

# The Sat Handyman from Beijing



■ Additional antennas are mounted on a side railing: a 75cm dish is pointed to 134°E with a 60cm antenna motorized with a MOTECK motor.



*One of the most active handy men would have to be ShiToy who adopted the English nickname Stone – it was an easy choice: the Chinese word ShiToy means stone in English. Thanks to his education as an IT technician he knows his way around and involves himself intensively on the technical side of his satellite reception hobby. We met up with him in his apartment in a newly built section in northern Beijing just outside the 5th Ring Road – actually, there really isn't any old-town section in Beijing; all of the construction took place within the past few decades.*

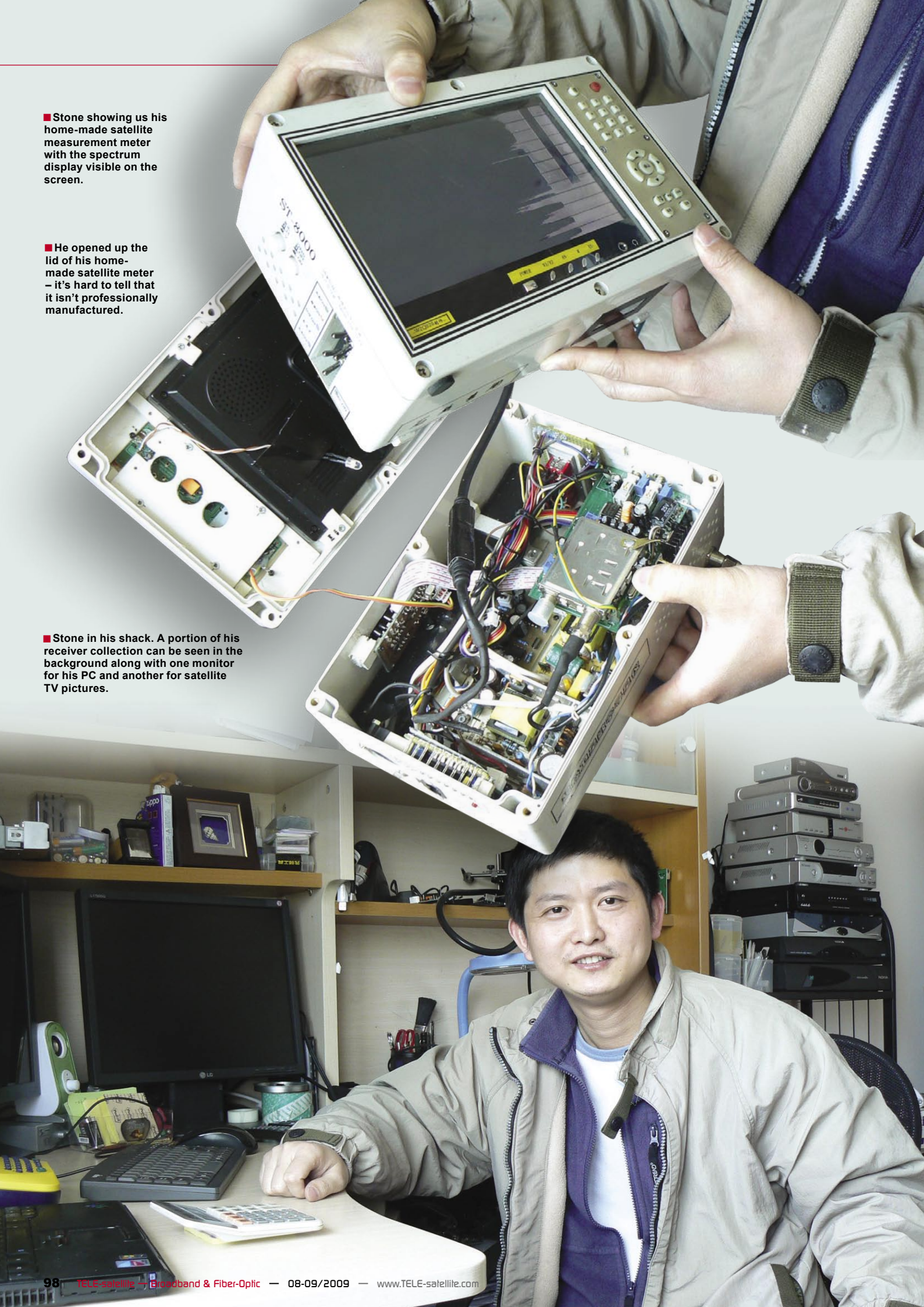


■ Stone, a regular reader of the Chinese version of TELE-satellite, on the roof of his apartment building. The 1.8-meter antenna is aligned to 138°E while the 1.5-meter dish is pointed to 115.5°E with another looking at 107.5°E.

■ Stone showing us his home-made satellite measurement meter with the spectrum display visible on the screen.

■ He opened up the lid of his home-made satellite meter – it's hard to tell that it isn't professionally manufactured.

■ Stone in his shack. A portion of his receiver collection can be seen in the background along with one monitor for his PC and another for satellite TV pictures.



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Stone explains how it all started: "I acquired my first 60cm antenna in 2001; I wanted to receive Phoenix and Star TV from Hong Kong." Since then his interest in satellites grew at a rapid pace. Over the next several years he not only acquired one dish after the other, but also numerous different receivers until the day came when he too looked for the perfect satellite hobbyist apartment.

Stone, originally from the Hunan province in southern China, came to Beijing in 1997 and found himself an apartment in a complex in which he still lives today. "At first I had a ground-floor apartment", explains Stone, "but recently I was able to swap this apartment for one on the 11th floor." But that still meant cable runs exceeding 200m to his dishes on the roof of the 18-story building. "Signal attenuation is still reasonably low", he says as he shows us the coax cable, "I use a high-quality cable with very little signal loss."

He set up all of his dishes up on the flat roof. But this led to a very interesting problem: how do you align all the antennas when you're so far away from the receivers? Stone's do-it-yourself talent came into play here: he bought himself a plastic housing and installed the main circuit board of a receiver into

it along with a lithium battery and a matching flat-screen monitor. The result was a home-made satellite signal meter with 16:9 flat-screen monitor and LED battery level indicator. Upon asking Stone if he ever considered professionally producing something like this, his answer was: "I'm doing this for fun; I'm not interested in making money with this." To prove that he's really taking his hobby seriously, he showed us more circuit boards with which he is working on additional experiments, such as, routing the satellite video signal via GPRS or designing his own audio section: "This would replace the existing audio section in a well-known receiver that simply puts out too low an audio level", explains Stone

Stone is very active in the Chinese satellite scene. He reports on all of his home-made ideas on his homepage: www.dvbs.org.cn. "Every year satellite DXer's from all over China meet here in

Beijing to swap their ideas and experiences", explains Stone, "the last time it was over 300 people." During these meetings, lectures are given. "I gave a 20-minute talk on how to use the AB-COM IPBOX 250S", comments Stone proudly. He explains why this AB-COM box is so popular in China: "It is an unusually robust box with very stable running software." The AB-IPBOX software was translated into Chinese by these same satellite handymen.

Stone is one of these handymen who understands satellite technology and enjoys coming up with his own ideas. Maybe someday he will turn his hobby into his profession; hey, you never know.

■ Stone set up the receivers in his living room. He downloads HDTV movies from the Internet and processes them with a home-made HTPC box in order to view them on his flat-screen TV. "I'm thinking about getting a projection TV", comments Stone as he looks over to his living room wall. It would be an ideal spot for it.

