How do I?

An occasional series

This week: Yaesu FTDX10 Unboxing and Initial Thoughts

A first look at the Yaesu FTDX10 HF-6M transceiver
Easy to use right out of the box for both SSB and digital modes.

Long time readers of this space will see there are many articles on radios, antennas, and other tips and tricks for operating. See https://www.radioclub-carc.com/resources/ for more articles.

Yaesu - One of the premier manufacturers of amateur radio gear has done it again. The FTDX10 offers a world class hybrid SDR receiver at a fraction of the cost of the FTDX101D and FTDX101MP transceivers.

Yaesu has had some classical transceivers over the years. Some may recall the FT101 from the 1970s and 1980s. Around 2020 Yaesu had an aging line up. Icom was cranking out the IC-7300s as fast as they could. Yaesu had recently eliminated the FT897 and FT857 transceivers and replaced them with the FTDX 3000, 5000, 1200 and 9000. They were good, but many did not have a built-in sound card for data modes and retained legacy RS-232 serial ports instead of USB ports. Meanwhile Icom was selling new radios faster. All Yaesu had to offer besides the FTDX line was the 891, which is a 857 with a USB port and without UHF/VHF. The 818 QRP model was the 817 with a name change and a couple minor upgrades. The FT450 was a great entry-level rig but the design was 20 years old. Yaesu launched the revamped line with the high end FTDX101D, FTDX101MP, and the intermediate level FT991A, a HF-6M plus VHF/UHF "DC to Daylight" rig.

About two years later, in 2021, the FTDX10 was launched. Hybrid software defined radio with classic hardware. Excellent DSP. Built in sound card and tuner. USB for CAT and sound card operation. Sherwood, in his receiver tests, rates it second, only behind the FT101D/MP.

Out of the box, the FTDX10 is smaller than the FTDX1200 and larger than the FT991A. It has menus, but also real buttons. If you want, the WIN4Yaesu suite provides full rig control via your computer. This allows menu access to change settings without pressing buttons on the transceiver, at the cost of another computer program. RT Systems provides cloning software, so you can easily save your radio settings and restore them if you mess-up something. For this and firmware updates, an SD card is used.

How does the FTDX10 play? On many occasions, it has pulled signals out the air that a few seconds earlier a FT991A or FTDX1200 on the same antenna could not. Out of the box, the

only settings I changed were the mic gain and perhaps the RF notch and digital noise reduction-DNR.

For sound card operation, you need to download and install the drivers from the Yaesu site. I held off as I read stories on several forums that described this installation did not always go well. I already had a FT991A operating well on data modes so I simply unplugged the USB cable from the FT991A and plugged it into the FTDX10. The only thing I had to change was the baud rate. My software was configured for 19200 and the radio was set at 38400. It proved easier to change the software than to find the radio menu setting. Once I had the baud rate set, making FT8 contacts was a breeze. This was the easiest CAT/sound setup of any rig I have used.

So far I have only two negatives.
1.) The band switch is a tiny button squeezed between the Function knob and the Tuning knob. I change bands a lot and it is a tough fit without bumping something else. I may try Win4Yaesu or make more use of FLRIG so that I can change bands from the computer.
2.) When you wish to change RF power you need to go into menu settings about three levels deep. I suppose since many users seem to have a "SSB rig" and a separate "digital rig" this may not matter, but for me it is an inconvenience. Again, FLRIG or Win4Yaesu will make this simpler.

Yaesu sells a variety of high end speakers and desk microphones for the FTDX10. I do not use either, and my simple Heil Sound BM-10 headset does the job.

All in all, the FTDX10 is a reasonably priced, very capable addition to the Yaesu line. The current HF line-up consists of the FTDX101D and FTDX101M; the FTDX10; the new FT710, which is the same single SDR processing as the Icom 7300 with enhanced audio; the FT991A and the FT891.

Catch 'ya on the air!