Product Review & Short Takes Columns from *QST* Magazine

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Product Reviews

ICOM IC-R3 Communications Receiver

ICOM IC-PW1 Linear Amplifier

Short Takes

Array Solutions Swinging-Gate Side Mount

Logikey K-3 Memory Keyer

ChromaSound

Logikey K-3 Memory Keyer

Just what the world needs. Another CW memory keyer. Both of my HF radios have built-in keyers, and I use my computer to send CW for contesting. With all of that capability already available, the Logikey K-3 by Idiom Press would have to offer something special to earn a spot on my operating table. After using it for several months, I think it does.

The K-3's layout is deceptive. There are six pushbuttons across the cabinet top and a single knob labeled **SPEED** on the front panel. That's it. It's not until you read the manual and play with the K-3 for a while that you appreciate all it can do. The layout is simple because you program the keyer using Morse code commands sent by paddle. You can ask for current keyer settings and program or change functions. More on this in a moment.

Keyer Functions

At the most basic level, the K-3 is an iambic keyer with speeds from 5 to 60 WPM. The speed control is nice and linear and the speed is easy to control, but I just don't need the highest or lowest speeds for my normal operating. So I changed it to 15 to 40 WPM using one of the function commands. It's easy: Press and release the two left-hand buttons. The K-3 responds by sending "F" in Morse code. I respond with "R1540" sent from the paddle and now I have a keyer that works from 15 to 40 WPM with a speed control that allows fine adjustments within that range. If I want to know the exact speed, I press and release the two right-hand buttons to enter the inquiry mode. The K-3 sends "?" and I respond with "S" from the paddle. The K-3 sends one or two digits indicating the speed. It's really quite clever, and it's not hard to remember often-used functions.

The K-3 offers full control over keying characteristics. You can enable automatic character spacing, set weighting, send a continuous tone for transmitter tuning and turn the internal monitor on or off. If you operate full break-in (QSK) and your transceiver truncates characters, you can use the "keying compensation" function to improve the sound of your on-air CW. There are also 10 options for setting keyer timing and dot and dash memories. After playing with these options, I settled on the defaults.

Memory Functions

The K-3 really shines in the memory department. You can have either six memories of 255 characters each, or three banks of six memories for a total of 18 (85 characters each). What's really amazing is what you can do with the memories — a lot more than just remember what you sent. Using "embedded functions" you can program a message to include a contest serial number. Serial number options allow zeroes to be sent as "O" or "T," nines to be sent as "N," and suppression of leading zeroes. If you have a broken contact or a dupe you don't want to log, press the middle two buttons and the contest serial number is automatically backed off by one, so that you don't need to reprogram the serial number generator. Other options allow you to repeat a contest exchange without incrementing the serial number. You can program a pause or suspend a message to insert text sent from the paddle. You can program a message to call another message. You can speed up or slow down various pieces of a message or make slight adjustments to inter-character or inter-word spacing to make copy easier (for example, to spread out a call sign like K5SES).

Making it Play

To use the keyer you'll need a paddle and cable, a 12-V dc supply and power cable, and a cable to the key jack on your transceiver. RadioShack had everything, but a cable set (model HK-3) is available. The K-3 doesn't have an on-off switch, but current drain is so low when the keyer's not in use that some operators just use a battery pack. There's a 5-V regulator built in, and six AA cells (9 V) work just fine.

The instruction manual is excellent. In addition to a full description of the functions and examples of how to use them, the manual offers a tutorial that's broken into three very well written sessions. The first session explores setup and basic operation. By the end you can send CW and program messages. The second session gets into using the inquiry and function modes to set the keyer up for your tastes. The third lesson gets into embedded functions and more advanced features. There are detailed explanations of the options, and you're encouraged to try everything and see what effect the various settings have. You can try anything you like and you won't screw it up. When you're done playing around, press pushbuttons 1-3-4-6 to return the K-3 to its default settings.

I was impressed with the K-3. It's helped me to improve my CW sending, and its capabilities go well beyond anything built into my transceivers. Although I use my contest software for sending CW during the contest, I hook up the K-3 in parallel for manual sending when I'm not quick enough on the keyboard. The additional memories come in handy for variations on the CQ and for times when I want to send the exchange more slowly without stepping through a bunch of preset speeds in my software. If you're serious about CW, take a close look at the K-3. If you like rolling your own and want to save some money, a K-3 partial kit (the CMOS Super Keyer III) is available. See the Idiom Press Web site for details.

Manufacturer: Idiom Press, PO Box 1985, Grants Pass, OR 97528; **www.idiompress.com**. *Suggested retail price: K-3, $129.95; HK-3, $10.95. Available directly from Idiom Press or from selected Amateur Radio dealers.* QST

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