

The F4 is an outstanding metal detector

with enough power to satisfy even the most discerning hobbyist

by **Mark Ellington**

I've always heard "The older you get, the faster time passes." Now that I'm in my mid 40's I've found that statement to be all too true. However, there are exceptions to this rule.... Christmas, payday and waiting for a metal detector to arrive in the mail! I'm the first to admit, I become very "kid like" when I have a new machine on the way to my house. My wife is very "understanding" of this affliction of mine, only succumbing to the occasional "eye roll" when I constantly babble on about treasure hunting, old sites, coins and metal detectors.

The subject of this particular dose of excitement was the new Fisher F4. Fisher Research Laboratories, the oldest hobby metal detecting manufacturers in the world, was purchased by First Texas Products of El Paso Texas. First Texas also owns the Bounty Hunter and Teknetics brands. At first, a lot of folks in the metal detecting hobby didn't know what to make of the Fisher purchase... would First Texas continue the long tradition of high performance/high quality metal detectors? Would the "new" Fisher be introducing new exciting models? Luckily for us, the answer to both these questions is a resounding "YES!"

Assembly and First Impressions - My new F4 was shipped double boxed, which is a nice touch in my book. After unpacking it, I was immediately impressed by the high quality feel of the gold anodized rods and the heavy duty plastic arm cup. Assembly was a breeze, with all the poles locking securely in place. I noticed that the pole length adjustment has enough range to handle the needs of most detectorists. The fit, finish and "feel" of the F4 impress me as very high quality.

Like most folks, my first act after assembly of a brand sparkling new metal

detector is to take a few "test swings" across the floor. I'm blown away by the light weight and balance of this machine! I'm also very impressed by the lack of any movement or flex in the shaft, even during "vigorous" swinging... nice and tight! I finally decided it's time to get down to business. I notice there are no batteries included. Wrong assumption! I open the battery compartment and find two 9 volt alkaline cells installed "backwards" for shipping purposes. I carefully removed the batteries... (Be careful, they are pretty tight!) and installed them. Finally! The moment of truth!

Display and Controls - A light press with my right thumb brings the F4 to life. The F4 makes use of membrane type buttons that offer a light "click" for feedback. The LCD display is clear and sharp with a centrally located conductivity ID number. Along the top is an arc of various common targets, ranging from iron to \$1. An LCD "arrow" points to the detected target, making for quick and easy identification. To the left of the conductivity ID is a "on the fly" depth gauge that displays the depth of the currently detected item in 2" increments. On the right is a battery meter, constantly monitoring the power level of the nine volt cells. The faceplate itself looks great. The red, gold and black color scheme is very "pleasing to the eye" and all the buttons are logically placed and clearly marked.

The face of the detector has nine touch pads and one ground balance knob. Available controls are: On/Off, Sensitivity up and down, All metal auto tune, Pinpoint, Disc, Notch and Discrimination/Threshold up and down. The "Disc" button toggles the F4 between an "all metal discrimination mode" and a "discrimination mode". All metal discrimination allows all targets to be heard

and identified using both the visual ID indicators and the 4 tone audio ID. The "discrimination mode" activates the discrimination circuits, allowing you to eliminate any targets you wish all the way through zinc penny. My experience with the F4 is that the "all metal discrimination" mode provided outstanding detection depth, while "discrimination" mode did a great job of getting rid of unwanted trash items.

Test Garden and "Real Life" Use - I grabbed a few test targets and gave them a swing in front of the DD coil. The 4 tone audio from the internal speaker is very clear and distinct. The corresponding ID numbers, and target icons seem to be dead "on the money" (pun intended). The F4 seems to be marketed as a "mid range" metal detector, but the air testing I did was comparable to many detectors I've had that cost much more.

Every time I get a new detector, my first destination is my "test garden". I've had it planted for several years with a large variety of targets buried at different depths. The F4 with the double-D coil was able to correctly identify closely located targets with a precision that nearly rivals my F-75. Very impressive! Depth is much better than I expected from a mid-level machine, and I was able to run it at maximum sensitivity in my yard without any false signals. Pinpointing was a breeze with the toggle on/off style pinpoint button. Entering the pinpoint mode changes the central ID numbers into an "inches of depth" reading. The numbering combined with the great VCO audio made it very easy to size up your targets and avoid large trash items.

My next stop was a local school yard. In my opinion, school yards are the best place to learn a new metal detector. Targets are plentiful, and digging is easy. The F4 felt "custom made" for this type of

hunting. The 11" DD coil cuts a wide swath allowing you to cover ground quickly without fear of missing targets. One of the beautiful things about a Double-D type coil is the great heel to toe ground coverage. I was immediately rewarded for my detecting efforts with coin after coin. The high tone audio "sang out" to me on copper pennies, dimes and quarters. Another cool thing I discovered is that the visual ID number stays locked on the last target detected, allowing you to hunt by sound, then refer to the meter afterwards.

The F4 has a very unique notching system that allows you to either choose the item you want to reject manually, or by waving a troublesome trash item in front of the coil, then hitting the "notch" button. Both methods work great and completely discriminated out the unwanted target. Another way to use "notch" is to crank up the discrimination as high as you want to go (all the way through "zinc"), then "notch" back in a desired item. This is what I opted to do for my school yard hunt. Discrimination was maxed out through zinc, and nickels "notched" back in.

This made for a VERY productive coin hunt! Nickels came in the ID dead on the "30" mark, while still rejecting most pulltabs and pencil eraser bands. For the clad coin hunter on a limited time frame, this mode of hunting is outstanding. Your "coins per minute" count will

undoubtedly skyrocket with the sheer volume of ground you can cover, while avoiding the trash items. I ended the school hunt with a nail apron FULL of coins of all denominations including a couple of Susan B. Anthony dollars and a Sacajawea dollar.

Conclusion - I've gained more and more respect for the F4 during the 40 hours I've logged on it so far. In my opinion, this detector is a great multi-purpose machine that would be an excellent addition regardless of whether you're a "seasoned pro" or just getting started in the hobby. Don't think that the F4 is just a "Clad Killer". Although it does excel at that type of hunting, I've recovered several wheat cents and a few pieces of silver since I've been using it. The F4 is incredibly "quiet" until you hit a target, and the audio feedback with 4 distinct tones is very good. All-metal depth is incredible and quite easy to ground balance.

Durability doesn't seem to be an issue. I hate to admit it, but while hunting, I stopped to adjust my headphones, leaning the F4 against my side. Before I could catch it, it fell straight to the ground with a couple of bounces on impact. I just knew I had killed it for sure, but it never missed a beat! This tough little detector was no worse for the wear. The plastics Fisher has chosen for the unit seems to be very, very resilient.

Coil availability is a huge plus! The F4 comes shipped with the 11" Double-D elliptical coil and available for purchase at very reasonable prices are 4", 8" and a 10". An incredible selection that will cover most hunting needs!

My personal opinion is that the F4 is an outstanding metal detector. It is very much a "turn-on-and-go" type detector, but with enough power to satisfy even the most discerning hobbyist. Between the F-75 and the F4, Fisher has proven they are serious about the high performance hobby market.

