

RADIO TODAY



Widest, By Jupiter

The Jupiter II multiband scanner now being supplied by Waters and Stanton apparently has the widest coverage of any model on the UK market. Covering 25 to 550MHz and 800 to 1300MHz, it is AM/FM switchable, has 100 memories in five bands, ten programmable band scan memories, a "Fast" scan rate of 20 modes, manual up/down control, battery saver circuit, adjustable antenna, and runs on four AA cells or 12Vdc. Retail price is £299. Further details from Waters and Stanton, 18-20 Main Rd., Hockley, Essex SSS 4QS. Tel. 0702 206835.

Living For Engineering?

Reporting that demand for personal mobile two-way radios is increasing steadily, the DTI adds: "There is a worrying shortage of skilled engineers and technicians to produce, install and service the equipment."

The report quotes James Malcolm, chief executive of the Federation of Communications Services, as saying that the mobile radio market is growing at over 10% a year. But a survey of FCS member companies shows that 90% of them need more technician engineers. One industry source estimates that 6,000 more specialist technicians will be needed by 1995.

The DTI press notice then goes on to cite the 'initiatives' available to encourage young technicians to enter the profession: the Enterprise and Education Initiative, which offers work and business experience to children and teachers, Training and Enterprise Councils and Training Access Points. It also cites the Young Radio Amateur of the Year Award, although nothing is said of Project YEAR, which has potentially a far wider catchment area than the Award.

Lack of a structured set of qualifications in mobile radio engineering is also blamed for the shortage.

Nobody at any point mentions lack of career prospects. HRT readers are amateurs and SWLs who have taken to radio for the love of it, but how many readers know a skilled technician or engineer with considerable qualifications and many years' experience who is earning very little more than a senior secretary, and far less than somebody with similar experience and qualifications in public relations, marketing, sales, finance or even computing?

How many readers know a qualified engineer or senior technician who has been forced to 'cross over' into a managerial post where their engineering skills are no longer being fully used (we don't count writing reports) in order to gain seniority and/or a reasonable standard of living?

How many readers know engineers and technicians who are working alongside managers and directors who don't know much about engineering and seem to have difficulty in grasping the importance of engineering practices, especially in R&D?

We just thought we'd ask. We have been told by friends abroad that this relentless splitting of roles into "technical" and "managerial", with most of the plum rewards going to people in sales, accounting and top management, is a purely British phenomenon.

Overseas readers might like to argue with that, but it does seem that to make money you have to be controlling money in British industry.

Technically, the best jobs seem to belong to computing and digital engineering, which are seen as the 'cutting edge' and have a fashionable kudos, although there is still a shortage of skilled engineers in non-digital electronics. And even the 'digitals' — even programmers — find themselves moving into non-technical roles in order to 'progress'.

British industry does well out of engineers who aren't suited to management or who do it for the love of it. But how can it expect to gain or maintain more than a few token leads if it treats the people who are developing the technology as galleys slaves, kept in the basement and thrown the odd food parcel?

If this sounds a bit heavy, well, we've just been comparing an acquaintance's pay packet with his hours and years worked, skills and qualifications. Not for the first time, either.

If the DTI and British industry want more top class engineers and technicians, they should stop talking 'initiatives' and start talking about prospects.

Tom Lives On

The Appledore DARC in North Devon has taken over the call sign of its late member Tom Ward G2FKO in honour of his memory. Tom was well known in RTTY and computing in amateur radio, and hoped that the club would be able to adopt his call sign when he departed to a higher wave-band.

So if you hear G2FKO calling in the Devon area, you may be forgiven for thinking that Tom's keeping an eye on the neighbourhood, but it's more likely to be one of his fellow clubbers.

RAE in Cheshire

North Cheshire Radio Club will be running an RAE course in two-hour sessions on Sunday evenings. Enrolment is Sunday September 17, which is too late for this issue, chaps, but call Gordon Adams G3LEQ on 9565 4040 for further information. Lecturers will be Gordon, and Peter Krisop G4WCE.

RSGB Newsletter

The RSGB's special Council Newsletter announces the publication of the Novice Licence Discussion Document, which was presented to the DTI at the Project YEAR Industry Conference on July 20. A summary will appear in RadCom in September. The document itself is available to members for £3 all inclusive. Meanwhile, the ARRL Directors have voted by 9 to 6 to propose a codeless class of amateur licence to the FCC in the United States.

Despite giving its annual show at the National Exhibition Centre a miss this year (for which reasons of cost were given) the RSGB is planning an International Convention and Exhibition at the NEC on 21/22 April 1990. The VHF Convention will be on 13 May at Sandown Park.

The new President for 1990 is Frank Hall G4MBZX. David Butler G4ASR will take over as VHF Manager, and Peter Burden G3UBX as VHF Committee Chairman.

No fewer than six amateur satellites will be launched together on 10 November on an Ariane booster.