



product spotlight

Pop'Comm Reviews Products Of Interest

Radio Free Awesome — The RCI-2990DX

What's that — you just upgraded to Tech Plus and now you're hot to try some DX on 10-meters? Well, you might want to take a good look at the new RCI-2990DX from Ranger Communications, Inc., the company that is famous for its line of single-band 10-meter radios.

At about 19 inches wide, 6.5 inches high, and roughly a foot deep (a bit more, if you count the rack handles), the new 2990DX is one of the largest modern ham radios I've ever seen. The matte black finish is striking, and all of the knobs are clearly labeled in white. The 2990DX covers from 24 MHz to 31.99 MHz with AM, FM, CW, and SSB modes. That means you can operate on either the 10- or 12-meter bands and receive on a fair amount of radio spectrum in between. Power output is 50 watts for AM, FM, and CW and 100 watts for SSB. The 2990 incorporates a heavy-duty power supply into its case. To operate, just plug it into 110 Vac, add coax and antenna, and you're set to go.

“Operating this rig is straight-forward — just put it on the frequency you want.”

The large size of the faceplate on the 2990DX gives this radio something that's a rarity in the world of ham transceivers — room between the controls. Basically, there is a knob or button for every function. That makes the 2990DX straight-forward and fairly intuitive to operate. There are 11 small knobs on front of the 2990DX for various functions, and one large knob; the tuning knob. All of them are good-sized, have knurled edges, and, with the exception of the tuning knob,



The new Ranger RCI-2990DX.

have a white dot on the face to indicate the position of the control.

Starting at the upper left of the 2990DX, there is a small red LED that lights when transmitting. To the right of that, there is a pair of meters. The one on the left indicates either modulation on transmit or received signal strength. The one on the right shows either transmit power or SWR. Still further to the right is a backlit green liquid crystal display that serves as information central for the 2990DX. It displays frequency, tuning step, and a variety of indicators for functions, such as noise blanker, automatic noise limiter, and so forth. In the upper right corner of the front panel is a front-firing speaker.

Midway up the left side of the front panel is a rectangular pushbutton for power. Next to that is a knob for varying transmit power. Then, a pair of knobs; one for turning on an echo effect for transmit

and another for adjusting the timing of that echo effect. Under the LCD, there are two rows of seven buttons. The NB/ANL switch activates the noise blanker and automatic noise limiter. The R.BEEP button activates a Roger Beep function. SPLIT enables different transmitter and receive frequencies for FM repeater operation. PRG is used to program operating or scanning frequencies. MAN returns the transceiver to manual mode. SHF is used to select 100 Hz, 1 kHz, 10 kHz, 100 kHz, or 1 MHz tuning steps.

DIM adjusts display backlighting in four steps. SWR is used to check SWR. SCAN used to scan frequencies in each band segment. MEM is used to program memory channels. ENT enters frequencies into memory, and LOCK locks the transceiver on a selected frequency. Finally, a pair of UP and DOWN buttons are used to change frequency.

At the lower left corner of the 2990DX

BY JOCK ELLIOTT, KB2GOM

faceplate, there is a microphone connector. The supplied hand microphone has up and down buttons for changing frequency by whatever step has been selected. The knob next to it is used to calibrate the SWR measurement function. To the right of that is a knob for adjusting receiver tone, then a TALKBACK control which, when activated, allows monitoring of transmitted audio. Next, there is a pair of concentric knobs. The outer ring controls RF gain, while the inner knob adjusts microphone gain. Dead center in the bottom of the front panel is the tuning knob, followed by a clarifier for making small adjustments in frequency, a squelch knob, volume knob, and a rotary switch for selecting operating mode. At the far right, below the speaker, is a jack for plugging in earphones.

On the back panel of the 2990DX are connectors for antenna, record output, PA, external speaker, CW key, and, of all things, an external frequency counter.

Straightforward Operation!

Operating this rig is straightforward — just put it on the frequency you want, select the mode of choice, and go to work. My very first contact on 10 meters was with Florida, some 1,500 miles away. I got fine signal reports from the folks there, and they sounded good to me. Several operators complemented me on the quality of the transmitted audio. I was particularly impressed by the audio on receive. It sounded very smooth, and for long-term operation I liked it better — in fact, much better — than some high-performance ham rigs at four times the price.

To be sure, if you have your heart and soul set on a rig built for contesting, designed for battling it out shoulder-to-shoulder with powerful stations nearby, there are other, far more expensive rigs that will perform better under the worst possible band conditions. But for the average ham who wants to ragchew over long distances, the RCI-2990DX offers extraordinarily pleasant two-band performance at a bargain price.

Suggested retail is \$795, with street prices likely to be on the sunny side of \$650. When you consider how much fun this rig is to operate and that you also save the expense of a separate external power supply, for my money, the RCI-2990DX ought to be in the Great Deal Hall of Fame. For more information, contact Ranger Communications at 800-446-5778, and tell them you read about it in *Pop Comm*.

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