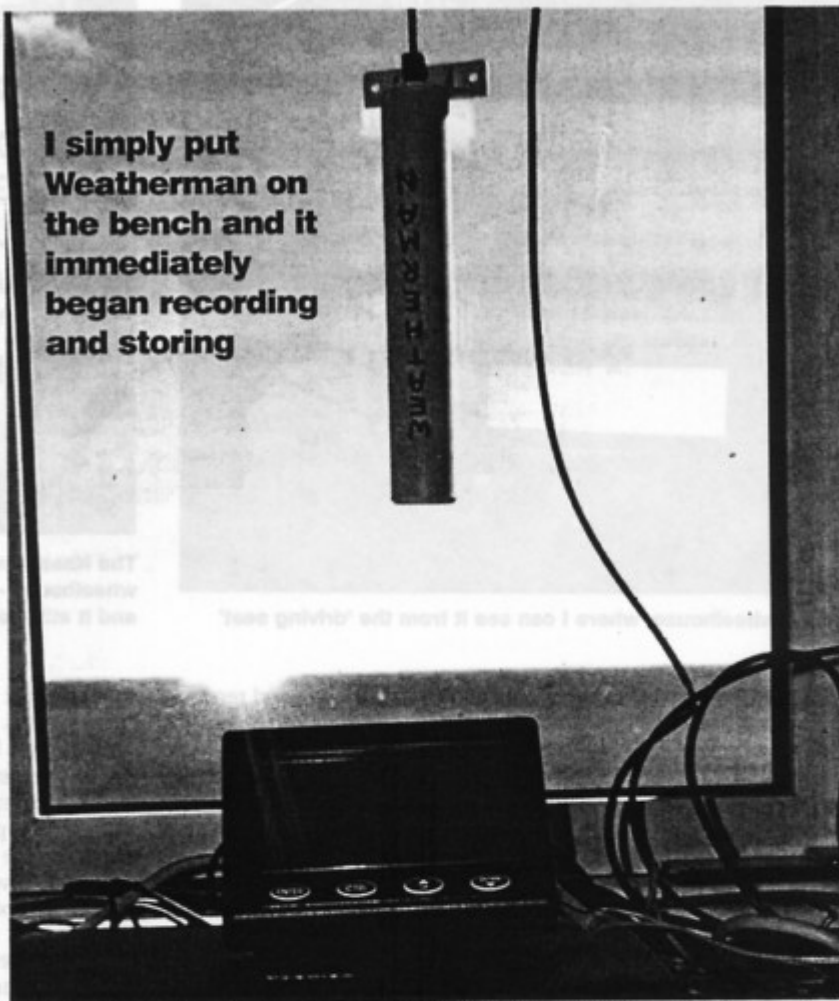


Enter the NASA Weatherman...

**I simply put
Weatherman on
the bench and it
immediately
began recording
and storing**



A particularly useful source of weather data is the German 5-day radio teletype forecast in plain language. But although I can get a very stable signal and perfect text on my amateur band Kenwood and Icom rigs using my aerial at home, boats seem very susceptible to interference and frequency or phase shift and this leads to text corruption. Even after several years experience, I'm still far from being a competent operator.

Enter the NASA-Weatherman, a device which uses the same box, LCD, and stubby antenna configuration as their Navtex. I'm lucky enough to be testing a prototype of this new and interesting piece of equipment, which is certain to make a big contribution to cruising and safety and will make obsolete many of the problems with cables and PC's. Weatherman has been commercially tested

in Germany and will soon be released in the UK, where it receives the German (Hamburg) weather service forecasts. There are the usual BBC shipping and Navtex style forecasts and warnings but, for me, the most useful item is the 5-day forecast for most cruising areas.

I connected up the prototype on my radio bench, gave it an earth, and hung the aerial upside down in the window. It immediately locked on and began recording and storing a series of forecasts, beginning in the Med. and passing through Biscay, and several areas of the English Channel and North Sea, before ending in the Baltic. I got forecasts of wind and sea state in the eastern Channel for every 12-hour block over the next five days, with almost no corrupted letters. This is not to say that Weatherman is totally automatic. It has to be

programmed, like a Navtex unit, and a bit of radio knowledge helps in the selection of one of the four simultaneously transmitting frequencies. But there's an on-screen 'scope' and a good user manual to help you gain experience quickly.

It isn't often that I'm impressed by yet another electronic gadget, but this one could be a real winner. We'll test it next summer in Brittany, where it will be left to run (draining only milliamps) all day long. Rita is already planning to use our record sheet to compare the accuracy of its forecasts both with each other and with the actual weather we experience. At about £250 Weatherman is likely to be one of the most useful cruising tools I have yet used. I shall certainly be adding it to my inventory and look forward to reporting on it in Liveboards Diary.