

plant was lost. The emergency diesel was started, but the regulator went bad on it and I could not bring up any of the Marisat or HF gear. By this time the radio room was full of smoke, and the heat from the port uptake was unbearable. (A bar of soap melted in the soap tray in my room). You can imagine what it was like trying to put out the fire, and heat was even worse down in the engine room!

Fortunately, I had my Atlas 210 along, and a 12-volt car battery purchased the last day we were in Germany.

I rigged up a 20-metre vertical dipole on the flying bridge and, within five minutes, contacted 9K2YA (Joseph in Kuwait) who was able to run an emergency phone patch for the captain to the office in Philadelphia. Also standing by on Desert Storm Net was SV1BDC Angelo in Athens.

The office contacted another ship, "Cape Lobos", which was within a few hundred miles of us. The fire was put out successfully that evening and everybody was exhausted! It sure was a strange feeling still to be dead in the water, no power and completely in the dark! The "Cape Lobos" finally got close enough and we rigged the 12-volt battery to the bridge VHF and contacted them on Ch 16.

A tug was called from Malta, and for the next three days, "Cape Lobos" was our relay mainly to MSC in Naples.

The tug arrived two days later and I sent out our routine traffic on 500 kHz using the 40-watt emergency CW transmitter/receiver to 9HD, Malta Radio.

Finally, I would like to add that I hope when the new GMDSS satellite gear is installed on merchant ships around the world they plan to have a radio officer on board just in case something goes wrong!"

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

The Editors are always interested in photographs suitable for use on the cover of Amateur Radio magazine.

Please use recent issues as a guide to suitability.

Mini Equipment Review

Ron Fisher VK3OM

The MFJ-945D Mobile Antenna Tuner

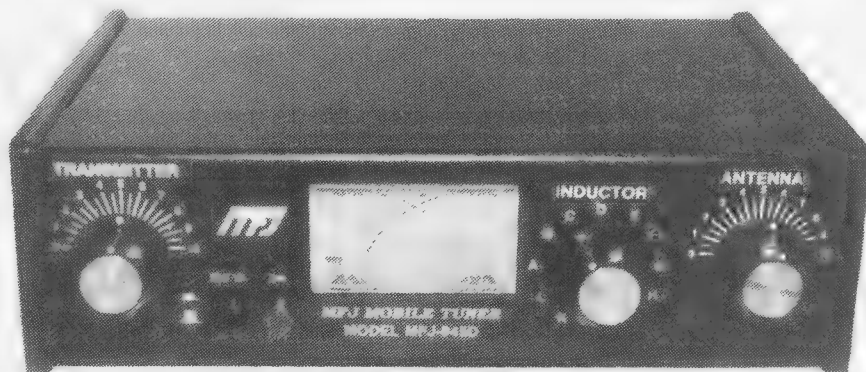
MFJ produces a wide range of excellent antenna tuners. The 945D is typical of the several 300-watt models that Stewart Electronic Components stocks. It is, in fact, the smallest and cheapest of them all, yet it still includes a crossed needle SWR/power meter and 160 to 10-metre coverage. While it's advertised as a "mobile" tuner, it is equally useful in the home station shack.

At only \$195 it is probably the best value around. Overall size is a compact 200mm wide, 52mm high and 150mm deep. Weight is just 875 grams. Construction of the case and front panel is metal with plastic end pieces to form the rest of the cabinet. Finish is a low gloss black enamel. There are five front panel controls, transmitter (input) and antenna (output) tuning capacitors, a 12-position inductance selector, a push button to select 300 or 30-watt power

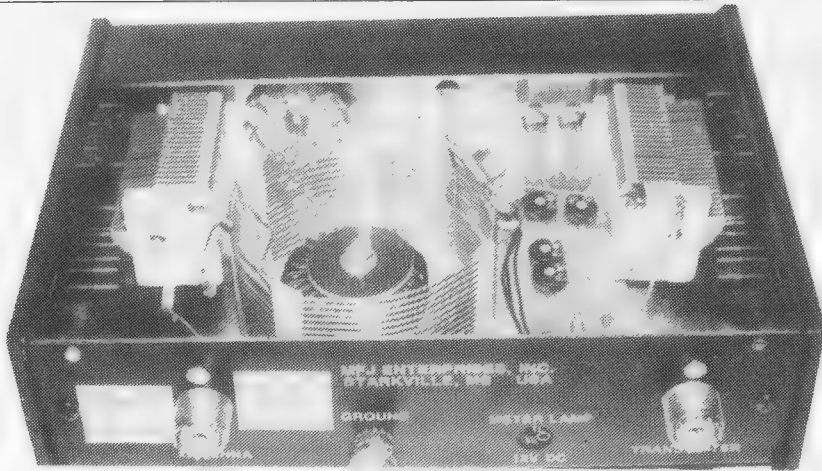
range on the meter, and a button to switch on the meter illumination lamp. This requires an external 12-volt DC power source.

The rear panel has SO-239 connectors for RF input and output, plus a 2.5mm audio type socket for the meter illumination power output. There is also an earth connector with a good solid wing nut on it. Another word about the cross needle power meter. With the 300-watt range selected, the reflected side reads 60 watts maximum, and with the 30-watt range the reflected full scale is six watts.

So, what will the MFJ-945D do for you? Firstly it will tune up a random wire antenna and present your transceiver with a 50-ohm load. It will extend the useful range of a narrow band antenna such as a trap vertical on 80 metres. It is also ideal to match anten-



The MFJ-945D Mobile Antenna Tuner.



Interior view of the MFJ-945D Mobile Tuner.

nas such as the G5RV on 80 and 40 metres where these usually operate with a high SWR. It should be noted that the 945D does not include a balun, so operation into a balanced line is not possible.

Some of the higher priced MFJ tuners do have a balun built in.

The MFJ-945D on the air

I have given this tuner an extended and very rugged check out. It came along on our 12,000km trip to Darwin and back via the Gulf of Carpentaria. It survived being bounced over terrible roads (in the van, of course), being

almost filled with red dust, and didn't miss a beat. At our campsites each night I threw a wire over a suitable tree and got on the air often using frequencies not covered by my mobile whips, such as 30 metres. Results were always excellent, with reliable contacts back to Melbourne, usually a couple of "S" points up on the whip when using 20 metres. At the time, I was unsure of the actual length of the wire. It was just a spare piece in my portable antenna box. On returning home, I checked it out and found it to be just over 80 feet; in other words, a classic W3EDP as described several months ago in Ran-

dom Radiators. No wonder it worked so well. That's my story, anyhow. The only band the 945D doesn't shine on is 160. The capacitors are too small, and the choice of inductance too limited. It will work on this band, but the matching range is rather limited.

Is there anything I would change on the 945D? Yes, for sure. I would install an insulated terminal in parallel with the output SO-239 to connect a wire antenna. Also, I would like to see a proper DC connector in place of the 2.5mm audio type connector.

The instructions supplied are reasonable. They consist of three pages of A4 size material. There is a circuit included, and they do tell you which side of the DC power connector is positive.

Thanks to Stewart Electronic Components of 44 Stafford Street, Huntingdale, Victoria, for the loan of the MFJ-945D used in our tests. Have a look at the full range of MFJ tuners they stock. I am sure you will find one to suit your needs.

By the way, I might just have to buy a 945D before heading north next year. I am not sure I could get along without it!

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SOME THINGS HAVE NO COMPARISON

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