

Hamvention 2019

N4HCI and I (WA4THR) attended Hamvention 2019, which was our 4th overall and 3rd consecutive Hamvention. The latter 3 have all been at the new Xenia venue and it has been interesting to observe the changes from year to year as it has adjusted to the new site.

Last year, using a cell phone based group text we coordinated an eyeball QSO with 4 net controllers and 1 frequent user of the net. See last year's report [here](#). This year, we repeated this process ending up meeting a total of 16 net controllers, members, and users of ECARS at Hamvention. Pictures of the various meetings are shown below in the section below titled '2019 Hamvention Eyeball QSO'.

For the first time in the last 3 years that N4HCI & I were visiting, there was no rain during the 2 days we attended, although the night before and the day after had some. As a result, there was reportedly a record set with over 30K attendees. That said, traffic was handled smoothly and even the lines at the gate could be bypassed if you had a ticket and didn't want to wait for a laminated lanyard. Almost all equipment vendors were inside buildings. We had previously arranged to meet other ECARS folks at 2PM Friday and again met some at 10AM Saturday, so it was nice to put a face to those we hear on the radio.

Hamvention 2019 was characterized by attendance by all major and many minor Amateur Radio equipment vendors, the ARRL, 3 days of scheduled forums, and a very large tailgate area. In addition, there were many food vendors present in 'roach coaches' and tents. No matter what your food preferences might be, you'd find something you'd like at Hamvention. One of the tents included a place to package and ship your acquisitions home if you did not want to carry it with you.

2019 Hamvention Eyeball QSO

The following attendees coordinated group meetings at the flagpole in the center of the Greene County Fairgrounds where Hamvention was held.



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We plan to return to Hamvention 2020 and will repeat the group get together. If you are interested, be sure to sign up for the group text in March / April 2020.

And The Toys

Of course, the raison d'etre for any hamfest is to see the toys that we play with. Several new or nearly new radios were seen:



Ten Tec was there with Alpha, and aside from the legacy radios they were showing the “new” Omni VII+, which is basically the Omni VII with an aluminum front panel, with a price below \$3000. We talked with the owner, Mike Dishop, who said they had just moved into a new manufacturing facility near Dayton that provided significantly more space than before and that he would be changing the website with ordering information right after Hamvention. He still has Ten Tec repair and engineering people in Sevierville, TN, but all other manufacturing is in the new facility.

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Elecraft was showing several examples of their new K4, with shipments expected in the Fall. This radio follows the latest trend of being based on direct signal sampling with a displayed waterfall on the front panel. No pricing information was heard, but this was a very attractive radio.



Yaesu had examples of the new FT101D radio at several locations, including DX Engineering. This under \$4000 rig (100W version, the 101MP is a 200W radio) had a unique 3-D waterfall that provided both signal strength and waterfall history on the display, and could separate the waterfall between the main and sub receivers.



Kenwood was highlighting the TS-890S, which also featured an on-screen waterfall display. This is priced at around \$4000, but well below the TS-990.

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Mission is a Bulgarian enterprise showing a very interesting radio called the RGO One. This 50 watt rig was to be available “soon” at around \$800 with a kit version for around \$500. More information could be seen at www.LZ2JR.com. This 50 watt rig was to be available “soon” at around \$800 with a kit version for around \$500. More information could be seen at www.LZ2JR.com



Polar Explorer is a 500 watt transmitter, only, but offering significant efficiency on the order of 88% as opposed to a typical value of under 60% in SSB service. The owner was soliciting beta testers who would agree to buy the hardware, at parts cost, and help with further development. The rig was designed to use another rig as a receiver, such as an Elecraft K2, at a cost less than an external linear amplifier. More could be seen at <https://www.polex-tech.com/>

The Other Hamfest

FDIM (Four Days in May) is a 4-day QRP conference sponsored by the QRP ARCI and held each year just ahead of the Hamvention. We enjoyed visiting the open Vendor Night and Homebrew contest night. At both events we saw Ashar Farhan, the designer of the very popular [BitX QRP rigs](#). Here he was being mobbed at a table where his [“Antuino” antenna analyzer](#) was being sold fully assembled for \$80 (the bubble-wrapped packages). He had made a presentation on the design of this Arduino-based device at the conference.



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Favorite Purchase for me was a nifty little "Transistor tester" that I picked up new at FDIM for \$20. This



little device has an internal processor and a color screen and a variety of ways to connect 2 and 3 terminal devices including resistors, capacitors, inductors, diodes, LEDs, and transistors. It figures out what the device is, what lead is connected to what input, and displays the readings relative to the device under test along with a graphical picture!