

EVALUATING SURPLUS BARGAINS

Being a spendthrift and an impulse purchaser is quite a problem, since yours truly cannot resist a bargain! The loft and garage at my house are littered with equipment racks, old test sets, boxes of valves, connectors and panel meters. Readers who suspect this is just journalistic licence are invited to take a conducted tour... Some of these

- it has no commercial use,
- it is beyond economic repair (or is unrepairable),
- it cannot be identified (or no data is available), or
- it is stolen.

Setting aside the last case, which is fairly uncommon, we need only consider the other three situations.

Items with no commercial use

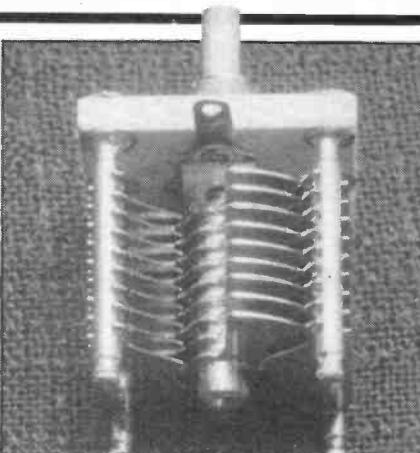
*Things may not be what they seem to be,
particularly if they are feeder cables... by*

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surplus bargains picked up at rallies, junk sales and surplus shops never turn out to be the bargains they seemed at the time, well not until a fortnight after I threw the items out in disgust, and I end up wishing I had counted to ten before dipping into my pocket! So this article is intended to give you a guide to sorting out the real bargains.

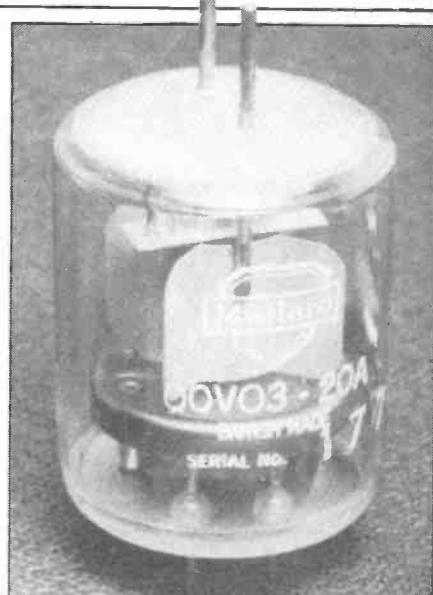
Beauty is said to be in the eye of the beholder and to a large extent, so is a bargain. Very few vendors are in the charity business, so I suppose the first thing to check out is why an apparent bargain is so cheap. I can think of four reasons:

Base for the 4X/CX series of valve — commonly found in ex-MOD RF equipment



Surplus equipment is the cheapest source of quality variable capacitors.

may just be junk which has fallen out of favour on account of its size or because it uses outdated techniques. Space is not always a prime consideration for us hams and we may well be prepared to tolerate something bulky or valvey which commercial users would no longer give houseroom to. A good case is valved frequency counters, video monitors and general coverage receivers. If properly maintained some of these will be perfectly serviceable and will additionally save the cost of a room heater in winter. Claims that an item is in good working order should be treated with some suspicion, but your eyes should give you a good idea of how an item has been treated in its past life. 'Sold as seen' means exactly that, built-in faults and all.



PA of many a public service RT and 2m TX — the QV03-20A.

Items beyond economic repair can also be valuable. If you don't cost your time on an economic basis and enjoy a challenge you may be able to restore an old unit to its former glory. Some people take this to elaborate extremes and clean panel knobs with detergent and toothbrushes, and crackle finish paint with baby oil to get a sleek, like new, finish. You should be sure that service data and spare parts are still available, and if in doubt don't spend more than you can afford to lose. I can look back with mingled amusement and sorrow at one item on which I spent many pounds replacing leaky and dried out capacitors, changing high resistance and open circuit resistors, not to mention many weekends, and even then the thing never worked properly! Equally, some obsolete varieties of valve, transistor and connector may still be available only at ludicrous prices. You only need look at some of the advertisements in the back of the magazines to see the astronomical prices quoted for some replacement valves these days.

Items which cannot be iden-

