



# SQUELCH TALES



**Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association  
for February & March 2026**



## Sniffing out that pesky HF band noise with a nifty QRN Tool

By Mike Adair, N1MA

Oh, to return to the good old days when our neighbors had analog Radios, TV, and stereos that allowed us to indiscriminately invade them with our transmissions. Now the tide has turned and everything is digital with all their little square waves that are an affront to our radio spectrum. Now we are the lucky ones if we can turn off our house and all our QRN goes quiet.

In our efforts to eliminate this QRN the first goal is to identify the sources. Once identified we can apply our potions, charms, ferrite chokes, filters and incantations (mostly 4 letter) to resolve the problems and restore that weak and elusive DX

One method to identify potential sources is to walk around with an AM radio and listen for noise near devices. This will identify things producing noise (that's everything digital), but it does not tell you if you are hearing them in your shack. To confirm the problem sources, you unplug the noisy devices and run back to your radio to see if it makes a difference. To assist in this process, I discovered that a wi-fi controlled smart plug is an excellent tool to reduce the running back and forth (excessive exercise), or all

that yelling to a disinterested assistant across the house.



With my latest issue (a too-smart garage door opener), combined with my new ability to turn it on and off at my radio, I discovered that it not only eliminated the train of pulses drifting across the 80 meter band, but also the background hiss that I thought was atmospheric noise. Continued use of the smart plug then helped to evaluate the application of my many fixes.

In the end I could not eliminate all the noise so I just left the smart plug on the opener. That allows me to turn it off from the radio whenever the door is not needed, but a quiet radio is. An S meter reading of zero is a wonderful thing. I now also keep another smart plug in the toolbox for future quests. And finally, to avoid more QRN (yelling), remember to turn stuff back on when done.

73, Mike N1MA



# CHINEASE RICEBOX HF TRANSCEIVER, A REVIEW

By W1ZE

Back in November my XYL Donna said, "How would you like to warm up if February in warmer Suvanna, Georgia for a few weeks?" It took me all of 15 seconds to reply, "ah – yeh." She said she found a Air B&B condo overlooking a very green back yard in old Savannah, It wasn't priced like a Motel-6 but for a couple weeks it fit into our tight retirement budget.

With that mutual decision we started making some minor plans. Donna did the good wife planning and yours truly, being the ham radio geek planned on what radio to bring along. I thought that maybe I could do a little hamming while there but I didn't want to haul along a shack size transceiver and accessories.

I remembered reading the reviews for the Chinese Xiegua G90 20-watt all HF band and all mode transceiver and the reviews were mostly positive.

On the Aliexpress website you can buy electronic stuff at a good price. One shop's ad said \$325 + shipping and the other shops were asking just under \$400. I took a stab and ordered the \$325 "new" radio. They said it would arrive just before Thanksgiving. After my order I awaited shipping status and there was none. After 15 days and no feedback from the seller I canceled the order and Aliexpress was quick to refund my payment.

I still wanted one so I went on Ebay and there were a lot of new G90s for sale in the \$420+ range. One seller said he had a slightly used one with a few extra addons and would ship for free for \$350. I ordered it and on January 9<sup>th</sup> a FedEx truck pulled into my driveway with a box containing the G90. After opening it was as stated looked almost new with just a few minor scratches on the side handles.



I set to work hooking it up to a 12 volt supply and my old 6BTV vertical and fired it up. Darn if it came to life and I could at once hear a chap, G0IDX with an S-9 signal talking to a chap in California. There is a waterfall on the 2"x1.5" screen and it looked like a tiny version of the waterfall on my big station Icom. It has all the features your mid range 100-watt transceiver has but only at 20-watts but the package is small and easy to transport. One real plus is that the tiny transceiver has an effective internal antenna tuner (transmatch).

I have a portable 9:1 UnUn 29-foot End Fed wire antenna and it will travel nicely and at only 29-feet it should work OK on 40 through 10 meters. The radio will facilitate digital modes like FT8 and PSK but on this adventure to Savannah I will not attempt it. That will be for a later day.

If you are looking for a starter or portable rig without spending \$1K+ you may want to consider the G90. I will have a followon trip report.



## MARA Executive Board selects new Association Officers



At the January 13<sup>th</sup> Executive Board meeting the following board members were nominated to be Association officers for the upcoming year. They are:

**PRESIDENT**, Robert Buckmore Jr, W1TON  
**VICE PRESIDENT**, Scott Higgins, W3VNE  
**TREASURER**, Eric Gilbert, W1KCA  
**SECRETARY**, Donald Wakeman KA1WAL



## SWAP-N-TRADE

Squelch Tales newsletter, will be happy to post readers ham radio related equipment items for sale or trade. Send your item with description to Bruce Randall/W1ZE ([jbrandall43@comcast.net](mailto:jbrandall43@comcast.net)).

**For Sale**  
**MFJ-941C 300-watt HF**  
**Antenna Tuner**



In good working order with manual. \$50.

## MFJ-1026 Noise Canceling Signal Enhancer



In good condition with manual. \$50

## uSDX QRP Transceiver and Z-Match antenna tuner.

A complete QRP HF station. Includes wall-wart power supply microphone, interconnection coax cables and manual.



New but tested and it all works.  
\$120

POC for all the sale items = Bruce, W1ZE  
in Phippsburg at  
[jbrandall43@comcast.net](mailto:jbrandall43@comcast.net)

Note: W1ZE will be on a warm-up mini vacation and will be away for most of february.

