



the irca technical column

Subjective evaluation of FRG-7 vs FRG-7 by Louis Goldstein

The title might seem confusing, but it is not, when you look at it closely, as the FRG-7 has had some improvements over the years.

Yaesu Musen is well known for its workhorse, the original FRG-7, which has graced the shacks of many SWLers and DXers all over the world. Back in 1978, I made the plunge and bought my first communications receiver from Gilfer. This version did not have the fine tuning knob, which appeared on the market a few weeks later. Not including postage and handling it came to \$279+. Though I had been a dedicated SWL since the '50s, this was my first real shortwave receiver. A heavy, durable machine, with so many sophisticated controls. The instruction booklet was more a hindrance than a help. They assumed you knew how to operate the instrument before purchase. When I wrote Gilfer for assistance, they suggested I buy a good book on the subject; the poorly written instruction booklet was not their problem. The American outlet for Yaesu knew little about operation of the machine; they were just importers. Some of the info they supplied was all wrong. By trial and error I started to get results from the FRG-7, and thanks to people like Glenn Hauser and Syd Osterman, who had patience and understanding, the original FRG-7 has proven to be a winner. As we all know, it did have some annoying features. Most communications headphones have a $\frac{1}{4}$ " plug, but the FRG-7 had mini jacks, forcing one to use adapters. The recording level was too low and the medium wave band was not too good; a good MW antenna was needed such as the SM-2 to get any decent MW reception. Overall however, the plusses were greater than the minuses.

Recently, I purchased a new stock version FRG-7 from Ham Radio Outlet for (can you believe it?) \$269.95 with free shipping. Less expensive than the original, especially in these inflationary times. Upon request, they check out machine for the customer, to see that all parts are intact and the machine is working properly. We both overlooked one point, however. We assumed that the battery pack was installed by factory personnel, and were fooled by the dummy door. After hearing horror stories about some other suppliers, I informed HRO about the missing battery pack, and within two weeks the pack arrived via UPS; this seems to be a good company to deal with.

Have any improvements been made over the years? A big YES. First, the headphone jack is standard $\frac{1}{4}$ " in size. The design of the pilot light is improved giving you better visibility. The output from the recording jack is higher, and allows improved signal on recordings. The S-meter is more peppy and accurate. The fine tuning knob is very helpful and with dial set you can get accurate readout. The volume is slightly lower at a specific setting of the volume control on the new FRG-7 compared with the older one, but is no problem. With a very short length of wire you can get a multitude of clear shortwave stations. With another short piece of wire I get many AM stations clearly, more than I was getting with the old FRG-7 and the SM-2. I have the original FRG-7 on one side of the room with a short length of wire for short wave and the SM-2 for MW. On the other side I have the new FRG-7 with only short wire antennae for comparison. A plus of both machines is the internal battery pack which allows you to run off 8 D cells, with very good results and low battery drain. A negative point to the new FRG-7, however--the bright white paint used to improve visibility of numbers on the dials is missing on the later FRG-7, and it's tough to see the numbers with the dial lights off.