephone, radio or Internet. The ability to send DTMF tones (aka *TouchTones*) is key.

As long as you have a telephone, a transceiver with a DTMF keypad, or a laptop and *Skype* or similar software with DTMF capability, you can control your radio from anywhere with RemoteShack.

At the risk of oversimplifying, RemoteShack works by listening for specific DTMF tones. It decodes the tones and then commands the remote transceiver accordingly. In addition to passing the transmit and receive audio in both directions, RemoteShack responds with a pleasant voice that confirms your commands, reads back the transceiver frequency settings, and so on.

RemoteShack will work with just about any transceiver that offers a computer connection. When you order RemoteShack, you're asked to specify the transceiver model so that they can configure the device and include the proper interconnecting cables.

### Putting RemoteShack to the Test

For this review I chose to try the telephone configuration. This is the most straightforward way to use the RBC-212 for remote station control and it's the one I suspect might appeal to most readers. With this configuration you are totally computer free; you don't need a computer at the radio or the control point. You don't even need an Internet connection. Everything is handled

over telephone lines with the RemoteShack box doing all the work. In addition to controlling your radio, the RBC-212 can also switch antennas and command rotators.

The RemoteShack arrived completely pre-con-

figured for my Kenwood TS-2000 transceiver. All I had to do was attach the serial control line and the audio cable, and

connect a standard telephone cable between the RBC-212 and a nearby telephone jack.

I powered up the RBC-212, switched on the radio, set the front-panel switch on the RBC-212 to ON and reached for my cell phone. The RemoteShack answered after two rings and prompted me for a passcode. After I entered the 4-digit code the RemoteShack switched on my transceiver and we were off to the races.

I began punching in commands and the RemoteShack responded instantly. The RBC-212 includes a laminated "cheat card" and it comes in very handy — at least until you have the commands committed to memory. There is a bit of a learning curve, so your first sessions with the RBC-212 demand patience. For example, despite having the card it took me a while to figure out how to enter a frequency. To get to 7250 kHz you have to press \* followed by 0072500 and then \* once again. It is important to point out that RemoteShack is designed strictly for voice communication. You can't operate CW or digital.

The receive audio quality was acceptable over a cellular telephone connection, but it was best with a wired line (or a wired line with a wireless handset). On the transmit side, you're working with telephone-quality audio, but according to reports I sounded fine.

### Plug and Play — Literally

At almost \$575, the RemoteShack RBC-212 is not inexpensive. However, keep in mind that not only is the device pre-configured for your radio (with a radio-specific cheat card included), it is about as close to plug-and-play remote control as you're likely to find — no computer, no Internet. There is no software to buy and no need to open ports in your network router. Set up takes all of 15 minutes in most cases.

With RemoteShack at the ready, on-the-air enjoyment is just a telephone call away. Remote station control doesn't get much easier than that.

Manufacturer: Onthegodevices LLC, 6900 NW 6th Court, Plantation, FL 33317; tel 954-261-8968; [www.remoteshack.com](http://www.remoteshack.com). \$574.90.



The RemoteShack RBC-212 controlling the author's Kenwood TS-2000 transceiver.