

Equipment Review

The Yaesu FT-26 2M FM Hand Held

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HAVING BEEN THE proud and satisfied owner of a Yaesu FT-23R for some years, I was delighted when Dick Smith Electronics suggested I might like to look over the new FT-26.

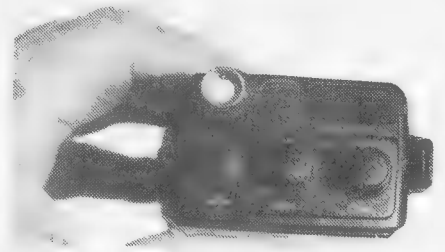
There were two things that impressed me about the original FT-23. First, the size, and second, the ease of use. There were just eight buttons, three knobs and a push switch to select high or low power. Simplicity itself. There were a few things that the 23 did not do well, though. Frequency stepping was selectable in two rates only, five and 10 kHz. Neither of these was ideal. The 10 kHz rate does not fit our band plan and, although the 5 kHz does, it was far too slow when tuning large segments of the band. Secondly, there were only 10 memories. Not bad for the time, but a few more would have been useful. Well, thanks Yaesu, you have retained all the good features and well and truly fixed the not-so-good ones.

The FT-26. Features

The FT-26 is a compact hand-held receiver that covers 144 to 148 MHz on

transmit, and 130 to 174 MHz on receive. With the supplied battery pack it weighs in at 350 grams. The overall size is just 123 mm high, 52 mm wide and 32 mm deep. The shape has been rounded off compared with the square old FT-23. It fits into the hand very well. The battery supplied with the transceiver is rated at 7.20 volts, 700 mAh, and gives the rig a 2 W output capability. A larger 12 volt 600 mAh battery is available which produces a maximum output of five watts. There is also a DC input socket for a maximum input of 16 volts. With a full 13.8 volts input from a car system, the power out from the rig gets up around six watts. A wall pack charger is supplied which takes care of the 7.2 volt FNB-28 pack. A carry strap, belt clip, carry case and instruction manual complete the package.

The memory capability will satisfy the most critical. Believe it or not, there are now 50 full-time memories. In addition to this there is a call channel and two memories for upper and lower limits for band scanning. A new feature is the ability to tune each memory



Top view of the Yaesu FT26, showing how readily it fits into the hand.

so that it acts like a separate VFO, and then choose to store the new frequency and retain the original.

The FT-26 On the Air

Having used the FT-23 for some years, the operation of the new FT-26 was very easy to master. I loaded up a few memories and got on the air. Received audio quality was crisp and clean. Naturally, audio power output is somewhat limited, as with all hand-helds, but quite adequate for normal hand-held operation. For use mobile in an average car, an external speaker would be an advantage to make the most of the limited audio output power. Audio output power was measured at just over 200 mW at 10 per cent distortion with an eight ohm load. Transmitted audio was rated as good quality, and the deviation appeared to be spot-on. The MH-12 speaker microphone I have for my FT-23 was compatible with the FT-26 and produced very acceptable quality on both transmit and receive. There are now four levels of transmitter power output selection. Using the 7.20V battery, high power produced an output of two watts, while low power No 3 level produced 0.5 watts output.

One interesting feature is the ability to change the display to a simplified readout. Instead of showing frequency, the channel number is displayed (see photo). I think I prefer the actual frequency to be indicated, but at least this does give another option. It is also possible to lock the keyboard completely to stop accidental changes in operating parameters. Low power No 2 provides 1.5 watts output, while low power No 3 level rises to 3 watts output.

As mentioned earlier, stepping rates can be set to 5, 10, 12.5, 20 and 25 kHz. As is usual, I found the 25 kHz rate fits

our band plan ideally and enables you to tune up and down the band very quickly. The FT-26 version sold in Australia has a special microprocessor to provide an automatic repeater offset set up for the Australian band plan. This feature can be activated or de-activated as required. CTCSS facility can be added to the transceiver as an option and, as it was not included in our review model, I was unable to check this out. However, a code squelch system is included. This even has a pager mode which makes the rig ring like a phone when the correct code sequence is received. Of course you need two similarly equipped transceivers for the system to operate. Another interesting feature now included with most Yaesu VHF and UHF transceivers, is the ability to transfer the memory contents of one transceiver into another. Has anyone out there actually used this feature?

One thing I found out right at the end of my test was that the transceiver will not fit into the Yaesu CA-2 desk stand. The size is right, but the locating grooves on the FT-26 are in a slightly different position than the FT-23. So, no way will it plug in.



The FT-26 Instruction Manual

Like all current Yaesu manuals, the FT-26 owner's manual is very well presented. One of the very nice features is a fold-up concise instruction sheet. Until you get into the way of operating the rig, you can slip this into your wallet for instant reference. A full circuit diagram is included but, as usual, no technical information is supplied.

The FT-26 Conclusions

This would have to be one of the neatest little hand-helds around. It has all the facilities needed, and yet is very simple to operate. Yaesu seems to have found the right formula for hand-held transceivers. When my FT-23 wears out, this one will be top of the list. The FT-26 retails for \$399, and our review transceiver was supplied by Dick Smith Electronics, to which all enquiries should be forwarded.

Front view of the compact Yaesu FT26 2 metre FM hand held transceiver.