

Over the years I have used a couple of HF rigs. My first HF transceiver was a Yaesu 857 with high stability TXO and audio DSP. I liked the rig but never could remember which button controlled what and where in the menu structure controls could be found.

In an effort to find a more user-friendly rig, I purchased a Kenwood TS-2000. The TS-2k is a nice rig but had several areas that I thought could be improved. Again the menu system was more than I wanted to deal with, the transmit bandpass was not flat, even when set to flat. I had thought that it might be the transformers in the Nomic interface so I purchased a Signalink USB. The Kenwood still behaved the same way. I went back to the Yaesu while I sent the Kenwood in for service. The 857 was flat, I did not have to adjust the audio drive as I moved across the PSK-segment of the band.

Knowing that I had issues with the Kenwood, I started looking for a new rig. I knew I would have to sell the Kenwood and possibly the Yaesu to buy a new higher end radio. I had purchased the Kenwood after looking at many radios. The radio that had appealed to me before settling on the Kenwood was the Elecraft K2. I was impressed by the user reports and thought that it was a possibility. I did not want to build a radio; it had been years since I had done any soldering. I had passed the NASA soldering school back in the 60s but hadn't done any real soldering since I left Ohio in the 80s.

I started looking for a new radio; I went over to Sevierville to Ten-Tec to look at their radios. I had heard good things about their equipment. I looked and played with their equipment for about an hour and really did not find anything operationally that I didn't like but I also did not see anything exceptional. I am sure that others have a different opinion, I am not bashing the equipment but it just didn't grab me and say take me home.

I despaired finding a rig I liked; one that was easy to operate, had good specs, and was somewhat affordable.

The last time I talked to Jay at Array Solutions, his company was setting up to import a really cool German radio. He had brought it to HamCom back in 2005 or 6. So I thought I would look into that radio. It was not listed on his web site so I assumed that it had not been economically feasible to import it at a price that Jay thought it would sell – or – it had not passed type acceptance. I don't know which...maybe I will ask Jay when I get to HamCom this year.

I finally succumbed and went to the Elecraft web site and looked at the K3. It sounded like the K2 on steroids and it didn't require me to wind any toroids or do any soldering.

The K3 looked good, it had many features that I wanted but it still had a lot of menu items. Some of the features are

- Optional filters including a general-coverage filter
- 100- or 10-Watt models
- Ham band only or general coverage
- 32-bit I.F. DSP
- All modes: SSB, CW, Data, AM, FM

- Built-in PSK/TTY decode/encode data mode operation without a PC
- High performance DDS/PLL Synthesizer with TCXO reference
- Optional high-stability TXO
- Downloadable firmware updates
- Direct interconnect to the computer soundcard
- Digital VOX operation

The K3 looked good, had good reports, and appeared to be what I could easily use. So last summer I sold all of my HF rigs so I could purchase the K3. I chose to build the K3 with the 100 Watt amplifier because I didn't think 10 Watts was enough even using PSK

Since most of my operating is digital...PSK, RTTY etc, I set up the radio with the optional 2.8 KHz and 250 Hz 8-pole crystal filters. With the coming solar max I will add the 12 KHz FM filter so I can use 6 meters in all modes including FM. I also want to add the all band filter card so I can have another general coverage receiver to supplement my RadioShack/Sangen portable.

I took my time so it took me several days to assemble the radio, all the parts were there except for one mechanical part. I emailed Elecraft to tell them about the shortage. They replied almost immediately and sent the missing part. As I neared finishing the radio, I had one question about checking the resistance from the positive power to various internal components. Elecraft responded immediately and I completed the radio in time to work last year's Field Day.

Field Day, as usual I was not be able to devote to radio ops all day. I had a dinner commitment that would keep me off the air for most of the evening, So, I was able to work until 4pm and then again after 10pm. I was able to make 97 contacts on various digital modes. Considering the few hours that I was able to work, I was satisfied that the radio was working properly and had the sensitivity and selectivity I wanted.

Since then, I was actually able to work Japan and Australia stations that have been lost in the noise. I don't believe that I could have made the contacts with either of my other radios.

In general, I am more than satisfied that I have found a radio that I like and works well. It does not have the audio bandwidth problems that the Kenwood had. It has the sensitivity and selectivity needed.

The radio has many options so it can grow with me as I become a better operator. They even have a Panorama adapter for the radio so you can see the signals. They also have a complete set of filters, dual receivers, and even a 2 meter option. Elecraft's web site is <http://www.elecraft.com/>