



Some ideas on improving the FT-897 field usability, by Axel, PA1XL

‘Rigster 897’ docking station: versatility, portability and protection

After having read many interesting ideas about making the FT-897 (and other rigs) more portable, I decided to design my own ‘docking station’ to improve the rig’s fun factor in the field and for mobile use. The out-of-the-box rig keeps nothing more than a promise of a real portable set (as it is very vulnerable). On-board batteries only don’t make a real field set out of the rig. Dare to compare: ever put your hands on a military field set? My design doesn’t turn the 897 into such a rugged, all-weather ‘bulletproof’ set, but improves at least its field qualities, which I think are worth sharing with colleague ham radio enthusiasts.

One picture tells more than a thousand words, so I will guide you through my design by pictures.

If you have any questions, please contact me by mail: axel.bak@gmail.com.



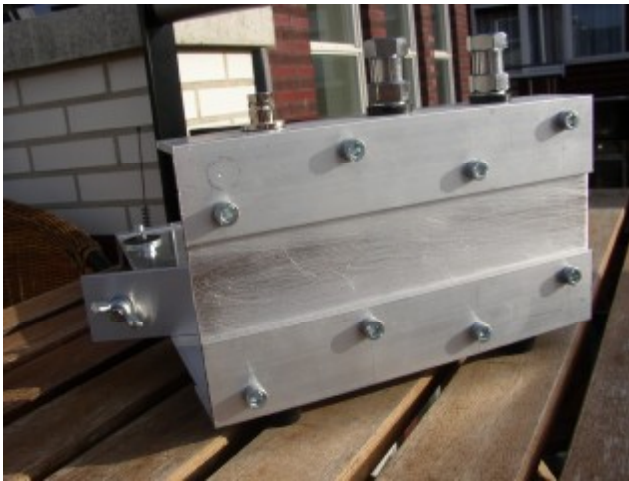
The Rigster is made out of 3 mm Aluminum plate and commercially available L and U profiles (angles and channels). The whole design consists of two parts: the base plate with the antenna deck and a side-mounted antenna deck that offers some protection to the vulnerable clarifier and VFO knobs.



A close up of the antenna deck with patch panel functionality. The first 3/8" mount is for HF, the second is meant for VHF operations, using the telescopic whip of the BuddiPole.



One of the supports that prevent the 897 from moving both backwards and sideways. A grounding bolt is provided.



Back view. Could be mentioned 'bottom view' as well, when the Rigster is used in upright position, which will be shown later.



Bottom view. Could be mentioned 'back view' as well, when the Rigster is used in upright position, which will be shown later.



Side-mounted antenna deck, useful when operating Rigster in upright position. Alternatively, this deck could be equipped with two connectors (either BNC, 3/8" or N to meet your needs).



Some patch cables and other useful hardware.



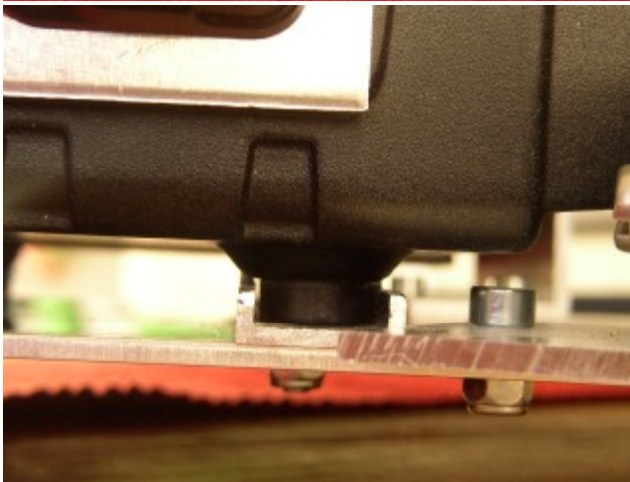
A one dollar strap keeps the 897 in place without leaving any traces.



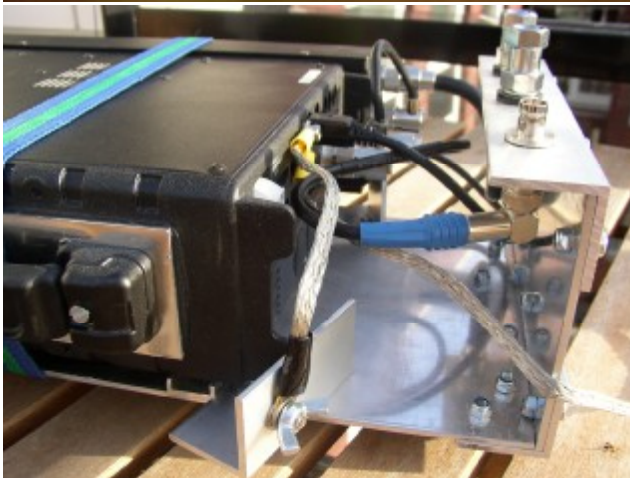
Detail of the side antenna deck. Of course, 'deck' is an overstatement; I just like the word ;)



The head of the bolt disappears into the hole of the (front) plastic cabinet feet.



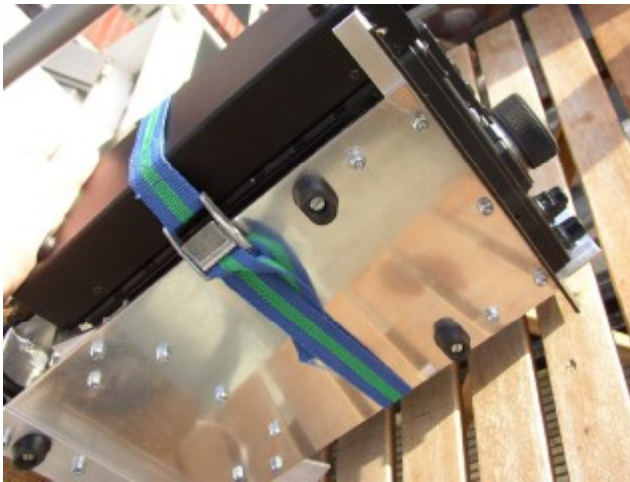
The other cabinet feet are locked in a channel profile.



The earth strap is connected. From the same bolt, the whole thing can be grounded. The cabling, plugs and jacks are well protected.



The AT-897 is kept free from the Rigster to maintain easy access to the SO-239 jacks when the antenna deck is not used.



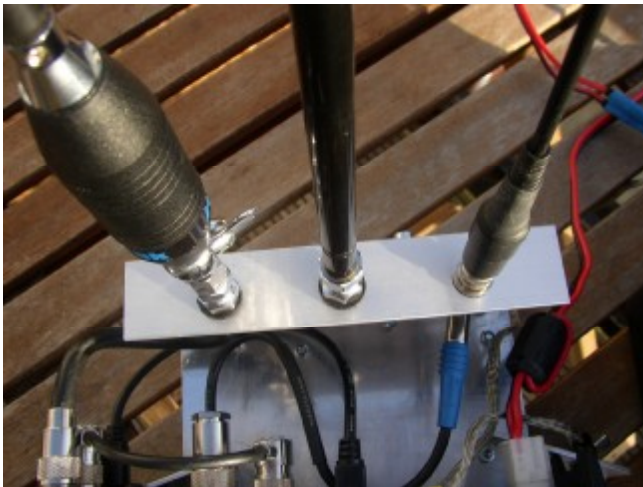
Bottom view with the strap.



The side antenna deck offers some protection to the vulnerable knobs. I've read a few too many posts about broken shafts, so that's why.



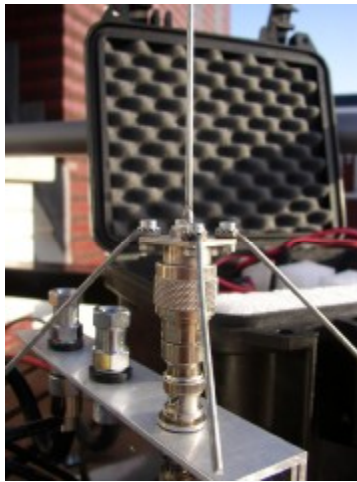
The stability in this position is remarkable, but some extra support wouldn't hurt.



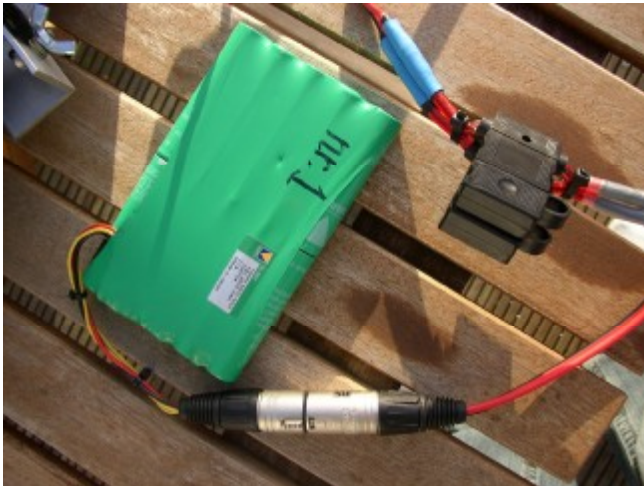
Some antenna ideas:
From left to right: CB whip, BuddiPole telescopic whip, some VHF whip.



Some antenna ideas:
UHF whip made out of a piece of H1000.



Some antenna ideas:
UHF Groundplane.



Some power ideas:
NiMH pack. 4 pole
Cannon connectors are
used for power.



Some power ideas:
Double NiMH pack. The
second power outlet is
situated on the back
side.



Some power ideas:
Portable lead acid gel battery unit, containing 2 x 2 x 6V batteries, 10 Ah each. Mind the Cannon connectors stored in the middle of the box.



Set in upright position again.