

Control layout

The front panel is compact, perhaps even rather crowded, although generally well designed in its layout. It is of neat appearance and has most of the controls located upon it. The 1750Hz tone burst is generated when a small front panel metal button is depressed regardless of whether the PTT button is pressed. This button stands as one in a group of eight similar buttons. The other seven control various functions: clarifier (rit), memory operation, VFO selection, priority and split frequency working. Under mobile operation it was not always easy to hit the tone burst button and I often committed the VFO frequency to the memory by mistake — there being no safeguard to prevent accidental re-writing of the memory input. A small modification to give switchable automatic tone burst when in repeater mode would make life easier all round. Having the volume and squelch controls on the same spindle also proved to be interesting at times and care had to be taken to adjust the correct control — I was sometimes deafened when trying to squelch out background noise! The squelch control is only operative when FM modes are selected.

The microphone, connected by a six core coiled screened cable was pleasant to use and very easy in operation with a positive PTT switch — large enough to handle even in the most awkward of situations. Two buttons, inset into the top of the mic unit, control the up and down frequency tuning and scanning. A lock switch is located to the rear of the mic behind a metal hanging clip to disable these two buttons. The high sensitivity of the mic sometimes gave rise to background noises entering the transmission.

There is an LCD display indicating the last five digits of the operating frequency (whether TX or RX) with resolution to 0.1kHz. Being of the LCD type this does not draw a large current and can be viewed even under bright sunlight. Indicators showing operation of the various functions are also shown on the display. A single light illuminates this display as well as the adjacent meter and, if appearing bright under night-time mobile operation, lights adequately at all times. A rear mounted switch is provided to extinguish the light when not

Left:
Yaesu FT-290R
costs about £265



Below: Standard C58, £239 from Lee Electronics



required, and certainly saves on battery drain when portable. The meter can only be described as barely adequate — half calibrated and requiring a magnifying glass to read it — it lets down the whole appearance of the rig. As well as showing incoming signal strength (relative voltage and not S-points), the meter serves as an indication of output power, showing either high or low output, and the state of the internal batteries if fitted.

Facilities

An antenna option is present on the set; a telescopic quarter wave

terminating in a Yaesu screw thread on the front panel, and an SO239UHF style socket on the rear. Besides the SO239, other sockets to the rear of the rig include a 3.5mm socket for the addition of a morse key, and a similar socket for charging the Ni-Cads, and one for connection of the external DC supply. It is unfortunate that this is wired such that the external surface of the plug is positive and, when this touches the chassis under mobile operation, the in-line fuse blows. However if the additional mobile mounting bracket is used this should not occur. This bracket costs some £22 and tends to gouge lumps out of the rig's case and reduce its