

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: Comet HFJ-350M First Look

Portable operation of a ham radio station seems to be very popular these days. So much so that Yaesu upgraded their venerable 817 series of low power (QRP) radio transceivers to the 818 series. Not to be out done, Icom has returned to the category with its own brand new Icom 705 transceiver.

A portable transceiver makes up half of the story. A portable antenna is the other half. In February 2020, Comet released its new entry into the ultra-portable HF antenna market . the HFJ-350M 9-Band Telescopic Antenna.

Most antennas sold for pedestrian mobile or bicycle HF mobile are rated to handle 20 or 30 watts, depending on band and mode. The Comet HFJ-350M is rated to handle 100 watts on 40 meters and higher frequencies. A slightly lower limit of 75 watts applies to 80 meters.

Comet designed this antenna to be mounted directly on the antenna jack of your rig. For the 100 watt power level that seems too close for comfort.. If this is a concern your radio probably offers a Power Level control that can be set to a lower level. In a portable environment, mounting the HFJ-350M on the antenna tuner, or even better, attaching the antenna to a camera tripod would be preferable. I am surprised the manufacturer did not package some sort of mount with their antenna or at least offer a mount as an option. It is possible that Comet has plans to do this someday and is waiting out the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the initial tests here at KB3PQT, I found that the antenna receives very well. It requires a counterpoise, which is not optional! This tester forgot to bring along that essential part so I am unable to report on how the antenna transmits.

Watch this space for future reports! This looks like fun!

Catch ya on the air!

