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Use it to find leaks, hot spots on circuit boards, and more

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Build a Telephone Monitor and Controller
It keeps a log of every call and lets you use any telephone to control up to eight devices

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ON THE COVER

35 Build a Super-Sensitive Heat Detector

One look at your heating bill and you know that you have a problem. Despite all of the insulation and weather stripping you've installed, some of your expensive heat is clearly escaping, but from where? You could painstakingly search every inch of your work, but that could take hours, and you might still not find the weak spot. Now there's a better way—the Heat Detector. It will make quick work of the task as it can easily pinpoint even tiny temperature differences. It can also be used to find hot spots on circuit boards, car engines, and more. — Skip Campisi

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It keeps a running log of every call received or placed, and can also be used to control up to eight devices using any telephone.
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**NEW LITERATURE**
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>152338 Portable heat gun</td>
<td>$849.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2MB VGA graphics card on board upgradeable to 4MB</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Windows® 95, MS Money, MS Works</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes 16-key keyboard, remote control (mouse), 3.5&quot; software and drivers and manual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size: 18.5&quot; x 16.0&quot; x 5.0&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weight: 29.4 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part No. Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>324868 16kB-8MB EPROM Programmer</td>
<td>$199.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parallel Port, DOS/Win 3.1/*Win 95</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPROMs up to 8MB, page programmed</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPROMs, serial EPROMs (including 8-pin), flash devices, NVRAMs, bi-polar PROMs, PALs, GNLs, PEELS, PALCEs, EPDLs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Package supports DIPs up to 48-pin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robust memory and logic editing features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part No. Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>159543 PICBasic pro compiler</td>
<td>$249.95</td>
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<td>Component Cabinet Kits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kits include the most popular components with extra space for your customized expansion. Each kit includes a 23 drawer component cabinet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part No. Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>819037 320-pin DIL series IC Kit</td>
<td>$129.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>819038 420-pin 74LS series IC Kit</td>
<td>$119.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>819070 300-pin CD-ROM series IC Kit</td>
<td>$84.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>819088 385-pin Linear series IC Kit</td>
<td>$159.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>819092 540-pin 1/8 watt Resistor Kit</td>
<td>$29.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>819132 540-pin 1/4 watt Resistor Kit</td>
<td>$28.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>819279 540-pin 1/2 watt Resistor Kit</td>
<td>$32.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>819343 2200-pin Electronic Hardware Kit</td>
<td>$39.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>819347 110-pin Radial Capacitor kit</td>
<td>$34.95</td>
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<td>819350 220-pin Ceramic Capacitor kit</td>
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<td>819351 160-pin Mylar Capacitor kit</td>
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<td>819341 129-pin Tantalum Capacitor kit</td>
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<tr>
<td>82587 270-pin Diode kit</td>
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<tr>
<td>82595 180-pin Transistor kit</td>
<td>$39.95</td>
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I Object

Before I start, let me make one thing clear: I am not a real big fan of Microsoft. So, you can imagine how surprised I am to find myself defending them in this space. Then again, since I am defending them against the government, well...

Our society is based on the principle of free enterprise. Yes, Microsoft is in the powerful position it is in today thanks in part to shrewd, aggressive, and perhaps ruthless marketing. It is also there because they have devised an operating system that fills the needs of most users better or more economically than their current competitors (Unix, Linux, OS/2, and Macintosh). Maybe someday that will change.

Win98 is slated to be the next generation in their operating system family. Not so much a revolutionary change, it is more of an updating and tweaking of Win95. One of the critical improvements was the integration of the already available Active Desktop. That feature provides, among other things, a seamless integration between a user's PC desktop and the Internet, making using the resources available on the Internet an easier and more intuitive operation. Of course, to do that, the desktop needs a browser component. Naturally, Microsoft chose to use its own Internet Explorer (IE) browser for that.

At least that was the plan before the government stepped in. As this is being written, the Justice Department along with a slew of State Attorney Generals have filed suit accusing Microsoft of violating anti-trust laws and seeking to block the release of Win98 unless either Internet Explorer is deleted from it or Netscape's browser is bundled with it to give consumers a choice. For obvious reasons, neither choice is acceptable to Microsoft.

The government means well, but as usual when it comes to technology, they are misguided. There was a monopoly in the browser market—it belonged to Netscape prior to Microsoft's entry into the field. Even today, Netscape by the government's own figures, still has 60% of the market. And the presence of IE in the operating system does not stop users from using Netscape if they wish. Its presence is well advertised on the Net, and getting a copy is easy and free (although the latter was not the case prior to the introduction of IE).

Other points are equally weak. For example, the suit makes a big deal about the "Channel" bar that highlights content providers with ties to Microsoft. But you know what, Netscape comes with Netcaster, which is pretty much the same thing, with the same types of problems. Fortunately, disabling such "features" is easy enough, if you wish.

What annoys me here is that the suit seems to be the government's way of saying that computer users are dolts, unable to use anything other than the tools put in front of them. Just because it comes bundled with your system, you are under no obligation to use IE, or any other bundled app for that matter. Of course, if you have any degree of computer literacy, you already know that. If not, I guess you sue.
Handheld LCD Oscilloscope

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Ooops!

I was examining the schematic and PC board in the article “Build an AM Transmitter” (June, 1998), and believe I have uncovered a problem. In the schematic, resistor R45 is shown grounded. However, on the board, it is shown wired to the cathode of D8. Which is correct?

JAY CRASWELL
Jordan, MN

The PC board is correct. In preparing the art for publication, the connection from the bottom of R45 was drawn too long. It actually terminates at the line above the one shown, which goes to D8 as per the board. We are sorry for any confusion that might have been caused—Editor

Where Are the Indexes?

Hello. I have been a long time subscriber to your magazine. I noticed that, unlike recent years, you did not publish an Annual Index. I do recall reading somewhere that you have moved the indexes to your Internet site, but I was unable to locate them. Can you help?

D. SMITHSON
via e-mail

Sure: A searchable index of all articles that have appeared in Electronics Now (and Popular Electronics) since September 1994 is available on the Gernsback Publications Web site (www.gernsback.com). You can get to it off the main Electronics Now page on that site. If you want to go directly to the index, the URL for the search page (no-frames version) is www.gernsback.com/search.html—Editor

Still Disaffected

I read with considerable annoyance your June 1998 editorial: “The Object of Disaffection,” which you say is based on your receiving letters, phone calls, and e-mail regarding the lack of source code for microcontrollers. I presume that I am one of the people you are referring to in the editorial. However, my complaints have never been directly referencing the availability of source code, instead my complaints have been about the impossibility of building the projects without buying the kits advertised by your authors. Not only has the lack of source code for microcontrollers been a problem, but also code (object, source or otherwise) for PC interfaces and PLDs. None of these points were addressed in your editorial.

In your editorial, you say “While our policy is to insist that any software required to make a project operate as described be made available, which in the case of microcontrollers means the object code as a minimum...”. While not ideal, this would be acceptable, but I do not see any evidence that this is the case.

I’ve just checked your web page and for Electronics Now, the project code on the web page was last updated on September 16, 1997 and for Popular Electronics, the project code was last updated on July 25, 1997. This means that any readers who are unable or unwilling to buy the kits that are advertised in your magazine, cannot reproduce the projects you’ve presented in your magazine, even though the authors have been paid by you (and us, indirectly) to release the information required to build the projects. For example, in a June 1998 article entitled “Add a Video Trigger to your Oscilloscope”, you publish bare board foil patterns, but don’t give PLD information or microcontroller object code. This is a very interesting project that, as far as I can see, the reader cannot reproduce without buying the kit from the author!

This experience has been quite frustrating for me as I do not feel like my concerns have been adequately addressed.

MICHAEL PREDKO
via e-mail

As per the article, the required file, vidtrig.zip, is posted on the ftp site. However, I believe I know what has happened here. Shortly after the ftp site was set up, readme files were posted that listed the available articles in each directory. Unfortunately, though new files were being uploaded every month, the readme files were not being updated. Though this is the first anyone has complained, at least to us, we do need to get them up-to-date, and it will be done right away. Please accept our apologies for any confusion that was caused by this oversight.

On another note: We understand why many readers object to purchasing kits or parts solely from one source. Because of that, we insist that authors provide sources for parts other than the kit/part supplier mentioned in the article, and provide all software required to make a project function as described. On the other hand, our experience has been that if times, the cost of the kits is less than what a typical hobbyist would need to spend to acquire the parts on his or her own, especially when you consider the high minimum orders many parts distributors require these days. Yes, if you have access to a large reserve of parts, “rolling your own” can save you a lot of money, but that is not always the case, and even less so if all parts must be obtained new through traditional channels.

Anyway, the point is that whether you want to buy a kit (when offered) or go it alone is up to you. We do our best to give you the tools you need to succeed regardless of the path you choose.—Editor
BP294—Concise Introduction to Microsoft Works $8.99. In the shortest and most effective way, you can use the word processor to advantage to type, edit, print and save documents. It goes on to explain how Works can be used to build up simple spreadsheet examples, edit them, save them, print them and retrieve them. It informs you how to create simple macros, and enables you to simplify long repetitive tasks and to customize the program to your own needs.

BP349—Practical Opto-Electronic Projects $8.99. Whether you are interested in motor racing, searching for buried treasure in a barren island or for gold in Fort Knox, spinning the wheel of fortune, or doing a musical quiz—there is something for you to build and enjoy!

BP350—Electronic Board Games $8.99. Twenty novel electronic board games that you can build from the plans in this book. Whether you are interested in motor racing, searching for buried treasure on a barren island or for gold in Fort Knox, spinning the wheel of fortune, or doing a musical quiz—there is something for you to build and enjoy!

BP378-45—Simple Electronic Terminal Block Projects $8.99. Contains over 45 easy-to-build electronic projects that can be built by an absolute beginner. Projects are assembled on terminal blocks using only a screwdriver and other simple hand tools. No soldering is required.

BP423—Simple Sensor Terminal Block Projects $8.99. This is the next logical step from 45 Simple Electronic Terminal Block Projects (BP379), by the same author. The former describes an easy method of constructing transistor circuits without the need for soldering. It is an open sesame to the practical world of electronics for youngsters or beginners.

BP426—MS-Word 97 Explained $12.75. Without any previous knowledge of MS-Word, you can be up and running this evening using this User Guide. Nothing is assumed! The hardware specifications you need to run the package, and how to install it onto your system, are covered. You discover how to enter, edit and enhance text and how to become comfortable working with document page layout, paragraph styles, document templates, textboxes and frames.

BP357—Electronic Projects for the Garden $8.99. Electronics enters the Garden! New exciting book points out how gardeners can use simple electronic projects to promote success where the elements work against them. Some of the projects are over/under temperature monitoring, dusk/dawn switching, automatic plant watering, warming cables, etc.

BP358—Practical Electronics Musical Effect Units $8.99. There is a constant hullabaloo for musical effects projects by the hobbyist community. This book provides practical circuits for several projects that range in complexity and are sure to work. All the circuits are easy to build and use readily-available parts.

BP429—MS-Excel 97 Explained $8.99. 3D Excel spreadsheet is here! Get a quick start with this exciting program in the shortest and most effective way. The book was written with both the newcomer to spreadsheets and the existing spreadsheet user in mind. A brief period of reading the book will be able to build up simple spreadsheet examples, edit entries, format cells and ranges, and save and open worksheets. From there, you can generate and use 3-dimensional worksheets and to link them together.

BP385—Easy PC Interfaceing $8.99. The built-in ports in your PC provide an easy and hassle-free way of interfacing your circuits. This book provides useful PC add-on circuits including the following: Digital input/output ports, analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog converters; voltage and current measurement circuits; resistance and capacitance meters, temperature measurement interface, bioprocessor monitor, and many other useful interfaces.

BP333—Practical Concise Introduction to UNIX $3.99. If you are using or intend to use the UNIX multi-user operating system and want to get the most out of your computer system in terms of efficiency and productivity, then you must learn its operating system. The book explains how the UNIX operating system is structured so that you understand what happens when you first approach your computer.

BP336—Electronic Hobbyists Data Book $18.99. This book provides a wide range of data. For example, you require details of a modern five-band resistor code or an old color code for a ceramic capacitor, the formula for parallel resistance, or basic data on an NE55540 operational amplifier, it is contained within these pages. The subjects covered are numerous and widespread to cover all hobbyist interests.

BP343—A Concise Introduction to Microsoft Works for Windows $10.99. The book explains and details: How the Works for Windows package fits into the general Microsoft Windows environment; how to use the word processor to advantage; how to use Microsoft Draw to create and edit graphics and place them in your documents; how to build up simple spreadsheet examples; and how simple, and multiple charts, or graphs, of different types can be generated. And there's much more!

BP322—Understanding PC Specifications $9.95. This book offers a clear explanation of the subject covered include the following: Differences between types of PC (XT, AT, 80386, 80486, Pentium etc.), math co-processors; input devices (keyboards, mice, and digitizers); memory, including both expanded (EMS) and extended RAM; RAM and disk caches, floppy disk drive formats and compatibility, hard disk drives, and display adapters (CGA, Hercules, super VGA, etc.).

BP298—Concise Intro to the Macintosh System and Finder $7.50. Although the Mac's WIMP user interface is designed to be easy to use, much of it only becomes clear when it is explained in simple terms. The book explains: The Finder, how simple or complex it is, and what they do; how to use the System and Finder to manipulate disks, files and folders, configuring and printing files from Finder, getting the most from the system utility programs, and running MultiFinder.

BP88—How To Use OP Amps $7.50. The Operational Amplifier is the most adaptable circuit module available to the circuit designer. It is possible to design a low-cost integrated circuit with several hundred components, very-high gain and predictable performance. The book has been written as a design guide for most Operational Amplifiers, serving both as a source book of circuits and a reference book for design calculations.

BP316—Practical Electronic Design Data $10.95. A book made for use of electronic enthusiasts with over 150 practical circuits. It covers the main kinds of components (from pig-tail leads to surface mount), pinouts, specs and type selection. Basic units are defined and most used formulae explained. Five additional sections are devoted to circuit design, covering analog, digital, display, radio and power supply circuits.

BP346—Programming in Basic for Windows $10.99. This is a guide to programming. The reader is not expected to have any familiarity with the language as both the environment and statements are introduced and explained with the help of simple programs. The user is encouraged to build these, save them, and keep improving them as more complex language statements and commands are encountered.

BP321—MS-DOS 6 Explained $13.25. The book covers: How the DOS program is structured so that you understand what happens when you first switch on your computer; how directories and subdirectories can be employed to structure your hard disk for maximum efficiency, how to use the DOS Shell program, and much, much more.

BP345—Getting Started In Practical Electronics $8.99. If you are looking into launching an exciting hobby activity, this text provides basic essentials for the builder and 30 easy-to-build fun projects with which every experimenter should toy. Printed-circuit designs are included to give your project the professional touch.
**Q & A**

**Readers' questions, Editors' answers**

**Pinball Wizard Correction**

Contrary to what we said in the May 1998 installment of "Q&A," the fine folks at Two Bit Score, Austin, Texas, do NOT repair, or supply parts for, Gottlieb pinball games. They do service most of the other leading makes. For more information see their web site at www.twobit.com. If anyone knows of a supplier of Gottlieb parts, do please let us know.

**Dawn Simulator**

**Q** I would like to have a 120-volt AC circuit controlled by a clock radio so that when the clock switches the radio on, a 100-watt bulb will start very dim and brighten over a period of about 30 seconds. — F. P., Orland Park, IL

**A** What you want is called a "dawn simulator" and is sometimes used to treat sleep disorders; it's a very gentle, natural way to wake a person up. Some dawn simulators take as long as 30 minutes (not 30 seconds) to bring the lights up to full brightness.

As you know, a light dimmer works by cutting off part of each AC cycle. This is done by triggering a Triac (AC switch) after part of each cycle has already passed by. The best way to build a dawn simulator would be to use a microcontroller to compute the exact time delay during each cycle, changing it slowly over a period of minutes. If there's sufficient interest, we might develop this as a construction project later; it would provide very smooth, reliable operation.

In the meantime, Fig. 1 shows an all-analog circuit that you can build. It's a modernized version of a circuit originally published by General Electric that used a unijunction transistor and a pulse transformer, both of which are hard to get nowadays.

Diodes D1-D4, resistor R1, and diode D5 produce a pulsating DC waveform clamped to 15 volts; almost a square wave. From that, the circuit derives two more waveforms, a sawtooth across C1 and a slowly rising voltage across C2. Those are combined, amplified by Q1 and Q2, and then used to control the Triac (TR1) through an optocoupler.

Switch S1 lets you start the timing cycle over again—a necessity while you are testing the circuit. The circuit is somewhat tricky, and you should breadboard it before building the final version. Adjust R4 so that the light bulb just goes off when S1 is pressed; you'll find that R4 affects the behavior of the circuit quite a bit. Change C2 to change the timing period; for a true dawn simulator, you may want to make C2 as large as 3200 µF. Use a smaller value while experimenting so you don't have to wait half an hour to see what's going to happen.

Most of the other parts aren't critical.

**FIG. 1**—WHILE THE BEST APPROACH WOULD BE TO USE A MICROPROCESSOR, this all-analog circuit will fill the bill. It is a modernized version of a "dawn-simulator" circuit originally published by General Electric.

**FIG. 2**—USE THIS APPROACH TO INTERFACE the dawn simulator with a clock radio. The leads marked "Control Voltage" go across the capacitor in the radio circuit as described (see text), while the leads marked "To Controlled Circuit" go to the AC input of the simulator.
You can use any Triac with suitable ratings. For D1-D4, you can use 5ou 1N4004s or one bridge rectifier (Radio Shack 276-1161A or similar). Check the temperature of the Triac and of R7 while the circuit is operating (but beware of high voltage); use a heat sink on the Triac and/or a higher-wattage resistor (as appropriate) if they get hot.

A word of caution: This circuit can generate appreciable radio-frequency interference (RFI). Keep the light bulb close to TR1, and if you have RFI problems, put a 100-milhenry RF choke in series with the Triac and light bulb.

Now for the clock-radio interface. What you’ll need to do is find a DC supply voltage inside the radio that is switched by the electronic circuit. That will probably be between 6 and 12 volts; look for it across a large electrolytic capacitor near the radio circuitry. Some models will require a voltmeter will be required. Once you’ve found a switched voltage source, connect it to a solid-state relay as shown in Fig. 2. You can then use it to control 120-volt AC loads.

Changing Voltage

Q We have a Sony AM/FM clock radio that runs on 120-volt AC, 60 Hz. How could we use this on 220 volts, 60 Hz, outside the United States? What kind of dropping resistance could be incorporated into the circuit? We tried a line-voltage converter from Radio Shack, but it didn’t work. — G. J. S., Newhall, CA

A If the foreign AC power is actually 220-240 volts, 60 Hz (not 50 Hz), all you need is a transformer. A voltage-dropping resistor wouldn’t be satisfactory because the voltage drop depends on the amount of current being drawn through it, which depends on how loud the radio is playing, among other things.

Radio Shack’s 273-1401 voltage converter or any comparable transformer should do the job. This kind of voltage converter is relatively heavy because of its iron core and is rated to handle only 50 watts or so. Don’t use the other kind of converter, which is lightweight and handles hundreds of watts; it doesn’t produce normal AC output. Instead, ittrims away part of the AC waveform like a light dimmer (see “Dawn Simulator” elsewhere in this column) and is suitable only for lights, heating elements, and some types of motors.

Also, double-check that the foreign power is 60 Hz, not 50 Hz. British and European power is 220 to 240 volts, 50 Hz, and transformers change the voltage but not the frequency. Also, check the label on the radio; if it says “50-60 Hz,” then both frequencies are OK. Otherwise, there is no cheap way to change the frequency of the AC power; it’s cheaper to get another radio.

Bulk Tape Eraser

Q I want to build an electromagnet to erase VCR tapes. Low-priced bulk erasers mostly just muddy the tape and you have to take a nap between erasures to let the magnet cool. A commercial unit that develops 3000 Gauss costs over $350, but I can’t afford that investment. I could wind my own magnet if I had the specifications. — R. C., Meridian, MS

A Before giving up on low-priced bulk erasers, make sure you’re using them as effectively as possible. The tape has to get very close to the magnet in order to be erased. Consult the instructions to find out how to position the eraser and the tape. Erasing a tape should take only a few seconds and should not overheat the magnet. After erasing, be sure to move the magnet well away from the tape before turning it off to avoid re-magnetizing it with the pulse that occurs at turn-off.

Next, experiment. Could you combine two cheap erasers to make a more effective one? Another cheap way to get strong electromagnets is to take apart junked electric motors. We once made a small, effective demagnetizer by removing the rotor from a phonograph motor; perhaps you could do the same thing with a larger induction motor to make a tape eraser. Be sure to include a light bulb in series with the electromagnet in order to limit the current; you can get more current by changing to a higher-wattage bulb.

Powering Probescope From Computer

Q I use a RadioShack Probescope, which is a hand-held digital oscilloscope that inter-

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On the Internet: See our Web site at http://www.gernsback.com for information and files relating to our magazines (Electronics Now and Popular Electronics) and links to other useful sites.

To discuss electronics with your fellow enthusiasts, visit the newsgroups sci.electronics.repair, sci.electronics.components, sci.electronics.design, and rec.radio.amateur.homebrew. For sale" messages are permitted only in rec.radio.swap and misc.industry.electronics.marketplace.

Many electronic component manufacturers have Web pages; see the directory at http://www.hitex.com/chipdir/, or try addresses such as http://www.ti.com and http://www.motorola.com (substituting any company's name or abbreviation as appropriate). Many IC data sheets can be viewed online. Extensive information about how to repair consumer electronic devices and computers can be found at www.repairfaq.org.

Books: Several good introductory electronics books are available at RadioShack, including one on building power supplies.

An excellent general electronics textbook is The Art of Electronics, by Paul Horowitz and Winfield Hill, available from the publisher (Cambridge University Press, 1-800-872-7423) or on special order through any bookstore. Its 1125 pages are full of information on how to build working circuits, with a minimum of mathematics.

Also indispensable is The ARRL Handbook for Radio Amateurs, comprising 1000 pages of theory, radio circuits, and ready-to-build projects, available from the American Radio Relay League, Newington, CT 06111, and from ham-radio equipment dealers.

Copies of past articles: Copies of past articles in Electronics Now and Popular Electronics (post 1993 only) are available from our Claggk, Inc., Reprint Department, P.O. Box 4099, Farmingdale, NY 11735; Tel: 516-293-3751. Electronics Now and many other magazines are indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, available at your public library. Copies of articles in other magazines can be obtained through your public library's interlibrary loan service; expect to pay about 30 cents a page.

Service manuals: Manuals for radios, TVs, VCRs, audio equipment, and some computers are available from Howard W. Sams & Co., Indianapolis, IN 46214 (1-800-428-7267). The free Sams catalog also lists addresses of manufacturers and parts dealers. Even if an item isn't listed in the catalog, it pays to call Sams; they may have a schematic on file which they can copy for you.

Manuals for older test equipment and ham radio gear are available from Hi Manuals, PO Box 802, Council Bluffs, IA 51502, and Manuals Plus, PO Box 549, Tooele, UT 84074.

Replacement semiconductors: Replacement transistors, ICs, and other semiconductors, marketed by Philips ECG, NTE, and Thomson (SK), are available through most parts dealers (including RadioShack on special order). The ECG, NTE, and SK lines contain a few hundred parts that substitute for many thousands of others; a directory (supplied as a large book and on diskette) tells you which one to use. NTE numbers usually match ECG; SK numbers are different.

Remember that the "2S" in a Japanese type number is usually omitted; a transistor marked D945 is actually a 2SD945.

A SADLY, the answer is no. The data lines of a serial port can easily provide a few mA to drive a CMOS circuit or even a single LED, but 12 to 85 mA is more than they can deliver. You can, however, power the Probescope from the 12-volt (yellow and black) wires of an unused disk-drive power connector inside your PC. If you frequently use your PC for electronic experiments, you may want to rig up external connections to its power supply so you can borrow power for experimental circuits. Use 0.5-amp fuses for protection.

A calling Benchmarq...

Q I have a Sears Craftsman cordless drill whose charger uses a Benchmarq BQ2004PN integrated circuit. Sears won't give me any information on this IC. I would think they would be interested in selling the parts for their tools or helping me find them. Can anyone tell me how to find this part or a substitute? — J. W. B., Greenfield, OH

A The drill is almost certainly made, or at least designed, for Sears by another company, and Sears probably handles the entire charger as a single replacement part.

However, the IC maker, Benchmarq Microelectronics, is easy to locate. Benchmarq makes a variety of high-performance battery-charger ICs. You can write to them at 17919 Waterview Parkway, Dallas, TX 75252, and request a data sheet, or see product data on the Web at www.benchmarq.com.

Benchmarq chips are sold by distributors; one of them is Marshall Electronics, 89320 Telstar Avenue, El Monte, CA 91731; Web: www.marshal.com; Tel: 800-833-9910. Marshall takes orders 24 hours a day.

looking for mm5369

Q In your January 1998 issue you recommended a National Semiconductor MM5368 or MM5369 IC for use in a precision pulse generator. Since the summer of 1997, National Semiconductor no longer makes these chips, and I haven't been able to find any equivalents. Do you know of any alternatives or any way of building an equivalent circuit from other chips? — A. H., Mountain View, CA

A These chips generate precise 60-Hz squarewaves from, respectively, a 32.768-kHz watch crystal and a 3.58MHz color-TV crystal. The MM5368 is admittedly a rare beast, but it will be a while before the MM5369AA/N disappears from the hobbyist market. As this is written, it is still in stock at Jameco, 1355 Shoreway Road, Belmont, CA 94002; Web: www.jameco.com Tel: 800-831-4242 (where it is listed as "part no. 26104") and at Advanced Computer Products, 1310 E. Edinger Ave, Santa
Clock That Sets Itself

Q I have seen digital clocks advertised that receive time signals from the National Institute of Standards and Technology and will keep the correct time automatically. I have been trying to find a schematic for such a clock without success. Do you know where I can obtain one? — L. J., Florissant, MO

A You can still get a manual for the now-discontinued Heathkit “Most Accurate Clock” (model GC-1000-II) from Heath Company, Tel: 616-925-5899 (they sell manuals only by phone). Bear in mind that any clock of this type contains a programmed microcontroller that the schematic will not enable you to duplicate. More modern clocks that tune in NIST signals are available from Contrafl Industries, 2820 Waterford Lake Drive, Suite 102, Midlothian, VA 23113; Tel: 800-992-2966.

The NIST signals are delivered by shortwave radio from stations WWV, in Colorado, and WWVH, in Hawaii. Reception varies quite a bit from place to place, and nowadays most people who need accurate time signals prefer to use a GPS satellite receiver. GPS receivers display the time of day and can be interfaced directly to computers as described in this column (see January 1998, pp. 11-12). Because a GPS receiver contains several very specialized ICs and works at ultra-high frequencies, it’s not practical to build your own; instead, treat the entire receiver as a unit that can be interfaced to other projects.

Two Stereo Questions

Q I am repairing a Sansui QRX-3300 4-channel stereo. I need a schematic and service manual. Where can I get them? I would be willing to pay a fair sum.

Also, now that stereo have remote controls, why doesn’t the remote control include a speaker A/B switch? Is there a simple way to add one? — R. S. N., Marathon, FL

A Your best and most likely source would be the manufacturer, Sansui Electronics, 17150 S. Margay Avenue, Carson, CA 90746; Tel: 310-604-7600.

As for your second question, remote controls normally switch the low-level signals at the input of the amplifier. This switching is done with CMOS digital and analog ICs. A speaker A/B switch switches the output of the amplifier at the speaker connections; that’s a high-level signal and no additional resistance is tolerable (obviously, even 1 extra ohm would affect the output from a 4-ohm speaker). For this reason, an A/B switch has to be mechanical or electromechanical. If you wanted to add one, you’d have to use relays, which cost more money and take up considerably more space than ICs.

Writing to Q&A

As always, we welcome your questions. The most interesting ones are answered in print. Please be sure to include plenty of background information (we’ll shorten your letter for publication) and give your full name and address. If you are asking about a circuit, please include a complete diagram. Write to “Q&A,” Electronics Now Magazine, 500 Bi-County Blvd., Farmingdale, NY 11735. Due to the volume of mail, we regret that we cannot give personal replies.

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Until recently, digital photography has always been a promising technology, but one that was full of compromises. For one thing, the digital cameras themselves have been quite expensive, and the only ones that were even close to being affordable for the casual user offered relatively low resolutions—usually a maximum of 640 x 480.

But that is changing. Cameras having resolutions of 1024 x 768 and higher are now available at prices of around $600, and sometimes lower. And while they still do not quite measure up to well-focused photographs made with conventional film, images with a resolution of 1024 x 768 can be made into photo-album size prints that look incredibly sharp.

Which brings us to another problem with digital photography: producing paper prints from electronic images. Let's face it: most people still keep their favorite photos in albums and don't want to have to turn on a computer to see them. There are services that will take the output from your camera and produce finished prints, but most are not inexpensive, and it can take a while to get your prints back. Plus, most require that you have online access of some sort to upload the digital images to them.

More popular is using an ink-jet printer to produce prints, but there are problems here, too. For one, only some ink jets are capable of producing prints of acceptable quality. And even those usually require the use of special “photo” ink cartridges and paper for best results. Further, both the paper and the ink are relatively pricey, and printing photos uses a lot of ink and can take a long time to do.

Now, however, there's a better alternative. It's a neat little printer from Olympus whose output rivals 35-millimeter prints, and it is much better than the photos produced by instant cameras.

**Olympus P-300**

The P-300 is a 300 dpi, photo-quality dye-sublimation printer that produces continuous color tones. The P-300's output is equivalent to that of a 2400 dpi ink-jet printer. Images are printed on 4.5 by 5.5-inch glossy sheets in true 24-bit color (16.7 million possible colors). It takes about 100 seconds to make a print. Images can come from scanners, digital cameras, the Internet, and so on—as long as they're digital, you can print them on the P-300.

Olympus has equipped the P-300 with a parallel port for connecting to PCs and a serial Macintosh port for connecting to Macs. You'll need at least a 486 PC running Windows 3.1x or Windows 95, or a Mac with a 68040 CPU or later and Mac OS 7x or later. A CD-ROM drive is also required. You can use whatever software you like, such as Adobe Photoshop, to print to the P-300. You simply have to set the print size to that of the P-300's paper.

And if you happen to have an Olympus digital camera, you don't even need a computer to create prints. Though the procedure differs slightly from camera to camera, any Olympus digital camera can be connected directly to the printer and prints can be made right from it. The P-300 will not work directly with digital cameras from other manufacturers.

The P-300 measures 10 1/8 inches front to back with its tiny paper tray attached and is 2 3/4 high by 9 3/4 inches wide. It weighs 5 pounds 8 ounces. It prints 3.5 x 4.5-inch images on 4 x 5.5-inch sheets. The paper tray holds 30 sheets, and a thumb wheel on the tray lets you set the number of prints you want of the same image.

The P-300 requires a special dye-sublimation ribbon that looks like cellophane reeled up in a film cartridge. The ribbon cartridge, good for 60 prints, slides into the side of the printer. The printer uses heat to fuse color from the ribbon onto the print sheets in continuous tones.

Aside from the 4 x 5.5-inch glossy photo paper, Olympus also offers sticker-label photo paper and miniature sticker-photo labels, 16 to a sheet, which are great for scaling envelopes and the like.

**Hooking It Up**

The P-300 was tested both connected to a PC and connected directly to an Olympus camera. The printer is easy to unpack from its carton because of its small size. There is very little to set up. You simply insert the paper tray into the front of the printer, load the glossy photo paper and ribbon cartridge, plug the printer into an outlet, and you're off.

Connecting the P-300 to a PC is easy. You simply connect it with a parallel cable and load the drivers using the “Add New Printer” icon in the Windows control panel. Then use whatever graphics program you have available. One benefit to using a computer is that images can be retouched and enhanced before printing, which, of course, is not possible when printing directly from a camera.

The perfect complement to the P-300 printer is the Olympus D-500L.
THE OLYMPUS D-500L digital camera is the perfect companion to the P-300 photo printer. The printer can also print directly from any other Olympus digital camera, or from any digital camera if a computer is used.

Digital Camera. It has a maximum resolution of 1024 x 768, a 3 x zoom, a back panel color LCD for reviewing images, three levels of compression, a serial port for connecting to computers, and a parallel port for connecting directly to the P-300 printer.

A special cable connects the D-500L camera to the P-300 printer. After the two units are connected to each other they can be turned on. With the camera set to play back its stored images, they can be previewed on the screen on the back of the camera. Whichever image is displayed on the camera can be printed at the touch of a print button on the D-500L camera.

With some other Olympus digital cameras, a "Direct Print" button on the P-300 is used, though it has no function when the printer is connected to the D-500L. Once the print button (on either the camera or the printer, depending on the setup) is pressed, the printer starts whirring and about a minute and a half later, a glossy color print pops out. Multiple prints can be made by setting a dial on the side of the paper tray.

The P-300 costs $399, and it comes with a 10-print paper and ribbon kit. Additional 60-print paper/ribbon kits sell for $39.95, and are available wherever the printer is sold. The D-500L has a suggested retail price of $799, though there are much less expensive Olympus cameras that will print to the P-300 (and don't forget that the unit will work with just about any digital camera). For more information on the P-300, contact the manufacturer directly (Olympus America Inc., Digital & Imaging Systems Group, Two Corporate Center Dr., Melville, NY 11747; Tel: 800-347-4027; Web: www.olympus.com), or circle 15 on the Free Information Card.

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GAVE A PRETTY TIGHT OVERVIEW OF XML LAST MONTH, AND
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I'LL TRY TO CORRECT THAT DEFICIENCY NOW, IN ADDITION,
I'VE SINCE RUN ACROSS A FEW MORE RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP

flesh out the details.

The canonical source is the XML spec (Extensible Markup Language
(XML) 1.0, W3C Recommendation 10-
February-1998), available at the World
Wide Web Consortium www.w3.org.
Counting appendices, the spec is only 32
pages long. An easy read, right? Guess
again. Without a good background in
formal language theory, it will probably
seem like Greek. Even with a good back-
ground, it's difficult, lacking in exam-
ple, and inconsistent in treatment depth
across various areas.

There are several FAQ documents
floating around. The best is “The XML
FAQ,” available at www.ucc.ie/xml/
Microsoft, ArborText, and other inter-
ested commercial concerns have their
own FAQs that tend to be interesting as
indicators of how the companies inter-
pret and plan to extend XML. For exam-
ple, Microsoft's FAQ discusses the con-
cept of schemas; quoting directly from
the 1/8/98 document (the word schema
appears nowhere in the 2/10/98 W3C
Recommendation):

"Schemas combine concepts from DTDs,
relational databases, and object-oriented
design. Schemas can describe the structure
of XML documents, databases, directed-
labeled-graphs, and other similar organiza-
tions of data. Schemas supply additional
semantic information to documents, and
contain new facilities such as data types,
inheritance, and extensibility that are not
available in DTDs: Schemas use the same
syntax as XML documents."

Microsoft's FAQ also briefly men-
tions Channel Definition Format (CDF),
the company's XML-based "push" tech-
nology that provides a way for web
servers to deliver advertising and other
goodies to your browser; Open Software
Description (OSD), an XML format to
aid software distribution; Open Financial
Exchange (OFX), a format for communi-
cating with financial institutions; and
Resource Description Format (RDF),
which (to quote again) "allows for gen-
eralized searching of information without appli-
cation-specific rules... [and] ... allows a com-
plementary view of data through graphs and
nodes, rather than through a structured tree,
which the current XML technology enables."

Of all the technologies mentioned in
the previous paragraph, RDF sounds
most interesting to me, with its hint of a
hyperlink modeling scheme. I wouldn't
be surprised to see RDF end up as the
core of the Windows Help System

someday. The Schema concept is also
tantalizing.

XML Books

Chapter 16 of Using HTML 4 contains
a pretty good overview of XML, along
with a few very basic yet practical
eamples. I wouldn't buy the book just
for that chapter, but if you do any web
development, it would be a reasonable
investment.

The most detailed, in-depth treat-
ment I've found so far is Presenting XML,
by Richard Light. One thing I don't like
about the book is Light's frequently slop-
py language. To me it seems unforgivable
that a book about a formal language is so
careless in its description of that
language. It's great to try to avoid being terse
(like the spec) or pedantic, but the cure
seems worse than the disease in this case.

Anyway, if you read carefully and
cross-reference the spec, you can learn a
lot from Presenting XML. The spec itself
is well dissected. There are lots of exam-
pies, including a chapter on converting
HTML to XML, another on available
XML software, and a good bibliography.

C++ Builder 3.0

In today's business world, can you
create documents or spreadsheets in any-
thing but a Microsoft product? That's
debatable. But there's no question that
you can create programs without sup-
porting the MS habit. A few years ago,
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imminent decline; in case you haven't
noticed, Borland is back, and with a
vengeance.

Recent publicity from the company
trumpets four consecutive quarters of
revenue growth and three of profitability.
The last three product introductions
(Continued on page 25)
The National Lightning Detection Network

Whether it involves building new electric-power distribution lines, forecasting weather, planning military-training exercises, or establishing responsibility for damage, detailed information on lightning-strike activity can be important. That information—both real time and historical—is now readily available thanks to the National Lightning Detection Network (NLDN). The NLDN, owned and operated by Global Atmospherics, Inc. (GAI) in Tucson, AZ, is the largest and most sophisticated lightning-detection and location system in the world.

The NLDN consists of ground-based sensing stations that detect cloud-to-ground lightning activity across the continental U.S. The sensors instantaneously detect the electromagnetic signal given off when lightning strikes the ground. Sophisticated techniques are used to differentiate between lightning strikes and background noise. The individual sensors transmit the lightning data via a communications satellite to central ground stations. These, in turn, send the information to the Network Control Center (NCC) in Tucson.

Using data from two or more sensors, computers at the NCC determine the strike location to within an average accuracy of 500 meters (1640 feet). That high level of accuracy is achieved by a combination of waveform processing, Global Positioning System (GPS) time synchronization, high-speed signal processing, and wide-band peak-gated magnetic direction-finding techniques. Processed lightning strike data is sent to subscribers' computer displays via satellite normally within 15-20 seconds of the actual lightning strike. Besides location, the time, polarity, and amplitude of each strike is transmitted to the recipient.

The system is undergoing a dramatic expansion, and will soon be known as the North American Lightning Detection Network (NALDN). That's because Environment Canada's Atmospheric Environment Service has contracted with GAI for a companion Canadian Lightning Detection Network (CLDN) that will be integrated with the NLDN. When completed, the NALDN will cover the North American land mass south of 60 degrees North Latitude to the northern border of Mexico, and extend from the Pacific to the Atlantic Oceans. The combined system will include 105 ground-based sensors in the U.S. and 81 other sensors in Canada.

A Growing System

The NLDN provides real-time information about lightning strikes as well as a historical archive data library containing over 160 million flashes from 1989 to the present. The NLDN is the result of over twenty years of research and development first initiated by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), the research arm of the electric power industry. The original objective was a system to help utilities make decisions about line-maintenance priorities, effective crew dispatch, and future design and placement of utility lines to reduce lightning damage and to make faster repairs should lightning strike. The NLDN was originally developed by the State University of New York at Albany in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management and the National Severe Storms laboratory. The final implementation of the technology was developed by GAI.

Users and Applications

Users of the NLDN's real-time and historical lightning data include the National Weather Service, NASA, the FAA, and the military. The data is of
HOW THE NLDN WORKS: 1. Sensors transmit data to satellite; 2. Satellite relays information to earth station; 3. Data is transmitted to NCC via land-lines; 4. NCC processes data; 5. Processed data is relayed back to satellite; and 6. Lightning data is displayed within seconds of an occurrence.

value for power-quality assurance, aviation, forensic analysis, personnel and equipment protection, mining, insurance-claim investigation, meteorology, and many other applications. For example, historical data is provided to the insurance industry for lightning damage and claims verification. Being able to verify the existence or absence of time-coincident lightning in the vicinity of a policyholder's claim for lightning-caused property damage reduces the cost of investigating claims. Likewise, utilities can use NLDN data in resolving warranty claims. When suppliers deny a claim because they say the damage was caused by an "act of God", archival data can show there was no lightning activity when the piece of equipment went down.

GAI provides a wide variety of NLDN products, and each can be tailored to meet the needs of individual subscribers. For instance, THUNDER is a software package that operates with a real-time link to the NLDN via either a satellite downlink or modem connection. THUNDER's dual-monitor, display package provides uninterrupted viewing and tracking of lightning events in a particular region as they occur.

The Fault Analysis and Lightning Location System (FALLS) was specifically designed to address the Electric Power industry's lightning concerns. FALLS, with its various modules and reports, allows complete, in-depth analysis of lightning and its cause and effect on, and association with, power delivery-system reliability. FALLS can be used to assess lightning-exposure risk for power lines, telecommunication lines, railways, gas pipelines, forested areas, or even single customer facilities.

FAULTFINDER is another product that can determine whether lightning strikes played a role in an outage or momentary interruption. It can eliminate the problem of erroneously categorizing unverified outages as lightning-related, ignoring the possibility of equipment malfunction, improper grounding, wind and other factors that affect system reliability.—BILL SIURU

Accelerator Takes A Giant Step Towards Fusion

Sandia's Z accelerator—the most powerful producer of x-rays in the world—has recently produced another world record for power output, making it a viable contender in the quest to achieve sustainable nuclear fusion. The most recent increase—bringing its output to 290 trillion watts (terrawatts)—shatters by nearly 40 percent its previous world record set last summer.

The Z machine works by firing massive bursts of electricity to superheat a miniature oven, a hohlraum, which is about the size of a sugar cube. The electrical energy fired at the target is the equivalent of 60 times the world's usage of electrical power at a given moment.

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Lasting only a fraction of a second, the shot generates temperatures greater than 1 million degrees, ever closer to the 2 to 3 million degrees required for nuclear fusion. Temperature is particularly important in the quest for fusion, in which much more energy is created than used.

In the past 18 months, the Z machine has increased its output by more than seven times, starting from 40 terrawatts. Before that, it took 25 years for a succession of Sandia accelerators to reach the 40-terrawatt level. Each successive test has helped lay the groundwork for sustainable nuclear fusion. It also has provided data to help test U.S. nuclear defenses without physically exploding large-scale devices.

**Ultrasound Improves Truck Tire Safety**

At the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign (UIUC), a fast, low-cost inspection system has been developed for evaluating the structural integrity of new and used steel-belted radial truck tires. Using ultrasonic sound waves, the instrument detects ply delaminations; weakened, damaged, or broken cords; and other, potentially dangerous, hidden defects. Professor of General Engineering Henrique Reis and graduate student Paul Golko use an analytical, nondestructive evaluation technique called acousto-ultrasonics to check for hidden damage.

The first step is to inject a sound wave into the side of the tire, using an ultrasonic transducer. The ultrasonic pulse then propagates along the sidewall, where it is picked up by another transducer and analyzed by a computer.

"Tires are scanned with measurements recorded every 0.3 degree of tire rotation, for a total of 1200 samples," Reis said. "This angular sampling interval was chosen because it is smaller than the spacing between radial cords on the tire at the transducer locations. Therefore, we can test for damage in each individual cord. The entire measurement takes less than a minute per tire."

By studying the attenuation characteristics of the transmitted signals, the researchers can analyze damage within the tire. "We can detect strained or damaged cords because the sound wave is not transmitted as efficiently as in a normal steel cord," Reis said. "The greater the damage, the higher the signal attenuation. If the signal disappears, the cord is broken. By studying the signals, we can also detect areas where the steel cords and rubber have separated."

A color-coded display is used to graphically represent the results. It shows not only regions of broken or damaged cords, but also areas where the steel cords are weakened to the point where the tire should be removed from service. By evaluating the residual strength in the sidewalls, the instrument can determine a tire's remaining useful life and whether it is worth retreading.

"For safety reasons, we don't want to use bad tires," Reis said. "But for ecological reasons, we don't want to throw away good tires that can be retreaded. This instrument enables us to easily distinguish between the two."

**Test Engineer's Workstation**

Technical manuals can be massive and intimidating, so researchers at the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) came up with a solution to "manualitis." They turned a computer into an interactive how-to guide—called the Test Engineer's Workstation (TEWS). The machine uses hypertext links and multimedia—graphics, video, and sound—to decrease the learning curve on complex test and evaluation jobs.

At the request of the U.S. Air Force, the GTRI's Electronic Systems Laboratory (ELYS) developed TEWS. It was designed to meet an ongoing Air Force need to bring new test engineers up to speed quickly in electronic-warfare systems testing. Hard-copy documents and word of mouth from people who had done it before were the only previously available resources. With TEWS, engineers can quickly find out what a piece of equipment does and what it did last time.

The GTRI developers distilled massive test manuals into on-screen programs that lead test engineers through evaluations of new and upgraded systems, helping them plan, conduct, and accurately analyze a test. In developing the TEWS platform, the team combined video and audio materials—from lectures to slides and video—onto CD-ROM discs that are accessed from Windows PCs. Users can click on any on-screen subject to view and listen to the requested information, and they can replay any segment they choose.
TEWS aids engineers in the analysis of test data through its ability to use the Automated Data Reduction Software (ADRS). The software computes performance and effectiveness measures to satisfy test-program requirements for electronic-warfare systems. Implemented as a Microsoft Windows application, ADRS helps ensure the quality of data collected and that the resulting analysis satisfies the test objectives. As important, TEWS helps developers design their own test plans from scratch. The program even has pop-up help boxes with questions that designers need to ask themselves.

Users can customize TEWS to fit their location and test-facility type. Since a video-capture card lets users add standard video input to existing test programs, this feature allows online information about defense systems to be added as they are tested.

"Maintaining good descriptions of results means that if, say, two years later you make another change and you have to retest, you don't have to start over," says Brian A. Keeton, an ELYs research engineer, who works in test process development. "You can compare it to the last test pretty easily."

Several TEWS systems have been installed at the Air Force Development Test Center at Elgin Air Force Base, the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB, and at GTRI to support the defense-systems testing arena. The TEWS approach may have applications in other fields, where on-the-job training, system testing, and archiving of results need to be efficiently combined.

You're Never Too Old

For his upcoming 80th birthday on Sept. 22nd, NASA aeronautical engineer Seth Anderson plans to go gliding off Glacier Point again. This will be a replay of his 79th birthday celebration, when Anderson last glided from Glacier Point, more than 3200 feet above the valley floor at Yosemite National Park, CA. He soared on a breath-taking 16-minute hang-glider ride that he videotaped as he always does.

His hang glider is a NASA spin-off from space research. "It was originally called a Rogallo Wing, for Francis Rogallo, who in the early 60s experimented at NASA's Langley Research Center, Hampton, VA, with a paraglider as a possible landing method for space capsules," said Anderson. "If it had been used for the two-person Gemini capsule, astronauts could have landed on terra firma instead of parachuting to water landings."

As a contemporary of Rogallo, Anderson knows his NASA history. He began his career at Ames Aeronautical Laboratory, Moffett Field, CA, in 1942. Today, Ames is a NASA research center, where Anderson studies human factors for the agency's Remotely Piloted Aircraft Program. Human factors engineers examine the interactions between human beings and aircraft.

To allow Yosemite visitors to see the park from a bird's-eye view, Anderson has decided to donate his hang-gliding video to Yosemite for playback in the visitor's center. Visitors will be able to see many scenic views of the valley from a unique vantage point.

Hang gliding, Anderson believes, is a spectacular recreational sport. "I started 17 years ago. But hang gliding is an unusual hobby, not for the timid." Anderson has also built an experimental BD-5 turboprop aircraft at his home that he now flies.

Of his planned birthday flight, he says "It'll really be exciting."
to enter an agreement with NASA for collaboration on a suite of system's tools. United Airlines later signed a similar agreement. The system is undergoing operational testing by airline personnel, analyzing data from the first aircraft equipped with Quick Access Recorders.

Under NASA's new Aviation Safety Program, the system will eventually be extended to service the engineering, maintenance, and training needs of commercial airlines; as well as to commuter, cargo, and corporate air carriers. The system provides a prototype of a flight data analysis ground station with broad-based reporting capabilities customized to the needs and operations of U.S. airlines. It includes specific provisions for transfer of prototype products to commercial vendors using present safety programs and technology.

"By incorporating advanced automation techniques, we can detect accident precursors we didn't know existed," said Dr. Richard Keller, research leader for intelligent systems technology. "The carriers also can use the system proactively to forestall future problems by improving training, operations, and maintenance procedures," he added.

**Tailless Fighter Flies High**

The NASA/Boeing X-36 Tailless Fighter Agility Research Aircraft successfully completed its flight research program—demonstrating the feasibility of future tailless fighters achieving agility levels superior to today's best military fighter aircraft. The project goals are to develop technologies to improve the maneuverability of future fighter aircraft. "All of our project goals were met or exceeded," stated Mark Sumich, X-36 project manager at NASA's Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, CA.

During the final flight phase, the X-36 project team examined the aircraft's agility at low speed/high angles of attack and at high speed/low angles of attack. "We also achieved the final flight's goals to expand the X-36's speed envelope up to 206 knots (234 mph)," Sumich said. Thirty-one flights were made during the six months of the flight research program at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards, CA. The X-36 flew a total of 15 hours and 38 minutes and used four different versions of flight control software. The aircraft reached an altitude of 20,200 feet and a maximum angle of attack of 40 degrees.

The 28-percent scale X-36, built by the Boeing Phantom Works in St. Louis, MO, is designed to fly without the traditional tail surfaces common on most aircraft. The X-36 is 18 feet long with a 10-foot wingspan; is three feet high; and weighs 1270 pounds. The aircraft is powered by a Williams Research F112 turbofan engine that provides 700 pounds of thrust. It is remotely controlled by a pilot in a ground station cockpit, complete with a heads-up display. The pilot-in-the-loop approach eliminates the need for expensive and complex autonomous flight-control systems.

The X-36 Flight Test program team was comprised of employees from Boeing, Ames, and Dryden. Beginning in 1989, Ames and the Boeing Phantom Works developed the technologies required for a tailless fighter—a project that was jointly funded under a roughly 50/50 cost-sharing arrangement. To develop, fabricate, and flight test the two prototype aircraft cost approximately $20 million.

With the flight-test program completed, the X-36 will be placed in flyable storage condition in a hangar at Dryden. "Discussions are underway about what to do next with both of the X-36 aircraft," said Gary Cosentino, X-36 deputy project manager at Ames. "There is a potential for other technologies, such as a highly advanced reconfigurable flight control system, to be incorporated on the aircraft and possibly flight tested in the future."

**Intelligent Machines Inch Forward**

Representatives of Sandia and the Department of Energy (DOE) met recently to begin developing a road map for the future of the United States' robotics and intelligent machine industries. Also attending were representatives of other agencies, including the Department of Defense, the Department of Commerce, NASA, and the National Science Foundation.

The meeting was a result of Sandia's long-standing efforts to establish a national robotics and intelligent machines initiative based on America's technical excellence in sensors, software, controls, and computers—elements that turn simple robots into intelligent machines. An earlier milestone in this effort was the National Needs Workshop on Robotics in Albuquerque, NM. Robotics experts from around the country attended this workshop, which led to a day-long Congressional Expo on Intelligent Machines that was held on Capitol Hill.

Speakers at the Expo stressed that the United States has the opportunity to become a global leader in the robotics and intelligent machines industry. But government, academia, and industry must act quickly to achieve a leadership position, they said.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, of New Mexico outlined his national action plan during a keynote address at the Expo, recommending that DOE and NASA establish three test-bed centers for robotics and intelligent machines at Sandia, Carnegie Mellon University, and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory that would be open to other federal agencies and private-sector researchers. The centers would provide prototyping capability for potential users, serve as meeting grounds for researchers from different disciplines, develop and disseminate generic software for robots, and establish training courses for young professionals.

During the Expo, Sen. Pete Domenici, New Mexico's senior senator, also stated his support of the plan. In his speech, Domenici said the robotics industry is poised to quickly rival the enormous and ever-expanding telecommunications industry. He added that Sandia is a logical location for a national test bed where government, industry, and academia can work together on research and development to commercialize new robotics and intelligent machine Products.

The Expo prompted a bipartisan Senate-House task force to endorse Bingaman's plan to establish the national initiative for intelligent machines and to request the recent meeting of high-level representatives.
have been none too shabby either. I’m referring to Delphi 3.0, JBuilder 2.0, and C++ Builder 3.0 (CB3 for short).

I still do more development in Delphi than any other environment, and it kicks. However, CB3 is highly attractive and may finally force me to switch. It takes the best Delphi has to offer (the development environment and the VCL), throws in several major enhancements, and numerous C/C++ specific features.

As with Delphi, but even more so, you can use CB3 for both application and systems development. At the application level you have your choice of three major Windows-class libraries: MFC, OWL, and VCL. MFC, of course, is the Microsoft Foundation Classes; CB3 supports version 4.2. OWL is Borland’s Object Windows Library, at one time a competitor to MFC, but no longer. I guess there are still some people using it in a legacy mode. VCL is the Visual Component Library from Delphi.

On-screen, CB3 looks almost exactly like Delphi. In fact, the visual-development components (buttons, forms, etc.) are the Delphi components. You can install Delphi-developed components directly into CB3; unfortunately, the converse is not possible. Nonetheless there is still a high degree of compatibility and interoperability between the two.

Borland has discontinued Borland C++; CB3 is the company’s C/C++ compiler from this point forward. There is no 16-bit support. CB3 has an excellent new project manager, DLL and EXE debugging, and fully supports the recent ANSI C++ standard, including the Standard Template Library (STL), and more.

Bottom line: If you’re a C++ developer on Wintel, you owe it to yourself to take a close, hard look at CB3.

Java Notes

You may have heard about HP’s introduction of a Java dialect. The anti-Java crowd instantly took this as a sign of technology fragmentation, a loss for Sun, and a win for Microsoft. I’m not so sure. HP’s announcement, one might suspect, concerns a version of the language targeted for embedded use-in laser and inkjet printers. Clearly, there is some bad blood between Sun and HP over this, but it seems to be more a sign of Sun’s stretching itself too thin than anything.

Clearly, though, fragmentation is occurring. PC Magazine’s special issue on Java (5/7/98) reported (for the second year in a row) that Microsoft’s Java Virtual Machine (JVM) is faster and more compatible with the specs than all others, including Sun’s. Meanwhile, Microsoft has been forced to stop using the Java logo because of its proprietary extensions to the language. Odd, no?

Sun wants to control the standard, but nasty HP and nasty Microsoft won’t let it. Why is that? Why does no one complain about Microsoft holding the Basic standard, or for that matter HP the PCL (Printer Control Language) standard? Those are all de facto standards, not governed by any standards body, but owned and strictly controlled by single companies.

There are several million programmers using proprietary, single-sourced Visual Basic to produce real software that real people use in real companies every day. By contrast, Java is off by an order of magnitude or two in the number of developers, and by many orders of magnitudes in the number of actually running applications. So why the big fight over Java, and no fight over VB?

Let’s all demand that HP go public with PCL! (That’s a joke. I’d rather see Adobe go public with PostScript.)

Meanwhile, Borland’s JBuilder keeps racking up kudos; it’s consistently rated one of the top two Java development environments.

Are you interested in Java—for embedded use or otherwise? Let me know; I’m considering adding some ongoing coverage.

See you next time. Until then, you can drop me a line via e-mail at jeff@ingeninc.com.
Common CD-Player/CD-ROM Problems and Cures

L
AST TIME, WE DID SOME GENERAL MAINTENANCE TASKS
SUCH AS CLEANING AND LUBRICATION. IN MANY CASES,
THAT MIGHT BE ENOUGH TO RESTORE YOUR PLAYER OR DRIVE TO
NORMAL OPERATION. THIS MONTH, WE’LL TURN OUR ATTENTION
to what to do when such general maintenance is not enough.

CD Player is Dead as a Brick
If the heading above more-or-less summarizes the state of your unit, the first step is to check the obvious. Make sure the input power cord is plugged in and good, inspect the fuse (if present), and verify that the power switch (if present) is functioning normally. Also make sure that the outlet to which your unit is connected is indeed supplying power and/or that the batteries are good.

After that, you must turn your attention to the power-supply components. Locate the outputs of the power transformer and trace them to the rectifiers and associated filter capacitors and regulators. While the actual voltages will probably not be marked, most of the power in a CD player will be within ±15 VDC. The voltage ratings of the filter capacitors and regulators, if you can read them, will provide clues as to the correct power-supply voltages.

Most component CD players use linear power supplies so troubleshooting is straightforward even without a schematic. For reference, the power-supply schematic for a Technics SLP-310 is shown in Fig. 1. That unit is typical of those that use either discrete pass transistors (as in this case) or common IC regulators like the 7805, 7815, 7915, and similar devices.

Portable CD players and CD-ROM drives often use DC-DC converters to produce the various voltages required, and those are much more difficult to troubleshoot, even with a complete service manual. Doing anything other than checking for shorted or open components is virtually impossible without an accurate schematic.

Power-Adapter Blues
When it comes to portables, one of the common causes of damage is the use of an incorrect power adapter. When it comes to CD-ROM drives, connecting or disconnecting the power lead while power is being supplied is also a definite no-no. In either case, major damage can result despite the various types of protective measures taken in the design.

If that is the cause of the malfunction in the unit you are attempting to repair, all might be lost. Even so, check for the obvious—a blown fuse on the main board near the power connector—before giving up. These may be pifuses, which look like little green resistors; IC Protectors, which look like tiny transistors with only 2 legs; or something else marked F, ICP, etc. Who knows? You might get lucky.

Then again, you might not. For example, I once inherited a Sony Discman from a guy who thought he would save a few bucks and make an adapter cord to use it in his car. Not only was the 12–15 volts from the car battery too high, but he got the polarity backwards! He blew the DC-DC converter transistor in two, despite the built-in reverse-voltage protection, and he fried the microcontroller. Needless to say, the player was a total loss, except for some of the mechanical parts, which I salvaged for future use.

The moral of this story is that the voltage, current, and polarity ratings marked on portable equipment are there for a reason. Voltage ratings should not be exceeded. Using a slightly lower-voltage converter will probably cause no harm, though performance could suffer. The current rating of the adapter should be at least equal to the printed rating of the equipment you intend to power. Polarity, of course, must be correct. If you are not 100% certain of your adapter’s output polarity, double check it with a voltmeter before plugging it in.

Keep in mind that some identically marked adapters deliver widely different open-circuit voltages. If the unloaded voltage reading is more than 25% to 30% higher than the marked value, be cautious about using the adapter. If the player acts in any strange or unexpected way with a new adapter, if any part gets unusually warm, or if there is any unusual odor, unplug it immediately and attempt to identify the cause of the problem.

Unit Works, But No Display
Sometimes the display is backlit by miniature incandescent lamps. After a while, these burn out. If you take some time, you can probably find an inexpensive alternative to the high-priced exact replacements. Test any suspect lamps with your ohmmeter. Measure the voltage across the lamp terminals and then replace the lamp with one that is rated at a 25% to 50% higher voltage. They may not be as bright, but will last a long, long time.

If the lamps are not at fault, or if
there are no lamps, check for power to the display. At the same time look for bad connections or connectors that need to be re-seated. There might also be a power-supply or driver problem such as a missing voltage for a vacuum fluorescent display.

**CD Player Ignores You**

Symptoms here are that the display comes up normal when power is turned on, but all, or some commands are ignored. There are several possible causes:

- Front-panel problem: If one or more buttons are not responding, try to re-seat the internal cables. Clean or replace the offending switch or switches. If the player has a remote control, see if it is operating correctly.
- Reset failure: If the player has failed to reset properly and is not ready for user input, check the power-supply voltages and re-seat internal connectors.
- Controller and/or driver electronics: These could be defective for the affected functions. Once again, check the power-supply voltages and re-seat the internal connectors.

**Drawer Does Not Open or Close**

If the drawer does not open when the front-panel button is pressed, listen for a motor attempting to open it. If you hear the motor whirring but nothing happens, check for an oily or loose belt, or another mechanical fault. You can clean the belt as a temporary repair, but replacement will be needed eventually. If there is no motor sound (listen carefully), the motor, control chip, or front-panel pushbutton could be bad. If the unit has a remote, see if it will open the door. If it does, check the pushbutton for that function on the unit first.

**Erratic Drawer Operation**

You are about to remove your favorite CD from the unit but the player beats you to it—it closes the drawer and starts to play the disc over again. Other symptoms are that the drawer reverses course halfway out, or the drawer motor continues to whir even after the door is fully open or closed, and the front panel is then unresponsive.

These kinds of problems are usually caused by dirty contacts on the door-position sense switches. There are usually three sets of switch contacts associated with the drawer mechanism. If any of those get dirty, worn, or bent out of place, erratic door operation results.

FIG. 1—MOST CD PLAYERS, like this Technics SLP-310, use a linear power supply, so troubleshooting is usually fairly straightforward.
Those sense switches are:

- **Drawer-closed sense switch.** Dirty contacts may result in the drawer motor continuing to whir after the door closes and the front panel may then be unresponsive. Eventually, the door may open on its own.

- **Drawer-open sense switch.** Dirty contacts may result in the drawer motor continuing to run after the door opens and the front panel may then be unresponsive. Eventually, the door may close on its own.

- **Drawer-pushed sense switch.** Most CD players allow the user to start play by gently pushing on the drawer. That depresses a set of switch contacts. If these contacts are dirty, the drawer can decide to close on its own or to reverse direction in the middle of opening or closing.

The solution to all three of these problems is to locate the offending switches and clean their contacts. Those contacts are rarely protected from dust, dirt and grime. As a result, the problems outlined in this section are quite common.

**Drawer Does Not Close Completely**

Believe it or not, this is a problem that might not be obvious at first glance. The drawer may appear to close, but a loose or oily belt can prevent the mechanism from completing the close cycle. The result can be erratic behavior, since the disclamping action is often controlled by the movement. This problem can manifest itself in different ways. Sometimes, the drawer simply open again. Other times, less obvious problems—such as the disc not being recognized or tracking problems during play—are the result. Clean the belt first and see if there is any improvement; belt replacement will be needed eventually. Check for gummed up lubrication as well.

More obvious is the situation where the player goes through the motions of closing but stops short without further sounds. If that happens, a gear may have jumped a tooth or there may be some broken gear teeth. The result is that the mechanism is now incorrectly timed or not able to complete the operation. Examine the mechanism closely for broken parts. Cycle it manually by turning the appropriate motor pulley or gear to see if the drawer gets hung up or is much more difficult to move at some specific point in the cycle.

If the motor continues to whir after the drawer stops, there may be some other kind of mechanical damage that has caused an obstruction, or there is really gummed-up lubrication, not allowing the operation to complete.

**Loose Spindle Table**

When you remove the CD, you may run into an added surprise—the platform that the disc sits upon pops off as well, possibly jamming everything. There may also be startup and spindown problems.

Different models use different techniques to fasten the spindle table to the motor shaft, but this is just about always a mechanical problem. Either a set screw has worked itself loose, adhesive...
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weakened, or a press fit has come undone.

If there is a loose or missing set screw, get a new one or tighten the old one. If there is no set screw, a drop of epoxy cement may save the day. However, height is important to guarantee proper focus range, so be careful if there is no definite stop. The disc and rotating clamper magnet must both be clear of any fixed structures and be the correct distance from the optical pickup. Where something irreversible is involved, like using epoxy adhesive, checking the service manual becomes a must—the specification is usually 0.1 mm accuracy.

A loose spindle table can also cause continued spinning upon eject, or sluggish or noisy startup or seek; since if the spindle is loose, the motor cannot properly control disc speed during speed changes.

**Intermittent Operation**

When a CD player appears to have a "mood" problem—playing fine sometimes or for only part of a disc, or aborting at random times—there are several possible causes. Those include a defective disc, a dirty lens, various mechanical problems, dirty or worn interlock or limit switch, bad connection to the interlock switch (mainly in portables and boomboxes), flex cable with hairline cracks in one or more conductors, other bad connections, missing optical deck ground/shield, or power-supply problems. Let's go through some of those:

- **Dirty, Scratched, or Defective CD:** It might be easy to overlook the obvious, so the first thing you should do is to confirm that the CD is not the problem. Clean the disc and/or try another one.

- **Dirty Lens:** A player that accepts some discs and not others, or accepts discs sporadically, may simply need its lens glass cleaned.

- **Mechanical Problems:** This usually involves oily and/or flabby belts preventing full drawer closing, or gummed-up lubrication on the sled (may fail depending upon ambient temperature). For example, if the music gets stuck at about the same time on every disc, then there may be gunk on the end of the sled track, preventing the sled from moving any further. That is especially likely to manifest itself if you just purchased a disc with an unusually long playing time. NOTE: Some players simply will not play discs that exceed about 74 minutes of playing time, the maximum CD playing time if the CD specification is followed. However, some discs may be as long as 78 minutes or more, which means that some aspects of the CD specifications were compromised.

- **Dirty Switches:** Oily film or oxidation may be preventing any one of the limit or interlock switches from making a reliable contact. If this is the problem, the player may stop at random times, fail to accept a disc, close the drawer without your permission, etc. Use contact cleaner and typing paper to clean the contacts. Disassembly may be required to get at the contacts of enclosed switches.

- **Cracks in Ribbon Cable:** The moving and fixed parts of the optical pickup are often joined with a printed flexible cable. Constant flexing may cause one or more of the copper traces to crack. This may show up as an inability to get past a certain point on every disc (the player might shut down or start skipping at about 23 minutes into every CD).

- **Bad Connections:** There are often many little connectors used to send signals and power between the optical deck and the main circuit board. These are usually cheaply made and prone to failure. Wiggling and re-seating those may cure your problems. There may even be bad solder connections on the pins of the connectors or board-mounted switches. Slight flexing or just expansion and contraction may result in intermittent shutdown or other problems. Note that this type of failure is most common in portables and boomboxes because they are more likely to take physical abuse.

- **Missing Shield:** A missing shield between the analog ground and the optical deck can result in all kinds of erratic behavior. If your intermittent problems started after you had the player apart for some reason, check that you replaced the grounding strap or metal strip and/or didn't accidentally disconnect or break any shield connection on the ribbon cable to the optical deck.

- **Power-Supply Problems:** Problems in the power supply could cause the types of intermittent problems listed above, but it is unlikely. That said, if you have an oscilloscope, it certainly does no harm to check the power-supply outputs for ripple—a filter capacitor may have dried up and lost most of its capacitance.

**Heat Problems**

A CD player that becomes noisy, or a CD-ROM drive that fails to recognize discs or fails to reliably read data after a few minutes of operation, may have a component that is heating up and changing value. There is not very much in a CD drive that runs hot; however, specific components do sometimes fail in this way. The way to diagnose and locate problems of this type is to use some of the same techniques that you would apply to finding overheating components in a TV or in a computer monitor.

Your main tool will be a can of cold spray ("circuit chiller" or, in a pinch, a hair dryer set to 'no heat'), coupled with an oscilloscope (if one is available). What you are going to do is to try cooling various components to try to identify the one that is bad and causing the problem. However, if you are trying to deal with a unit that dies completely and suddenly after it heats up, this may not work very well since you may not have enough time to detect changes in behavior. If you are dealing with CD player that will play, but has tracking problems and/or audio noise, you should be able to monitor the playback quality by simply listening for improvement when you have cooled the flaky part. For a CD-ROM drive, play an audio disc if possible, since it will provide the feedback you need to locate the bad part without (hopefully) the drive shutting down due to data errors or inability to reliably access the file system.

Here's a good procedure to follow when making this test: First, run the unit with the covers removed and see if that has an effect that confirms a thermal problem. Next, use the cold spray on individual components. Start with a quick burst on an LSI chip and wait a few seconds for something to change. If nothing happens, move on to the next component. If you are using the hair dryer (no heat!), make a funnel out of paper to direct the air flow. Since this is not really cold air, expect to wait a bit longer to see any effect.

If you have a scope available, it would be wise to look at the RF "eye" pattern while cooling components and see if it changes in amplitude and/or quality over the course of an hour. If it does change, you may have an overheating problem in the laser diode or its power supply. (The "eye" pattern will be discussed in a future column, so you may want to hold off until then for this "advanced" troubleshooting!)

**Audio Problems**

Silly me, what other kinds of problems are we talking about? What I should
have said: audio signal-chain problems. The player appears to be working fine
(the disc is spinning; the time is incrementing correctly; seek, search, and play
operations behave normally) but there is either silence, noise, or distortion on one
or both channels.

Note: These sorts of audio symptoms could also be caused by problems with
servo alignment, the optical pickup, or front-end electronics. Troubleshooting
these types of problems will be covered in future columns. Therefore, if your
problems are as outlined in the paragraph above, you might want to hold off on
attempting to troubleshoot your unit until those topics are covered. Remember,
patience is a virtue, and in this case can save you from wasting time troubleshoot-
ing a problem in one part of the player when its cause actually lies in another.

Getting back to the audio signal chain, there is a distinct boundary
between the digital section where audio information is encoded digitally and the
analog domain where it is an electrical waveform. The diagram of the audio cir-
cuity of the Technics SLP-310 in Fig. 2 shows a typical organization. Note the
separate circuitry for the D/A converter, digital filter, audio mute, and post ana-
log filtering.

Problems in the digital domain will usually be obvious to the point of being gross—extreme noise, noise correlated
with the signal level, extreme distortion, tones or frequencies that with no stretch
of the imagination were present in the original music, etc.—and will be distinct-
ly different than the kind of noise or audio distortion we are accustomed to in
stereo equipment. Even small errors in the digital reconstruction can result in
extreme changes in the audio output. For example, a single bit error if in the MSB
can totally corrupt the resulting waveform. Simple errors can result in sound
frequencies not present in the original. Fortunately, these sorts of errors are rel-
atively rare as most of the circuitry is inside of very reliable LSI chipsets.

However, if the CD is recognized and appears to behave normally except
that there is absolutely no audio output, there can be problems in the audio-
decoding LSI chips. Other than hoping for an obvious bad connection, this is
way beyond the scope of anything you can hope to repair without the service
manual, test equipment, and a miracle.

Problems in the analog sections—
D/A(s), sample-and-hold(s), post analog
filters, and muting relays—produce
effects that are more familiar: noise, a
decrease in signal strength, and distor-
tion. Except for parts of the D/A, which
may be shared, there will be identical
left and right channels to compare if an
audio problem develops.

Note that if only one channel is
affected, then the problem most likely
has nothing to do with tracking, the
laser, or the mechanism. Coming off
the disc, the left and right channels are
interleaved on a sample (16 bit word)
basis so any disc or pickup problem will equally impact both L and R.

That means that you are left with the
D/A(s), sample-and-hold(s), the filters,
and the muting circuitry as your most
likely culprits. Many CD players multi-
plex the D/A between L and R, so in
these, even the D/A is ruled out since
most of its circuitry is common.

Now, how do you go about tracking
down the source of your problem?
Swapping components one at a time
between the identical left and right chan-
nels is a valid diagnostic technique. Here
are some other notes and suggestions:

Players without digital filters (or
oversampling) have fairly complex ana-
log filters after the D/A. A bad or noisy
component could conceivably be your
problem. Even players with fancy over-
sampling have some kind of a final ana-
log (anti-aliasing) filter. On an older
player, there is probably a lot of discrete
circuitry in the audio section.

If you can get to the components in
the analog filter (some are potted), then,
with a test CD that has a "silence track"
and a scope or signal tracer, you should
be able to find out where the noise is
being introduced. If the player has sepa-
rate D/As, then one of those would also
be suspect.

There might be separate power supply
outputs for the audio section (this
will be more likely with fancy expensive
players). In this case, a failure of one of
the supply outputs could result in either
distorted audio or no sound at all.

The following will mostly result in
static type noise, hum, or erratic audio
(sound not coming on or partial or total
dropout for one or both channels):

Don't overlook the simple problems
of dirty contacts on the RCA jacks or
bad connections where they are soldered
to the main circuit board. Test by jig-
gling the cable connectors and/or prod-
ing the circuit board near the RCA
jacks. The cable may be bad (from flex-

ing) as well—try another one.

Check the connections and controls
on your amplifier and other audio compo-
nents as well! Any bad connection in
the audio path can lead to audio signal-chain
symptoms. Clean, repair, or replace, as
appropriate. Perhaps your poor, helpless
CD player isn't even at fault!

Dirty muting-relay contacts could
result in intermittent or noisy output. If
tapping the relay affects the symptoms,
this is likely the problem.

To test, remove the relay and bypass
the suspect contacts with jumper wires.
CAUTION: Turn your amplifier's vol-
ume control down when you start to
play a disc—there may be unusual loud
noises during startup that are no longer
being blocked by the muting circuitry. If
CDs now play without any audio prob-
lems, a bad relay is confirmed.

If that is the case, it may be possible
to snap off the relay cover(s) and renew
the relay(s) with contact cleaner and a bur-
nishing tool or a strip of paper.
Otherwise, replacement will be required.

Wrap-Up

That's it for now. Next time we will get
into what the CD player does when you
insert a disc—and what can go wrong.
In the meantime, if you have any specific
problems or questions, you can reach me
by e-mail at sam@stdavids.picker.com.
For general information on electronics
troubleshooting and repair, visit my site
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Additional and useful features of the RMS225A include ProbeHold, autoranging, overload alert, oversized display characters, and menu selection of features like min/max and range lock. ProbeHold allows capture of the last stable reading and updating to the next stable reading to be done automatically. In Auto Min/Max mode, measurements of maximum and minimum values are displayed. A beeper sounds when the latest reading is captured and when updated values are shown.

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In addition, the PCI-GPIB+ is completely jumperless and features Plug and Play functionality for easy installation and use. The board comes with standard NI-488.2 driver software. It is also compatible with the company's LabVIEW and LabWindows/CVI application software.

Requiring only a single PCI slot, the combination PCI-GPIB+ controller/analyzer delivers a low-cost, high-speed alternative to separate GPIB controller and analyzer products. Pricing starts at $795.

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PCI-Video-Capture Card
AIMS LAB RECENTLY ANNOUNCED VideoHighway Xtreme (VHX), a video card that combines every facet of multimedia into an easy-to-use, plug-and-play PCI card. Incorporating Intel Interplay technology, VHX allows users to watch TV, listen to FM radio, use Internet video phones, capture still or full motion pictures, and communicate interactively on their PC. Using VHX, the operator can instantly get more information about a news item, order tickets, purchase products, or participate
in chat sessions—all while watching a TV show.

Besides watching TV, VHX users can connect their VCR, LD, or DVD to watch a movie or connect a Sega, Nintendo, or Sony game console to play a game. VHX also offers video conferencing features and closed captions.

Included with the card is the Intel Smart Guide, a TV program guide that contains a TV program grid, a browser, and a powerful search engine. The bundled VDOPhone software allows the connection of a camcorder or CCD camera for instant video conferencing over the Internet. VHX also captures MS AVI video clips at a speed of 30fps (frames-per-second) that can be used in presentations, Web pages, and video e-mail messages.

You can preset up to 99 FM radio stations. With VHX’s 125 channel-ready tuner, viewers can also watch TV in the corner of their PC monitor, with the ability to change the image to full-screen mode. The video-capture card requires a Pentium 90 or better, 16MB of RAM, a PCI expansion slot, Windows95 Direct-Draw, and 2MB of VGA memory. It retails for $129.95.

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Uninterruptible Power System
CYBER POWER SYSTEMS recently announced the industry’s first full-featured, low-cost surge-suppression and uninterruptible power system, the Power98/250VA. It includes free PowerPanel software, which automatically shuts down the Windows operating system before the computer loses power. This software utility runs under Windows 3.11, Windows 95, and Windows NT. It can be set to automatically save and close any open files within the backup battery time—and to shut down the computer.

With its advanced microcontroller technology and transformer, the Power98 creates less heat than traditional UPS designs, which results in a compact and lightweight design. Ideal for home, small office, and other cost-sensitive computing environments, the device provides three grounded outlets with full-time surge protection and three grounded outlets with both surge protection and battery backup—capable of supplying power up to 13 minutes. Its battery backup combines with surge suppression protects against all power disturbances: blackouts, brownouts, spikes, sags, and even lightning. The system’s high-efficiency batteries are designed to last up to 20 percent longer than ones used in traditional power supply systems.

The device includes top-of-the-line features in a compact, easy-to-use system. The programmable shutdown feature in the PowerPanel software allows the user to set the computer to run a job and leave, knowing the computer will be shut down safely and automatically at a certain hour.

The system’s exclusive communications protection ports protect standard modems, PBX systems, or 10-Base-T Ethernet networks. It can be used with any IBM- or Apple-compatible computer, as well as with other electronics. The 250VA comes with a lifetime guarantee up to $30,000 to repair or replace any properly connected equipment ever damaged by a surge, including one caused by a lightning strike. The suggested retail price for the Power98/250VA is $109.

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Maritime SSB Transceiver
DESIGNED AS A SMALL, LOW-power, low-cost HF companion to your current radiotelephone, the SG-2020 is ideal for coastal cruising and long-range cruising sailboats, as well as for powerboats. According to the manufacturer, the unit has the lowest current consumption on the market (less than 300 mA in receive mode).

The transmitter power of the SG-2020 is adjustable from 0 to 20 watts PEP output and covers all HF marine frequencies. The rugged SG-2020, with its extruded aluminum chassis, can be used as a standby, emergency back-up transceiver in voluntary fittings. You can communicate worldwide with this unit, and listen to marine frequency traffic, or copy weather-fax transmissions. (The SG-2020 is not FCC-type approved.)

Among the features of this radiotelephone are user-friendly functions, including SPLIT, RIT, XIT; a fully adjustable IAMBIC “A” mode keyer operating under microprocessor control from 5 to 50 wpm; 40 position simplex or semi-duplex memory storage; a backlit LCD display; and front-panel controls for noise-blanking and for RF gain control. A “D”-cell flashlight battery pack is also available as an option. Its compact size (2.75- × 6- × 7.25-inches) makes installation easy in any vessel.

The retail price of the SG-2020 is $625. A portable version, the SG-PortaPak (complete with battery pack, microphone case, and shoulder strap) is also available at a retail cost of $1195.

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Alternative Energy: An Introduction to Alternative & Renewable Energy Sources
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As populations increase and third-world countries start up more and more industries, the world's need for energy grows exponentially. At the same time, the world energy supply is decreasing just as the demand for oil-based energy is increasing. The demand for fuel is overwhelming the world's ability to produce it. That's why now more than ever, it is urgent to understand the energy problem and the available alternatives.

In this book, the author presents the problems and possible solutions in a clear, easy-to-read manner. He begins with a broad overview of electricity, explaining its various mechanisms from thermo-electrical and electromagnetic to thermo-, photo-, and piezo-electric. Energy is defined, and the basics of potential, kinetic, thermal, chemical, and nuclear energy are discussed.

Further chapters cover these topics in greater depth. Readers are introduced to energy sources that draw from such supplies as wind, sun, and water stored in reservoirs. Energy from the ocean—tides, currents, and ocean-heat storage—are also presented. Review questions are provided for each chapter.

Comprehensive listings of Web sites about alternate forms of energy and the organizations devoted to them, plus Web sites relevant to the subject of each chapter, make this an excellent reference resource. The glossary, index, and bibliography are helpful to anyone researching this subject.

Digital Literacy
by Paul Gilster
John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
605 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10158-0012
Tel: 800-225-5945
Web: www.wiley.com
$22.95
Using the Internet requires a different way of thinking. Paul Gilster calls this new mindset digital literacy. In his book of the same title, he explains what that mindset entails. He believes that without these new thinking skills, Internet users may be unable to use this medium to its fullest extent.

The book discusses the basic thinking skills needed to thrive in an interactive environment that differs radically from print or television, which are passive media. Internet novices are shown how to evaluate information found in news groups, on bulletin boards, and in other online sources. Readers are taught how to focus search strategies, as well as how to use hypertext and other hypermedia tools. Methods of mapping a path through the wealth of information found on the Internet are explained.

What questions should be asked when viewing a Web site? How do you separate form from content? How to integrate the masses of available information into one's business and personal life? These and other similar questions are discussed in detail.

The author also gives readers a brief glimpse into the future of digital literacy, and he explores other issues such as the question of Copyrighting online information.

Master Catalog 1998
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Jensen's 300-page, full-color Master Catalog is now available. It offers full lines of products for the worldwide electronic/electrical industries. The latest edition contains many new items, organized in a special section, such as power drills, a reciprocating saw, test meters, a stereo inspection microscope, a paging system, multipurpose scissors tool, torx driver sets, and much more.

In addition to Jensen's top-of-the-line tool kits, this catalog covers test equipment, specialty hand tools, wire and cable, power tools and measurement instruments, and devices for soldering, storage, and handling. Among the other products are work stations and static-control systems.

(Continued on page 71)
Measuring and sensing temperature has resulted in many different methods and devices. While some of the solutions developed meet certain requirements such as temperature range and accuracy, most have some sort of characteristic that makes them unsuitable for the average home hobbyist.

Sensors such as thermocouples, thermistors, and exotic ICs usually require their own "flavor" of circuitry in order to use their outputs. The outputs are also usually non-linear and change only slightly in relation to the temperature change. The result is a system that can easily be inaccurate because of circuit noise being interpreted as temperature change.

Fortunately for the home experimenter, materials and components are readily available for building an inexpensive non-contact type of temperature sensor that overcomes the limitations listed above. Such a device is presented here. The unit actually indicates the temperature difference between the temperature of an object and an arbitrary "ambient" temperature reference that can be set at any time.

A gain control is used to adjust the sensing range from 1°C down to an incredible 0.01°C between the sensor and the ambient reference temperature! While that specification might sound like "design overkill," it is really quite essential for remote sensing. For example, a match flame can be detected up to a distance of one foot at the 1°C gain setting. With the gain increased to detect a difference of 0.1°C, the heat from the palm of your hand can be detected at the same distance. At the maximum gain setting, that same match flame can be detected from across a room!

Obviously, those objects are all more than 1°C hotter than room temperature, so why is such a high gain needed? The culprit is, of course, the "column" of air between the object and the sensor. As the air absorbs and dissipates some of the heat, the apparent temperature falls off rapidly in an inverse-square relationship with the distance—double the distance, and the heat energy drops by a square-root function. By the time the heat reaches the sensor, we are probably sensing convection currents more than the actual direct heat from the object.

The implication is that any air flow will disturb the readings. When using the device at higher gains, still air is the biggest requirement for consistent results. Avoid fans, heat vents, and the like when experimenting. Of course, that "disadvantage" can also become an advantage, especially when using the unit to detect airflow such as "leak" testing.

About the Circuit. As you can see on the schematic diagram in Fig. 1, the actual circuit for the Heat Detector is a deceptively simple design. Remember, however, that the signals involved with sensing a heat source at a distance are very low in amplitude. Low-amplitude signals always run the risk of being lost in the normal background noise that they are sitting in, so all of the components were selected for low-noise performance. For example, notice that all of the fixed resistors are 1% metal-film units. Those types of resistors perform extremely well when low noise is important. What is interesting in the overall design is that the actual values of the resistors are not critical—any value within 5% or even 10% of those given should work well. However, the metal-film composition of the resistor is mandatory!

The circuit is a "current mirror" stretched to the ultimate degree. The current mirror itself is built around Q1 and Q2, a pair of surface-mount transistors. The tiny mass of the SOT-23 transistor package lets the circuit respond extremely fast to temperature changes.

A standard current-mirror circuit would only have Q1 and Q2 with their bases and emitters connected in parallel and the base of Q1 shorted to its collector, forming a diode-connected transistor. The current...
flowing through R1 would then be "reflected" in Q2's collector. For both currents to be equal in size and temperature tracking, Q1 and Q2 are normally a matched pair in a single package. However, the characteristic that we are looking for is the temperature difference between Q1 and Q2, that is why individual units are used. For every 1°C increase in the junction temperature of a silicon transistor at a fixed bias current, its forward-bias voltage decreases by about 2 millivolts. By holding Q2 at a fixed ambient temperature, its collector current will decrease as Q1's temperature rises.

A change of only 2 millivolts is not a lot to work with in a remote-sensing circuit, especially if we are interested in displaying a difference of 0.01°C. Besides, an increase in current for an increase in temperature would be very desirable.

Placing Q1 outside of the cabinet at the focal point of a standard parabolic flashlight reflector makes the sensor very directional and extremely sensitive to infrared energy focused by the reflector. The rest of the components are located inside a fully-enclosed cabinet that is used as an ambient-temperature reference.

Between Q1 and Q2, a two-stage inverting variable-gain amplifier made up of IC1-a and IC1-b provides the high gain needed for remote sensing. The first stage (IC1-a) is a unity-gain buffer that drives the second stage (IC1-b). The second stage is an inverting amplifier with a gain that can be adjusted between about -10 and -1000 with R3. The audio taper of R3 makes adjusting easy; the most useful gain setting, -100, is at about the center of its rotation.

A 1.2-volt reference, built around Q3 and Q4, tracks temperature changes within the case at a rate of -4 millivolts per degree C. The reference is divided exactly in half, using R8-R10, to a 0.6-volt reference tracking at -2 millivolts per degree C. That output is applied to the reference input of Q1, which has been chosen so that the bias resistors to Q1-Q4 all operate at the same current level. That will help ensure their forward voltages are essentially equal, assuming that they are at the same temperature.

The 0.6-volt reference acts as a "ground" reference for the input from Q1. When Q1 heats up 1°C, its forward voltage decreases by 2 millivolts. With the reference, by R3 to its minimum gain of -1000, a voltage appearing at Q2's base and emitter increases by 20 millivolts, which about doubles its collector current. The result is a full-scale display on M1. At a gain of -1000, a 0.01°C increase produces a 20 millivolt signal giving a full-scale display. With Q1 at ambient, Q2 conducts enough current for a 50%-of-full-scale display on M1.

As you might suspect, setting the operating levels of the transistors is crucial in order to get meaningful results out of the instrument. That is done by leaving Q1's current fixed and varying the current to Q3 and Q4 with R7. When adjusting the 1.2 volt reference, R7 can be considered as a "coarse" adjustment. Any "fine" adjustments are then done with R9.

The collector of Q2 directly drives M1, an analog current meter. Although the circuit uses a 150-microamp unit, you can use any analog meter that has a full-scale display between 50 and 250 microamps. Keep in mind that the markings on the meter do not indicate any particular temperature reading, just the relative change. If you are going to use a meter of a different capacity, R1, R5, and R6 must be changed in order for the circuit to work. The different values for those components are shown in Table 1 for several different types of meters. Those resistors have been selected to provide current through the transistors so that they all operate at about 50% of M1's full-scale current. The meter is protected from excess current by R5.

The total current drain of the circuit is only about 300 microamperes when M1 is a 150-μA unit. A simple unregulated power supply is quite suitable in that case. Two 3-volt lithium...
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WAE72
um coin cells are connected in series for a 6-volt supply. With a rating of about 200 milliamp-hours, they will last a long time. They also have a very “flat” discharge voltage curve, simulating a regulated power supply at those low currents.

One final consideration for this type of circuit is the concern over external noise pickup, such as 60-Hz hum and radio-frequency interference (RFI). Capacitors C1-C6 were specially selected to filter out as much noise as possible while still keeping response times very fast. Tantalum capacitors are highly recommended. If you have noise problems, the values of the capacitors can be increased. You can even connect the parabolic reflector to ground through one of its mounting screws if necessary.

**Construction Tips.** The Heat Detector’s circuit is simple enough that it can be built on perfboard using standard construction techniques. One area that will be a bit more difficult is connecting the tiny surface-mount transistors to the circuit. The simplest method is to attach separate leads directly to the units, converting them to through-hole-like devices. They can then be mounted to a perfboard like any other standard leaded part. The technique is shown in Fig. 2. Use 30-gauge wires that are at least 1-inch long for the leads—the excess length can be trimmed off after the unit is mounted to the board. In order to help protect the transistor from heat-related damage during soldering as well as making it easier to handle the tiny parts, hold the transistor case with a “micro-gator” clip such as a RadioShack 270-373, that particular clip has flat jaws rather than serrated teeth.

Using small tweezers, carefully bend the transistor leads out flat from the case. Wrap a turn or two of wire around the unit’s leads with the tweezers. Put the clip in a bench vise and attach another clip to the free end of the wire so that it acts as a weight, stretching the wire. Using very fine solder and a very fine tip on your iron, carefully solder the wire to the lead. Use as little heat as possible for a very brief time in order to avoid damaging the transistor.

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emitter around the 22-gauge wires as shown—do not solder the connections just yet.

Carefully slide Q1 on its leads to about the center of the 22-gauge bus wires. Attach the reflector to the case without disturbing Q1. With everything assembled, Q1 should be at a point close to the focal point of the reflector, similar to the arrangement shown in Fig. 4. It does not have to be exact at this point; we will next be adjusting the assembly’s focus. Set the reflector assembly down on a table or bench so that you can look directly down the “business” end of the reflector at Q1.

Starting at a distance of about a foot or two away from the reflector, look at the “image” of Q1 in the reflector. You should see a black “ring” somewhere around the reflector’s inside circumference, either towards the front or rear. The black ring is the focused image of Q1’s case. If you don’t see the ring, try sliding Q1 further in or out and look again; it might take a little practice. What you see should look similar to the view shown in Fig. 5.

Once you see the black ring, move farther away from the assembly while keeping the ring in sight. What you want to end up with is the black ring just about filling the forward (widest) section of the reflector from a distance of around 8 to 10 feet. That is a good focal point for indoor use of the Heat Detector. Slide Q1 in and out a little at a time to achieve that focus.

You can confirm a good focus by pointing the reflector directly at a diffuse light source across the room such as a lamp with a shade or a sunlit window curtain. Peek over the edge of the reflector, and you should see Q1 glowing like a lamp as the focused light shines on it. DO NOT point the unit directly at the Sun or you might melt or severely damage the transistor!

Once you have a good focus, carefully remove the reflector and solder the base and emitter wire leads of Q1 to the 22-gauge wires. Wrap the collector wire lead of Q1 around the 22-gauge wire connected to Q1’s base lead and solder that connection also. Re-check the focal point; if everything looks good, cut off the excess 22-gauge wires.

Select a non-metallic handle, such as a plastic or wooden one, and mount it to the opposite end of the case. It is important that the handle not conduct any heat from your hand, or the accuracy of the unit will be affected. If you use a handle from a wood file, the threads in the handle will make it easier to mount the handle to the case.

Now you can finish up assembling the Heat Detector. Install the board, S1, and M1, and then wire up the rest of the circuit. If you want to label any of the controls, that should be done before installing any other parts. When wiring Q1 into the circuit, pay careful attention to the polarities of that component.

Install the reflector, the handle, and close up the case. Install the knobs on the potentiometers and set the unit aside for at least 15 minutes to let the temperature inside stabilize after all of the handling it just received. You are now ready to test.

(Continued on page 50)
Perhaps you have a small business in your house. If so, you probably need to keep a log of your telephone expenses. You might also wish to block certain outgoing telephone calls at your office or house. It also might be convenient to be able to control some devices remotely using your telephone. Wouldn't it be great to have a device to handle all those tasks, especially if it was small, cheap, and easy to use?

The Phone Troll presented here is just such a device. Roughly the size of a cigarette pack, it connects to your PC’s game port on one end and to the telephone line on the other. It converts phone-line current and DTMF dialing tones into digital signals that are compatible with a game port. With a simple QBASIC program, the Phone Troll can be used for many different tasks.

The "Troll" part of the device’s name as used here actually has two meanings. The obvious one relates to the mythical creature that lurks undetected, lying in wait to monitor and record every telephone transaction in your home or business. Information that can be logged each time the phone is used includes the start and end times that the phone was in use, what number was dialed, what dialing buttons were pressed during the call, when an incoming call was received, how many times the phone rang before being answered, and whether or not it was answered.

When the telephone is in use (off-hook), the Phone Troll records all valid DTMF signals—including the additional four tone combinations that are not normally a part of the standard 12-button keypad. This will provide a permanent record of all telephone numbers dialed as well as any other digit activity.

The second meaning of "troll" can be loosely translated into "control". Since the DTMF signals are decoded by a QBASIC program, they can be used to signal the program to do some particular task—including control some electrical device connected to the computer’s parallel port. The QBASIC program is able to detect special control numbers that you can set. By simply lifting the telephone and pressing the proper control code, you can individually turn on and off any of up to eight outputs on the parallel port. To demonstrate that function, a parallel-port monitor plug with light-emitting diodes will also be built.

The control codes used in the QBASIC program are three digits long. When the Phone Troll is active, pressing a three-digit code will turn on or off a single output bit. You can activate the control by simply picking up any telephone that the Phone Troll is connected to, entering a three-digit code, and then hanging up. That feature will also work while talking to someone else. The three-digit code can be entered at any time without disconnecting the call. You can also place a call to your home or office from anywhere in the world, enter the desired control code, and turn an output bit on or off. Of course, the telephone must be answered in order to activate the Phone Troll, but that can be done either by a person or by an answering machine.

Calling home from your car phone just to flip the status of an LED on the back of your computer might not sound like an exciting way to use a pile of expensive high-tech gear. But when the LED is replaced with an opto-isolator acting as a solid-state relay, practically anything electrical can now be controlled by your PC. For instance, turning on a furnace or an air conditioner a couple of hours before you arrive home from a vacation would definitely have some merit.

The program listed here needs no modification; it will accomplish all those tasks as written.

One non-obvious use for the Phone Troll is placing the contacts of a single-pole normally-closed...
relay in series with the telephone line. Modify the program to sense the first digit of several digits being dialed on a new call. If the number being dialed starts with a "1" or "900", activate the relay for a half second. Guess what? That will stop unauthorized persons from using your telephone to place long distance calls or calling any of the "1-900" numbers. The program should also contain a code to enable and disable that function. No one without the proper code would be able to access any long-distance numbers using your telephone.

Note that this arrangement would not be able to prevent operator-assisted calls, unless you also include "0" in the list of numbers on the restricted list. However, doing that is not a good idea—especially as it could be necessary to contact the operator in the event of an emergency.

Yet another use for that "hang-up-the-telephone" technique relates to ordering merchandise or products from one of those "shop-at-home" TV channels. It's easy to write a QBasic program to test each DTMF digit being entered on the telephone. Have the Phone Troll watch for a string of digits that match any of the family or business credit-card numbers. When one of those numbers is detected, pulse the relay as detailed above. The person will be wondering why the telephone would mysteriously disconnect.

**Project Overview.** The Phone Troll circuit attaches to the game port on a PC with a standard 15-pin connector. Power for the Phone Troll is supplied by the PC though the game port. The telephone line connects to the opposite end of the Phone Troll through a standard telephone jack. The device is secured to the game port with two mounting screws. Load and run the program, and you're in business.

The Phone Troll has two separate

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**PARTS LIST FOR THE PHONE TROLL TELEPHONE-USAGE MONITOR**

**SEMI-DICUTORS**

IC1—TLP504 opto-isolator, integrated circuit
IC2—M-8870-01 DTMF decoder, integrated circuit
D1-D4—1N832 silicon diode
MOV1—VE099131 metal-oxide varistor, 38-joule, 130-volt rms
Q1, Q2—2N4124, NPN transistor

**RESISTORS**

(All resistors are 1/4-watt, 5% units, unless otherwise noted.)
R1, R2—15-ohm
R3—6.8-ohm
R4, R6—33,000-ohm
R5, R7—1000-ohm
R8, R11, R12—100,000-ohm, 1%
R9—60,400-ohm, 1%
R10—37,400-ohm, 1%
R13—300,000-ohm

**CAPACITORS**

C1, C2, C4—0.1-µF, ceramic-disk
C3—10-µF, 15-VWDC, electrolytic
C5, C6—0.01-µF, 5%, Mylar

**ADDITIONAL PARTS AND MATERIALS**

XTAL1—3.579545 MHz crystal,
HC49/U case
J1, J2—RJ11 telephone jack, PC-mount
P1—15-pin "D"-style male connector,
PC-mount
Case, hardware, etc.

Note: The following items are available from: Dage Scientific, PO Box 144, Valley Springs, CA 95252; Tel: 209-772-2076; Kit of all parts, PC board, and manual (without case or program diskette), No. FT-1, $26.95; Case, No. FT-2, $9.95; Program on 3½-inch diskette. No. FT-3, $2.00. Please add $4.00 for shipping and handling. CA residents must add appropriate sales tax. Visa and Mastercard are accepted on telephone orders.

IC2 can be ordered in single quantities from: ICS, Inc., 2222 E. Camelback Rd. # 222, Phoenix, AZ 85016-3427; Tel: 602-224-5322.

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**Fig. 1 The Phone Troll is a simple circuit that can sense both telephone usage and DTMF tones. A QBasic program logs activity and can even control other devices.**
circuit functions, each of which runs independently. One function is the monitoring of the telephone line continuously for DTMF tones. The other function watches for any current flow in the telephone line that would mean that a telephone has been picked up or that the telephone is ringing. The direction and timing of that current flow is used to tell the difference between those two situations.

The sample program that has been included here also watches for a special combination of DTMF tones that are used as “control codes.” The control codes are three digits long. The first number is the “#” key; it alerts the Phone Troll that a control code is being issued. The second digit is a number between one and eight. That number points to one of the data lines on the computer’s printer port. Those lines can be hooked up to any circuit that can be electrically controlled by a TTL-compatible digital signal. The last digit is either a one (for “on”) or a zero (for “off”). As an example, pressing the three keys “#81” will turn the eighth bit on the printer port on, while “#80” will turn the same bit off.

Any telephone activity will also be displayed immediately on the computer’s screen. After each telephone transaction is finished, the information will be saved to a file on disk under the filename “phonelog.txt”. That file will be created in the same directory as the QBASIC program. Each time the Phone Troll program is started, any additional entries will be added to the end of that text file. Since it is a simple text file, any convenient text editor in either DOS or Windows can be used to view and print the log. The file can be renamed to save it, or it can be deleted. In either case, a new file will be created and the logging started fresh.

An example log file is shown in Listing 1. The appearance is the same on screen and when saved to disk. The first time the program is run, the starting date and time are recorded. After that, just the time is recorded until midnight. At that point, the next record will be preceded by the new date.

In the example, we can see that according to the records, a telephone went “off-hook” (picked up) and a telephone number was dialed at 14:43 PM (which appears as 14:43 as all times are recorded in the 24-hour format). The call lasted about ten minutes.

The next three records show that the telephone rang. Both the time of the incoming calls and how many times each call rang are listed. Since the telephone never went “off-hook”, the calls were listed as “not answered”.

Next, the telephone rang once, was answered, and a control code of #81 was entered, activating the device that is connected to data line 8 on the printer port—let’s say that it is a tape recorder whose microphone is connected to the telephone line. Before the call was terminated, control code #80 turned the tape recorder off. That could have been done from any telephone that is monitored by the Phone Troll and not just the one that was picked up for the call. An arrangement like that can be a handy substitute for pencil and paper when a message or important information needs to be saved.

In the final three entries are additional demonstrations of controlling devices connected to the computer’s printer port from a telephone. First, a lamp connected to bit 2 was turned on. Minutes later, another call turned on the home stereo con-
Fig. 4. Placing the Phone Troll in a compact case lets the unit attach directly to the game port on a computer.

Fig. 5. The special hold-down screws for the Phone Troll are easily made from a piece of plastic tube and a length of threaded rod. You can easily make the threaded rod by cutting off the head from a 4-40 screw.

connected to bit 3. Several minutes later, the final call turned off both the stereo and the light in that order. Understand that any device that can be interfaced to a data line on a printer port can be controlled—lights, heat, air conditioning, or any other device that you can devise a control method for.

Circuit Description. The schematic diagram shown in Fig. 1 reveals how simple the Phone Troll's interface circuit is. Power for the circuit is supplied from the host computer's 5-volt supply through pins 1, 8, 9, and 15 of the game port. Ground is supplied from pins 4 and 12. Telephone jack J1 connects to the telephone line and is surge protected with MOV1. The other telephone jack, J2, is the jack through which the Phone Troll can monitor telephone activity. Any telephones connected to the J1 side of the telephonenwiring system will not activate the Phone Troll. Because of that, the Phone Troll will work best when connected between the telephone company and the telephones in the house—much like connecting additional telephone-line devices to the pass-through connector on a modem, fax machine, or answering machine.

Current on the telephone line is sensed by opto-isolator IC1. Two identical circuits within IC1 sense the current flow depending on the direction that it is flowing. Current flow in one direction will pass through R2 and pins 3 and 4 of IC1 while current flow in the other direction will pass through R1 and pins 1 and 2 of IC1. A wide range of DC current can flow from the telephone's central office, so diodes D1—D4 regulate the current through IC1. The small-signal audio impedance through the diodes and IC1 is matched by R3.

By monitoring the current and its direction, normal telephone activity can be determined. When current flows steadily in one direction, the telephone has gone "off hook". On the other hand, current flowing rapidly in both directions means that the telephone is ringing. Typically, the "off hook" pattern is one of current flowing for ½ second in one direction, then switching to the other direction for the remainder of the call.

The second part of the Phone Troll circuit is the DTMF sensing and decoding. DTMF signals fit within the telephone band of 300 to 3000 Hz. Further information on DTMF signals can be found on the Web at http://www.2xtreme.net/dage/dtmf_tut.html.

The DTMF receiver (IC2) is made by Teltone Corp. That chip makes
REM Release version 1.00 Date 10/16/97
REM No global variables, auto detection of output plug

DECLARE SUB OneSecTD()
DECLARE SUB FindPort()
DECLARE SUB LineSample()
DECLARE SUB Ring()

REM ratio = time current flows in one direction, divided by REM time current flows in other direction during sample window.
REM The DATA below are the normal addresses for LPT1 to LPT3 in default.
REM Add additional output port (in decimal) to DATA, ending with 0 only.
REM 'SUB FindPort()' will read DATA below.
DATA 885.632.956.0

CLS
CALL OneSecTD 'initialize
REM BEEP
REM FOR
REM)

DECLARE SUB LineSample
DECLARE SUB FindPort
DECLARE SUB

REM CallHandeling:
IF PRINT TIME$, doit 
PRINT
END IF

CALL LineSample 'used for delay when phone lines switch
CALL LineSample
CALL LineSample
CALL LineSample

REM ///// start DTMF /////

DO UNTIL INP(513) AND 128 'loops until next digit
IF (NOT INP(513) AND 48) = 0 THEN 'exits when on-hook
PRINT #1, PRINT #1, TIMES$, "On-Hook - call terminated", PRINT #1,
PRINT : PRINT TIMES$, "On-Hook - call terminated": CLOSE #1
END IF
LOOP

REM Read DTMF
OUT 513, 0 'start one-shots
n = INT(OneSec *.01) 'wait 10 mSEC
FOR i = 1 TO n: NEXT i

value = NOT INP(513) AND 15

REM /// print all 16 valid DTMF codes ///

IF value = 0 THEN PRINT "O"; PRINT #1, PRINT #1, PRINT #1, PRINT #1,
PRINT #1, PRINT #1, PRINT #1, PRINT #1,
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designing a DTMF-receiver circuit very simple because all of the processing is performed on-chip. All that is needed for operation is a power supply, the audio signal, a timing crystal, and adjusting

```
LISTING 3

SUB FindPort
SHARED OneSec
SHARED bas%

READ bs
DO
  test1 = 0: test2 = 0
  OUT (bs + 2), 4
  IF INP(bs + 1) AND 8 = 8 THEN test1 = 1
  OUT (bs + 2), 6
  IF NOT INP(bs + 1) AND 8 THEN test2 = 1
  IF test1 AND test2 THEN bas% = bs
  READ bs
LOOP WHILE bs

IF bas% = 0 THEN
  BEEP: PRINT "Test plug not found. Press any key to enter address;"
  PRINT "or, wait for program to start without the control function:" : PRINT;
  REM loop is about three times as long as OneSec
  DO WHILE INKEY$ = "" AND t < 3 * OneSec
    t = t + 1
  LOOP
  IF t < 3 * OneSec THEN
    INPUT "Enter output port address in decimal": bas%
  ELSE EXIT SUB
ENDIF

ELSE PRINT "Base address = ";
  HEX$(bas%); "HEX, or decimal": bas%
ENDIF

REM Cycle output LEDs
FOR n = 1 TO 3
  OUT bas%, 255: BEEP: FOR t = 1 TO OneSec / 5: NEXT t
  OUT bas%, 0: FOR t = 1 TO OneSec / 10:
    NEXT t
  NEXT n
END IF
END SUB
```

```
LISTING 4

SUB LineSample
SHARED ratio

$ = 0: $ = 0: LoopStartTime = TIMER
DO WHILE (TIMER - LoopStartTime < 2)
  IF NOT INP(513) AND 16 THEN $ = $ + 1 'check bit 4, active low
  IF NOT INP(513) AND 32 THEN $ = $ + 1 'check bit 5, active low
  REM correct LoopStartTime when passing thru midnight
  IF (TIMER - LoopStartTime < 0) THEN LoopStartTime = LoopStartTime - 86400
  LOOP

IF $ = 0 AND $ = 0 THEN 'Ideal samples
  ratio = 9 / ratio = 9 'Assigned; Line is calm
ELSEIF $ < $ THEN 'ratio = 1 Active Ring
  ratio = $ / $ 'ratio = 0 Off-Hook
ELSE ratio = $ / $ 
END IF
END SUB
```

An AC-balance connection is made to the telephone line through C5 and C6. Precision resistors R8–R12 provide the balance network to IC2—it is important to balance both sides of the telephone line with respect to the op-amp portion of IC2. A 3.579545-MHz color-burst crystal, XTAL1, is directly connected to pins 7 and 8 of IC2. All of the necessary drive circuitry is internal with no external components needed. The guard time is set by R13 and C4. The values listed set the valid length for the "tone-present" and "tone-absent" timing to 40 ms. Those values should work perfectly; they can be adjusted if needed.

When a valid tone pair has been detected, the four-bit binary code that represents that tone pair appears on output pins 11–14. Pin 15 also goes high for 40 ms as a signal that the data on the output lines is valid and stable. That feature is very important in order to be able to use the game port in such a non-traditional manner.

An IBM game port has 8 inputs—

![Diagram](image-url)

*Fig. 6. The finished test fixture will look something like this. A straight-pin header helps connect the bar-graph display to the connector. The pins on the header will have to be spread to match the spacing on the header.*

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4 analog and 4 digital. Three of the digital inputs are used—two for the telephone-current sensing, and one for the "DTMF valid" signal. The data lines from IC2 are connected to the analog inputs. Here is where the "non-traditional use" comes into play. The DTMF data signals are connected to an individual resistor/capacitor circuit in the game card hardware that is used to control the pulse width of a one-shot multivibrator. If the digital signal is high, the one-shot times out fast; if the digital signal is low, the one-shot takes a long time to time out (if at all).

Since the DTMF signals are locked for at least 40 ms, that leaves enough time for the QBASIC program to check the "joystick button" that indicates that DTMF data is available. The program reads the analog "joystick position" by triggering all four multivibrators. After a certain amount of time, the state of the one-shots are read out. The time period between triggering the one-shots and reading their state is long enough to give them time to time out if they are sensing a high signal, but not long enough to let them time out if they are sensing a low signal. Although it sounds complex and exacting in terms of critically-timed events, there is a wide margin available, making the readings very reliable. The QBASIC program can accomplish those steps with time to spare.

Output Test Fixture. As mentioned before, the Phone Troll can control devices attached to the printer port.

While the actual interface circuits are beyond the scope of this article, some way is needed to verify that the Phone Troll can actually send signals to the printer port. A simple test fixture is shown in Fig. 2. It is simply a set of 8 light-emitting diodes connected to the data lines of the port. A set of resistors limit the current through the LEDs, and the circuit is completed through the port's ground line. With that arrangement, the LEDs can be lit individually with the control codes.

Lighting LEDs might not sound very exciting, but the LEDs can be replaced with any type of opto-isolator chip. Those chips can have different types of circuits on their output sides. Readily-available outputs include bi-polar transistors, silicon-controlled rectifiers, and TRIACS.

**Construction.** The Phone Troll is a simple project to build. All of the components are mounted on a single-sided PC board. A foil pattern has been included for those who wish to etch their own board. As an alternative, a kit with a pre-etched board is available from the source given in the Parts List.

If you are building the kit or using

**LISTING 5**

```vbnet
SUB OneSecTD
SHARED OneSec

REM Purpose:
REM To find the number of FOR/NEXT loops on a specific computer to cause
REM a one second delay, variable [OneSec] is number of loops/second.

REM Use:
REM For program delays > 3 mSEC to < 500 mSEC. Interrupts affect accuracy.

REM Example:
REM To delay 250 mSEC, insert this code:
REM n = INT(OneSec * .25)
REM FOR t = 1 to n : NEXT t

REM **** Calibrate host cmptr / Turbo must remain constant ****
PRINT "Calibrating FOR/NEXT delay loops. Please wait."
REM
REM FOR t = 1 to n : NEXT t
REM
REM END SUB
```

Here's the foil pattern for the Phone Troll.
LISTING 6

```
SUB Ring
SHARED ratio
SHARED rngct
SHARED noansw

RINGADING:
DO
  CALL LineSample
  LOOP UNTIL ratio < .5 OR ratio = 9 'loops while ringing, but may catch first silence
  rngct = rngct + 1
  CALL LineSample 'get full sample
REM ring has either stopped (ratio = 9) or phone goes off-hook (ratio < .5)
REM assume between rings, then check for off-hook
RingStartTime = TIMER
DO WHILE TIMER - RingStartTime < 5 AND ratio = 9
  CALL LineSample
  REM correct RingStartTime when passing thru midnight
  IF TIMER - RingStartTime < 0 THEN RingStartTime = RingStartTime - 86400
  LOOP

  CALL LineSample
IF ratio > .5 AND ratio <> 9 THEN GOTO RINGADING 'ring again
IF TIMER - RingStartTime >= 5 THEN noansw = 1

END SUB
```

the included foil pattern, use the parts-placement diagram in Fig. 3 for locating the various components. Note that two jumper wires are needed; they are located near P1. When mounting the components, pay careful attention to the orientation of the semiconductors. The 1% resistors have three digit bands instead of two. The values, however, can still be read using the standard color codes.

The assembled board can be enclosed in a suitable case and mounted to the game port as shown in Fig. 4. With that arrangement, you will need to make a pair of extended screws for securing the Phone Troll to the game-port connector. Take a suitable length of stiff plastic pipe that is hollow. Glue a length of 4-40 threaded rod in one end so that it sticks out enough to screw down P1 to the game port. A nut should be threaded onto the rod to act as a stop. The length of the plastic pipe should be long enough to reach out the back of the case. That way, the screw can easily be turned by hand. The details for the extended screw are shown in Fig. 5. If you do not want to mount the Phone Troll like that, you can install it in a receptacle box and connect it to the game port with a cable and 15-pin "D" connector.

The test fixture can be made with an eight-LED bar-graph display, a single-inline resistor network, a 25-pin connector, and a strip of single-row straight header. The header will need to be bent on one side to match the spacing of the connector. That method makes a rugged assembly that matches up the different pin spacings between the connector and the bar-graph display.

Don’t forget to install a jumper between pins 14 and 15 on the connector. The QBasic program will check all of the available parallel ports. The jumper will help identify the connector to the program. The completed fixture will look similar to the one shown in Fig. 6. As a side note, the test fixture can also be used as a stand-alone test tool. You can use it to automatically find, identify, and test an active parallel port including enhanced parallel ports.

Testing the Phone Troll. Connect the telephone lines to the Phone Troll and attach it to the PC’s game port. Plug the test fixture into the printer port. The QBasic program will have to be typed in—follow Listing 6 through Listing 2 in order. Save the program as "FONETROL.BAS". Run the program, and the Phone Troll is up and running. If you aren’t using the test fixture, the program will pause to let you set the parallel-port address. If no address is entered, the program will continue but without the control function.

After the program checks your computer’s speed (for the timing function) and determines which parallel port is active, it will display the date, time, and start a log file. Pick up a telephone and the screen should show “Off-Hook, DTMF active”. Press #11 through #81 and all eight LEDs should turn on one at a time, depending on which LED you’re activating. Press #10 through #80 and all eight LEDs should turn off.

When building a new device, there’s always the possibility that it won’t work the first time. Recheck all of the parts for correct placement, orientation, and solder connections before continuing. Troubleshooting is more of an art form than a science and can’t easily be explained in a few paragraphs. However, here are a few test points to check that will help isolate any trouble spots in the circuit. When the telephone goes off-hook, the voltage at R7 (next to Q2), or voltage at R8 (next to Q1) will drop from 5 volts to less than 1 volt. With a high-impedance device such as an oscilloscope or logic probe, verify that the oscillator at pin 8 on IC2 is running. Pick up a telephone that is being monitored by the Phone Troll and press a button. You should see that pin 15 on IC2 pulses low. Those tests will help pinpoint any spots in either the circuit or the software for additional tests.

Programming in QBasic. A nice feature with QBasic is that you are not restricted to the original program as would be the case with a compiled executable program. Running the Phone Troll directly from the source code lets you customize the Phone Troll’s features to your own wants, needs, and desires. You will still need
to know how to program in QBasic, but it's very easy to modify the code and see what happens. Many budding programmers start gaining hands-on experience by modifying a program to achieve a particular goal. Just make sure that you have a backup copy of the program before you start experimenting. The program is well documented and will stand alone to act as a guide for those who are familiar with QBasic.

One example of a need to modify the program has to do with distinctive-ring service. The program will detect and count a normal ring cycle (two seconds of ringing followed by four seconds of silence). Distinctive ringing might cause the Phone Troll to count each burst of rings, indicating two or three rings for each actual ring. Simply divide the variable ringct by two or three, or rewrite the program to indicate which sequence of rings was received.

Like any good servant, your troll awaits.

HEAT DETECTOR
(continued from page 41)

Using the Heat Detector. There are a few points to consider whenever using the Heat Detector to obtain consistent readings: always grasp the unit by the handle only, keeping your body heat as far away from the cabinet as possible. For critical operation, attaching the unit to a camera tripod would be an excellent method.

Unless you are actually leak-testing and looking for circulating air, any air that blows across Q1 will cause temperature drift in your readings. Still air is the priority here.

The parabolic reflector used is very directional and will take some practice in aiming. Pointing a standard flashlight at an opposite wall will give you an idea of the area of coverage to be expected.

Hold the unit by the handle and set R3 to its minimum gain setting. Set R7 and R9 to their mid-positions. Turn on the power and point the reflector at a blank wall.

Adjust R7 for a display of about half of full scale on M1. That is the most sensitive area, although any region between 20% and 80% will work well. If R7 won't get you on scale, it might be necessary to adjust R6's value. An increase in value lowers M1's reading, and vice versa.

Advance R3 slowly while watching the display—it will probably move off-scale in one direction or the other as you arrive at the maximum gain setting. That is due to inherent offset voltages in the components. Adjusting R7 should give full-scale coverage in either direction at the highest gain setting. If not, adjust R6's value as mentioned above.

Note that making any settings with R7 becomes more difficult as the gain is increased. That is where R9 becomes very useful. For best results, always adjust R7 first to get as close as possible; then use R9 as a "fine" adjust for a 50% of full-scale indication on M1.

Set R3 back down to its minimum gain setting and adjust R7 for a 50% reading on M1. Now that you have an ambient-temperature set-point from the blank wall, point the unit at a match or candle flame about 6 to 12 inches away. You should immediately "peg" M1. Return to the blank wall and the display will return to 50%.

Rotate R3 to mid-position, and adjust R7 for a 50% reading on the blank wall. Hold the palm of your hand about 6 to 12 inches in front of the reflector and M1 should go full-scale again. Hold an ice cube in front of the reflector and M1 should drop to its minimum reading.

Rotate R3 to its maximum position, and adjust R7 (followed by R9) for a 50% reading on the blank wall. Now you can "sweep" slowly around the room. A hot spot such as a sunlit window or a lamp will probably peg M1 at full-scale. You will now note that any breeze, even one caused by rapid movement of the Heat Detector, will cause display drift.

Going Further. You will by now have realized that the parabolic reflector plays a critical role in the sensitivity and area of coverage of the Heat Detector. A 3-inch-diameter reflector is an excellent size for general-purpose use. However, it can be difficult to aim accurately at distant objects.

The solution to that problem is to use a larger reflector. Any photographic supply store will carry larger-diameter reflectors. Of course, the sensitivity of the instrument increases with the square of the diameter in addition to the coverage.

Some applications such as remote testing of circuit boards for hot spots might have the opposite requirement—miniature parabolic reflectors. A 1-inch-diameter reflector would be highly directional. The Heat Detector has sufficient gain to compensate for the decreased gain from the reflector. A miniature flashlight would be a good source for smaller reflectors.

Of course, you still have to make sure that Q1 is focused properly. An adjustable focus arrangement would be a great help in close-up work, where the focal point moves further away from the rear of the reflector. One method that can be used to make the Heat Detector more versatile would be to use a TO-5 transistor socket with female pins that are spring-loaded and completely hollow through their length. That would allow you to slide Q1 back and forth to achieve any focus position.

The Heat Detector is an easy-to-build precision instrument that shouldn't cost more than about $25 to put together even using all new parts. Any salvaged or surplus components will drop the cost of the project to the point where it becomes an almost trivial matter to add such an instrument to your bench or tool kit. Build one yourself and have hours of educational fun, or even put it to some practical use!
MAKE YOUR OWN SHUNTS!

Using a modern multimeter to measure current can sometimes be difficult. Many of these meters will only measure up to one amp. However, many 12-volt DC-powered projects draw a lot more than that. If you have ever thought of purchasing a commercial shunt to solve the problem, you know just how expensive they can be. Commercial shunts, while very precise, frequently cost more than the projects they are measuring!

However, there is a better and cheaper alternative that will work perfectly well in most situations: With only a few cents worth of wire and a little know-how, you can make your own shunts. It only takes a few minutes, and it’s fun!

What Is A Shunt? A shunt is simply a resistor of very low value (frequently less than one ohm) that is used to help measure current. As shown in Fig. 1, the shunt resistor RH is placed in parallel with a meter to decrease its sensitivity by a known amount. The shunt does that by bypassing or “shunting” most of the current around the meter. The shunt resistor therefore lets you take a standard meter, such as a 0–1 milliammeter, and turn it into, say, a 0–20-amp meter.

The Shunt Meter. Before you can make a shunt, you must find a suitable shunt meter. Surplus analog meters can be found at hamfests or mail-order sources for only a few dollars each, and they make excellent shunt meters. For a list of mail-order sources of surplus analog meters, as well as new ones, see the sidebar.

When selecting a meter, try to pick a 0–1 milliammeter in good physical condition and one with a convenient scale on the faceplate. For example, if you need the meter to read 10-amps full scale, then select a meter graduated from 0 to 0–1mA. When making your own shunts, you can use any meter, analog or digital.

While they might not be as accurate as the commercial units, these easy-to-make shunts are more than sufficient for many uses, and cost far less.

DEAN F. POETH II, Ph.D., K8TM

Fig. 1. A shunt is simply a resistor of very low value (frequently less than one ohm) that is used to help measure current. It is placed in parallel with a meter to decrease its sensitivity by a known amount.

1. If you need a full scale reading of 30 amps, select one with a 0 to 3 graduation.

To make a shunt, you will need to know the internal resistance of your meter. Therefore, select a unit that has its internal resistance printed on it, most likely in small letters on the meter face or on the back near the terminals.

If you already have a meter on hand but do not know its internal resistance, there is a simple way it can be determined. If you have a modern digital multimeter, set it to its highest resistance range. Connect the multimeter’s red (positive) lead to the positive analog meter terminal and the black (common) lead to the analog meter’s negative terminal.

Digital multimeters measure resistance by passing a small amount of current through the device under test. Do not attempt to use an analog multimeter to make this measurement. These older multimeters use much more current to test resistance, enough to potentially destroy some milliammeters.

Watching your analog meter, work your way down the DMM’s resistance ranges (remember you began at the highest range) until the analog meter’s needle moves to a full-scale reading. Note the reading on your DMM, and write it on the back of the meter using a permanent marker. Be careful and take your time. If you go too fast and accidentally pin the meter, it could easily be damaged.

Making The Shunt. The shunt is made from a short length of copper wire. All wire has resistance, so we can use that property to make a shunt resistor. To make the shunt, you first need to determine how much current will flow through it. For example, if your meter is going to measure 20 amps full scale, then the shunt wire must be safely able to carry that amount of current.

Let’s say you are going to make a 20-amp shunt using a surplus analog 0–1 milliammeter whose faceplate is graduated from 0–1. Go to a copper-wire table (there is one in the ARRL Handbook for Radio Amateurs; if you don’t have a copy, it is available at almost any public library) and select an appropriate gauge wire. Remember that the smaller the wire gauge, the larger its diameter and the more current it can safely carry. For most hobby applications, 250 circular mils per amp is more than adequate.

To find the circular mils per amp for the shunt wire, divide the circular mils for the selected wire (found in the copper wire table) by the...
current you intend to pass through the wire:

\[ \text{Circular Mils per amp} = \frac{\text{circu-}}{\text{lar mils for wire}} / \text{(current through the wire)} \quad (\text{Eq. 1}) \]

By using the copper wire table, you will find that 12-gauge wire has a cross-sectional area of 6530 circular mils. By dividing that by 20 amps, we get 326 circular mils/amp, which should work fine. Twelve-gauge wire is very common, and can be purchased in most hardware stores.

To find the resistance of the shunt, use this equation:

\[ R_{SH} = R_M / (n-1) \quad (\text{Eq. 2}) \]

Where \( R_{SH} \) is the resistance of the shunt, \( R_M \) is the resistance of the surplus meter, and \( n \) is the shunt’s multiplication factor. In our example, since we are using a 0-1 milliammeter and 1 millamp = 0.001 amps, \( n = 20 \) amps/0.001 amps, or 20,000.

Next, let’s suppose that the resistance of your meter was 81 ohms. Plugging that resistance and \( n = 20,000 \) into Equation 2 yields:

\[ R_{SH} = 81V / (20,000-1) = 0.00405V \]

That’s not very much resistance, is it? A shunt having that resistance will pass 19.999 amps thought it, and 0.001 amps (1 mA) will pass through the meter for a full-scale reading.

Next, we need to calculate the length of our shunt. Note that as stated in the copper-wire table, 12-gauge wire has a resistance of 1.619 ohms/1000 ft. Therefore, the length of the shunt wire \( (L_s) \) can therefore be determined using:

\[ L_s = R_{SH} / (XV / 1000 \text{ ft.}) = 0.00405 / (1.619V / 1000 \text{ ft.}) = 2.5 \text{ ft.} \]

So the 12-gauge wire shunt should be 2 feet 6 inches long when using a 0-1 mA meter having an internal resistance of 81 ohms to measure 20 amps full scale.

If we made the shunt this long, however, we might have trouble with contact resistance. That is because even a good solder joint has a lot of resistance when compared to a 0.00405-ohm shunt. To make sure that the circuit’s contact resistance is not part of the shunt resistance, two sense wires are used. These sense wires are spaced \( L_s \) apart on the shunt wire as shown in Fig. 2. Any type of wire may be used for the sense wires; they are noncritical. This simple feature will greatly increase the accuracy of your shunt.

Now we are ready to make our shunt. Cut a length of 12-gauge solid copper wire about 3-feet long. Remove the insulation from the wire using a hobby knife, being careful not to nick it. Now measure about 2 inches from one end and solder one sense wire there. Carefully measure 2 ft 6 inches from that sense wire and solder the second sense wire in position. Connect the shunt to its meter as shown in Fig. 2, and you’re ready to measure current! If you want to make the shunt a little more compact, you can wind it over an insulated screwdriver handle or something similar such as a non-conductive wood dowel.

**Calibrating the Shunt.** Shunts made using this method can be very accurate. However, improved accur-
many homeowners have thought about going to solar power, but up to now might have been turned off by the hassles of a typical solar-panel array installation. Besides being quite costly, in most cases solar systems have been downright ugly. Indeed, some communities even have covenants against their use.

Fortunately, that is changing as photovoltaic suppliers, working with architects and builders, are developing "Building-Integrated Photovoltaic (BIPV)" systems. That has resulted in residential solar electric systems with greatly improved aesthetics—these BIPV systems are an integral part of the home design rather than an obvious and often unattractive add-on.

The new BIPV systems do double duty. They convert sunlight into electricity while performing the traditional jobs of roofing materials—protecting the structure from the elements while enhancing its appearance. Two examples of the new product are United Solar's Uni-Solar PV Shingles and Atlantis System's SunSlate Roofing System.

But there's more happening on the solar-energy front than just products that look much better. The cost of home photovoltaics has also come down, with even more reductions promised for the future. With ever improving technology, the cost of generating electricity using photovoltaics, now at 25 to 50 cents per kilowatt-hour, may go as low as 12 to 16 cents per kilowatt-hour. Looking at it in another way, photovoltaic modules that sold for $50 per rated watt of peak generating capacity in 1970 dollars, now sell for $5 to $7 per watt.

**Solar Shingles.** United Solar, a joint venture between Energy Conversion Devices, Inc. and Canon Inc., a leading international manufacturer of office equipment and photographic and optical products, is now offering a line of solar shingles for residential applications as well other innovative solar metal-roofing products for commercial buildings.

The flexible shingles use proprietary thin-film semiconductor materials for the solar cells. Made of stainless steel coated with silicon semiconductor material and plastic, the solar shingles look like ordinary asphalt ones. The system integrates the solar shingle with the necessary " combiner" boxes, inverter, and wiring to convert sunlight into electric energy and distribute it directly to the building.

The Uni-Solar PV Shingles use amorphous silicon in thin films as the light-to-energy conversion material. While amorphous silicon has a lower conversion efficiency than the more traditional crystalline silicon, it potentially has a lower mass-production cost. Therefore, it is often seen as the best option for cost-effective home photovoltaic systems. What's more, recent advances have closed the gap between the two technologies. In particular, United Solar, under U.S. Department of Energy funding, has developed a thin-film amorphous-silicon cell that converts over 10% of sunlight into electricity, a significant improvement over the less than the 6% efficiency typical for this technology. That compares favorably to an efficiency of over 12% currently available from crystalline-silicon technology.

To achieve that efficiency, each cell in a Uni-Solar PV Shingle actually is made up of three separate p-i-n-type amorphous semiconductor solar sub-cells, each with a different spectral-response characteristic. That allows the cell to convert the different visible and near infrared wavelengths of sunlight with optimum efficiency.

United Solar and ECD have developed a low-cost manufacturing technique to make the thin-film amorphous-silicon alloy multi-junction solar modules. The pioneering technique uses one-half-mile-long substrates in a roll-to-roll process for manufacturing solar cells. The technique is similar to how newsprint...
More appealing in appearance than conventional solar-power arrays, each individual SunSlate roofing tile, with a photovoltaic cell mounted on it, produces 12.5 watts. The tiles are nailed on to a structure just like conventional shingles.

Part of a SunSlate-roofing-tile power array installed at the Arizona Public Service Company's STAR Center in Tempe, AZ. The complete system is rated at one kilowatt.

and photographic film is produced. The production plant, which came on-line in March 1997, can manufacture enough solar panels to generate five-million watts of electrical energy annually.

The seven-foot-long Uni-Solar PV Shingles are installed just like regular shingles, and the job can be done by any roofer. The shingles are nailed onto the roof and the pair of wires attached to each shingle are inserted through holes in the wood decking. An electrician then connects the wires below the roof. A mixture of solar and ordinary shingles is used since, with sufficient sunlight, only one-third-of-a-roof’s-worth of the shingles is needed to power the average home. The solar shingles blend in to the roofing pattern of the traditional asphalt shingles.

Uni-Solar PV Shingles have been installed on several demonstration homes. The Energy Efficient Home In Atlanta is fitted with a 2-kW solar-shingle array. Urban Options operates the Energy and Environmental Demonstration House In Lansing, MI, which features a 2-kW, 120 solar-shingle array. A 1.5-kW, 96-shingle system is installed at the University of Denver’s astronomical observatory atop Mount Evans. That stand-alone system includes a DC-to-AC converter and 16 storage batteries that provide sufficient power to operate the lab’s computers, instruments, and lights for up to five days. The Centex Home of the Future, built for the International Builder’s Show in Dallas, uses an 800-watt, 200-square-foot Uni-Solar roof-shingle system that provides electricity for computers, security system, skylight-drive motor, garage-door opener, and two emergency service outlets. Operating independent of normal utility power, it provides both backup electricity during outages as well as saving on electrical-energy costs.

Atlantis Systems, Inc. is also offering aesthetically appealing BIPV capability with its SunSlate Roofing System. Each individual SunSlate roofing tile, with a photovoltaic cell mounted on it, produces 12.5 watts. The tiles are nailed on to a structure just like conventional shingles.

The Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), along with Atlantis Systems, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, a local architectural firm, and a local construction company are installing SunSlate roofs on 20 new homes in a new 45-home subdivision in mid-town Sacramento. As part of SMUD’s PV Pioneer II program, SMUD pays half of the costs of a new SunSlate system and is helping the new owner to obtain a reduced mortgage rate on the home. While the homeowner will be paying between $7,000 to $7,500 for a system, it will generate 75-85% of a home’s electricity needs annually, meaning that the SunSlate system should pay for itself in about 12 years.

Recently ETA Engineering in Scottsdale, AZ installed an 80-SunSlate-roofing-tile array for Arizona Public Service Company at its STAR Center in Tempe, AZ. The total system (Continued on page 62)
LET'S START THIS MONTH WITH A QUICK QUESTION: WHICH IS MORE EFFICIENT—A HEAT ENGINE OR A FUEL CELL? BEFORE YOU ANSWER, NOTE THAT THE FOLKS AT POWER ENGINEERING MAGAZINE REPORT THAT THE LATEST POWER PLANTS are approaching a stunning 60% thermal efficiency by using close-coupled multi-cycling. Also note that one power utility is extremely proud of its real world 50% electrical-efficiency fuel-cell installations.

As always, there will be intelligent choices and reasonable tradeoffs. And, as always, a good starting point should be accurate technical information from unbiased sources. Let's see where this leads us as we seek out some.

Transportation Alternatives

A personal-transportation vehicle consists largely of an energy carrier and an energy converter. Three valid measurements of the energy carrier are: "How heavy is it?" "How much room does it take up?" And "What is the total cost per mile?" Gasoline is your baseline energy carrier at 9000 watt-hours per liter and 13,500 watt-hours per kilogram. With a cost of roughly seven cents per mile for the consumables and 30 cents per mile for payments, taxes, and insurance.

These figures define the capability of the carrier itself. Such figures have to be adjusted downward when you factor in how efficiently your energy can be used and how much structure, containment, or whatever is needed to safely hold the carrier.

Naturally, any proposed alternates also must be adjusted downward as well. Figures must also be modified for the distortions caused by taxes or any hidden subsidies.

Because of thermodynamic laws, an ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) has to throw away a lot of heat in order to produce a little mechanical power. The best you can ever hope to do is called the Carnot efficiency limit and is determined solely by the high-side and low-side temperatures. The typical automobile ICE-efficency at the flywheel is around 30 percent.

The claims of "how much better" the alternates might be are often outrageously overstated. For instance, a typical electric motor of suitable size and price probably provides an efficiency of no better than 90 percent. Its controller will be hard pressed to hit 85, and its wiring will be unable to exceed 98.

Combine these for a realistic 75 percent efficiency. And, no, regenerative braking does not help nearly as much as some of its more-vocal proponents claim.

What if you add a fuel cell to the mix? It turns out that the best of hydrogen-electrolysis cells are one-sixth endothermic, so you'd pretty much expect the best fuel cell to end up as one-sixth exothermic, which means that 83 percent efficiency is the best you are likely to do. Combine fuel cells with electric motors, and you are down at a 63-percent efficiency limit. That's certainly better than gasoline engines, but not spectacularly so.

Here's how I see some of the key issues that seem to involve personal transportation alternatives:

Business as usual: A lot can still be done to tweak the performance of conventional ICES. Examples include ceramic cylinders, six-cycle operation, ultra-lean combustion, modest hydrogen injection, valve timing done on-the-fly, improved turbocharging, adjustable compression, and possibly even a new bottoming cycle. A company by the name of Aurora Engineering has some exceptionally innovative new stuff in this area, including things like electrically actuated valves and combination starter-alternator-flywheel packages that even can double as AC power generators.

Turbines: Turbines provide high power in a small and lightweight package. They are superb for airplanes, but are grossly inefficient at less than full output and usually run only at extreme speeds. I'd expect this one to literally stay off the ground.

Liquefied natural gas: The energy
FIG. 1—SOME CURRENT BOOKS on hybrid and electric vehicles. More title information can be found at http://www.tinaja.com/amlink01.html.

density here is certainly useful, but still remains significantly less than gasoline. The same goes for propane. The popularity of this method waxes and wanes with the relative economics of oil versus gas, and it gets distorted by taxes, subsidies, and hidden agendas. Infrastructure is obviously limited. I don’t see this option getting very far unless economics radically change.

Grain alcohol: When based upon an American-farm corn economy, a lot more energy will go into producing alcohol than you can ever hope to get back. From an energy standpoint, the process can be considered a giant funnel. You pour gasoline in the top and alcohol dribbles out the bottom. Further, alcohol additives appear to be causing far more problems than they solve. Yes, there is definitely a third-world subsistence potential by using bagasse (sugar cane residue) or similar feedstocks. Otherwise, this one makes no engineering sense whatsoever. At least not to me.

Steam engines: Believe it or not, the steam-powered automobile was done in by hoof-and-mouth disease. Seems they drained all those public horse troughs just as inferior gas engines were starting to discover production economics. A steam engine is vastly simpler, offers high power on every stroke, and needs neither a clutch nor a transmission. Key issues remain closed-cycle vapor re-condensation, corrosion or scaling problems, and any inefficient superheating techniques. This one still has lots of potential, but seems to lack a credible champion.

Pure electrics: The energy density of batteries is utterly abysmal when compared to gasoline—only 35 watt-hours per kilogram for lead-acid and ten times that for lithium. The range, weight, and charging infrastructure remain key problems. It also turns out that any battery
operates by knocking loose one single electron in its outer shell. So, the smaller the atom, the better the energy density. I see nothing even beating out lithium (atomic number=3) for the ultimate energy density. A useful Web site on this topic can be found at www.cwdlworld.com.

Because laptop computers are an instant and a billion-dollar market for improved battery technology, I'd expect the computer folks to inadvertently "solve" the electric-car problem, in spades. They clearly have the money and the motivation.

**Fuel cells:** The essential difference between a battery and a fuel cell is that the fuel cell continually receives external chemical energy from one or more product streams, often by using hydrogen and oxygen. The crucial advantage of a fuel cell is that it is not a heat engine and thus will not be Carnot limited at its best efficiency. Another major advantage is that its main waste product is water.

Central issues in fuel cells today involve the reforming of methane or gasoline to make useful feedstocks, and trying to get the efficiency and performance up and the costs down. Fuel cells are still not very efficient, nor all that great at any suddenly changing power levels. Ballard is one high-profile source. A leading Web site on this topic is www.fuelcells.org. A major technical publication is the *Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Letter*.

**Hybrids:** Any ICE run at a constant speed is easily optimized. Batteries aren't all that heavy if you don't use that many of them. In a serial hybrid, the engine drives a generator, which powers the motors, eliminating the drive train. In a parallel hybrid, both engine and electric motors can drive the wheels, and both can be one half of the needed peak power. I believe this one is by far the best near-term solution. Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute is one champion of hybrid vehicles. Be sure to visit his site at www.rmi.org.

**Hydrogen:** The energy density by weight of hydrogen is outstanding—three times gasoline at 39,000 watt-hours per kilogram. Hydrogen routed to either an ICE or a fuel cell produces primarily water vapor as waste. Sadly, the energy density by volume as a gas is a pitifully absurd 3.5 watt-hours per STP liter. Even when liquefied, there is around four times less hydrogen in a gallon of liquid hydrogen than there is in a gallon of gasoline.

The "make it or break it" issue of a hydrogen economy involves finding ways to safely store hydrogen in a dense form. A graphite nanotube storage scheme pioneered by Nelly Rodriguez offers eight times the density of gasoline, but this technology seems slow in coming out of the lab, mostly due to lifetime and reuse considerations. More on hydrogen advantages and disadvantages can be found in MUSE112.PDF on my www.tinaja.com Web site. Hydrogen safety is discussed at www-osma.lerc.nasa.gov/ism.

**Powerballs:** These are simply spheres full of sodium—cracking the sphere underwater generates hydrogen. The densities involved are about the same as liquid hydrogen. All hydrocarbon pollution is eliminated by not using carbon, but to me, it seems that a lot of safety, hazmat, and recycling issues have not yet been realistically addressed. So far, this option seems to be a one-man show at Powerball Industries in Utah. More powerball details are found at www.powerball.net/index.html.

A variation on powerballs sparks aluminum under water to generate hydro-
Nitrogen power seems a student-project favorite. Several nitrogen car links appear on my Web site.

**Thermoelectric recovery:** Some older Peltier and related thermoelectric devices have been proposed to try and recover energy from exhaust or muffler heat. The devices to date are so inefficient that they never can even hope to return their cost, let alone accomplish anything useful. Usually a minor tire-pressure adjustment can deliver more energy savings for you.

A somewhat random assortment of my favorite alternative automotive resources is shown as this month’s resource sidebar. Additional information on some of these topics is also found at www.tinaja.com/h2gas01.html

I have added access to most of the more accessible books on electric-vehicle subjects to my Web site at www.tinja.com/amlink01.html. A summary listing appears in Fig. 1. Again, I feel that hybrids blow away electrics on all counts, and will continue to do so until fundamental battery energy-density problems are economically resolved.

### An Isolated Power Supply

The Burr-Brown folks have just introduced a new series of isolated hybrid power supplies. All these $6 devices are the size and shape of a 14-pin minidip, give output currents to fifty mils, and can provide safety isolation to 1000 volts.

Inside the hybrid is a 400-kHz oscillator, a tiny toroidal transformer, and some output diodes. Only two external capacitors are needed to get these to work. Obvious uses include AC-line isolation, eliminating hum and ground loops, doing high-side current sensing, and communication-line isolation.

These also let you do such tricks as very-low-frequency on/off data translation or letting both sides of a bridge rectifier tie to ground. The devices track the input voltage and offer only ten percent regulation, so some low-dropout post regulator might also be needed.

As shown in Fig. 2, various models of the device offer single and dual outputs. You can also conjure up your own custom isolated power converters through use of the individual bits and pieces separately sold as Burr-Brown’s PWS745 and PWS750 products.

### Another Approach

There is an obviously need for a device that to date is not available: A 79-
cent chip that starts off with a raw 110-volt AC input and then cheaply outputs isolated and hassle-free +5 volts at an amp or whatever.

There is one new device that comes close: the Harris HV2405E. That device does accept AC-line voltage as its input, but does not include the essential safety isolation. The high power (2 watts) dissipated in the input resistor also severely limits the efficiency and package size.

Even so, the device works equally well at 110 and 220 volts without any jumpers or switching. If you'd like to experiment with it, a circuit that provides a fixed 5-volt output is shown in Fig. 3, while an adjustable 5- to 20-volt version is shown in Fig. 4.

Again, be aware that the lack of isolation means that a severe shock hazard could potentially exist, so be extra sure to take the usual safety precautions. If you are at all unsure of that means, or are inexperienced in working with AC circuits, maybe it would be better if you just left this one alone.

**New Tech Lit**

From Texas Instruments, comes a new two-volume amplifier-chip data book library. From Harris, there's a nice booklet about Semiconductor Solutions for Multimedia, Video, and Imaging.

From That Corporation, comes a new $3 rms level-detector IC that provides wide bandwidth, a log output, and crest factors as high as eight. It is intended for electronic music apps.

New from NTE is a fat semiconductor directory that cross-references over 260,000 chips of one sort or another. From Aesar comes a free periodic table of the elements wall poster.

Certain new low temperature alloys that melt at 158 degrees Fahrenheit are offered by MCP Systems. Their intended use is for low-cost prototyping and mold-making intermediates. Useful casting plastics and mold-making materials are sold by Polytek, who has a free Developments newsletter. Another source is CastCraft.

A wide variety of educational and other laser products are stocked by Kentek. Ask for catalog #118.

A new magneto-coloric magnetic refrigeration material is described in *Science* for March 27, 1998 on page 2045. That material is six times more effective than the previous ones and operates at room temperature. Thus, only one sixth of the newer material is needed for a home refrigerator or similar heat-transfer system.

For those unfamiliar with how this works, basically any magnetic material absorbs heat energy whenever it is magnetized and releases heat energy when raised above its Curie Point, the temperature where it totally loses its magnetic properties. While not quite solid-state (your material has to slowly move from

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**HV2405E**

![Diagram](https://example.com/diagram.png)

**WARNING: Severe shock hazard!**

*Fig. 3*—THIS AC-LINE OPERATED 5-volt power supply uses a new Harris chip. Note that safety isolation is NOT provided so the potential for a severe shock hazard exists.
source to sink and back again), the mechanics involved are simpler than a compressor, and no freon or other fluids are involved. Additional magnetic-refrigeration coverage appears in the March 1998 issue of *Appliance Manufacturer* on page 14. More details on magnetic refrigeration can also be found in HACK33.PDF and RESBN63.PDF on my Web site, and in volume III of my "Hardware Hacker" reprints.


*Time Compression Technologies* is a new trade journal on Santa Claus machines, rapid prototyping systems, CAD/CAM, and industrial design. A lot more on the Santa Claus machines themselves and lots of links are at www.tinaja.com/santa01.html.

Our second trade journal for this month is the new *Integrated Design & Manufacturing*.

Some nice reprints on wavelets are newly offered by the folks at MatLab. Additional resources and links are at www.tinaja.com/wave01.html.


Bunches of freebie tutorials about wireless and communications topics appear at www.iec.org.

For all the fundamentals of active filters in an easy-to-understand and easier-to-use format, check out my *Active Filter Cookbook*. Ordering details are found in my nearby Synergetics ad, or pick up your catalog instantly online at my www.tinaja.com/synlib01.html.

Magic Sinewaves are a brand new opportunity that lets you generate surprisingly efficient and elegantly simple high-power waveforms for use in industrial, automotive, solar, and home-energy efficiency areas. I've recently posted a lot of new files to www.tinaja.com/magsn01.html.

Our usual reminders that most of the mentioned resources appear in the Names and Numbers or Alternative Automotive Resources sidebars, that we offer a free US helpline per the nearby box, and that my Guru's Lair Web site is www.tinaja.com.

**SOLAR POWER**

(continued from page 54)

is rated at one kilowatt. Like Uni-Solar PV Shingles, only a small portion of the roof needs to be covered with the photovoltaic tiles to provide sufficient electricity.

**Million Solar Roof Initiative.** Residential solar energy will get a great boost from President Clinton's "Million Solar Roof Initiative." Its goal is to install a million photovoltaic and thermal solar energy systems on roofs across the U.S. by the year 2010. The Million Solar Roof Initiative is also aimed at increased usage of residential and commercial solar water heating solar pool heating.

One key reason for the initiative is to decrease the production of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that many scientists believe can cause global warming. Experts say the amount of carbon dioxide not produced by a million solar roofs would be like getting 850,000 cars off the road. These million solar roofs could also reduce energy consumption, pollution, and the country's reliance on foreign petroleum. Further, by the year 2010, about 70,000 new high-technology jobs could be created to meet the new demand for photovoltaic, solar water heating, and related technologies. The initiative will bring solar power not only to private homes, but also to schools, libraries, and large and small businesses. Finally, as economies of scale kick in as a result of increased usage and mass production, the initiative is seen as a way to reduce the cost of solar-energy products.

The Million Solar Roof Initiative is being led by the U.S. Department of Energy and involves the building industry, local governments, state agencies, the solar industry, electric utilities, and non-governmental organizations. The federal government is taking the lead by accelerating its use of solar energy. It is important to note that the government alone owns nearly a half-million buildings and spends $3 billion annually for electricity, making it the world's largest single user of energy. Add to that the more than 76-million commercial buildings and almost five-million residential buildings, plus an additional 38 million projected by the year 2010 in the U.S. alone, and it is easy to see that the potential for solar roofs is tremendous.

Because of this potential, electric utilities are already getting in on the action. For example, some 68 utilities serving 40% of U.S. electrical customers have formed a consortium, the Utility Photovoltaic Group (UPVG), to buy $500 million worth of photovoltaic panels by the year 2003.
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| 16x4 | $15.00 | 32x4 | $10.00 | 4x2 | $5.00 |

5V power required. Built-in G-MOS LCD driver & controller. +98 ASCII character generator. Certain models are backlit. Call for more info.

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**Graphics and alphanumeric—serial interface**

| 480x480 (backlit) | Epson | $25.00 | 480x128 | Hitachi | $10.00 |
| 480x600 (backlit) | Panasonic | $20.00 | 256x128 | Epson | $20.00 |
| 480x600 (backlit) | Toshiba | $15.00 | 256x128 | Optrex | $20.00 |
| 480x128 (backlit) | ALPS | $10.00 | | Epson | $15.00 |

**Laser Products**

| HeNe Laser Head | 100mW max. output TEMMO, 15.5° long MFG. NEC | $89.00 |
| Laser Power Supply (for HeNe tube) | $79.00 |

Assembly included for a laser printer. Includes laser diode, polygon motor (4 side) and sync optics and lenses.

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**Laser Diode (5mW) with collimator.**

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**Pos & Bar Code Reader.**

Includes: 20 character dot matrix display with full alphanumeric capability + keypad with full alphanumeric entry + separate 7.5 VDC/0.5 A power supply + standard telephone interface extension cord + lithium battery and flat cone speaker.

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**Voltage Transformer**

| 110V-220V Transformer | 100W Power | $25.00 |

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**Magnetic Card Reader.**

Includes: 20 character dot matrix display with full alphanumeric capability + keypad with full alphanumeric entry + separate 7.5 VDC/0.5 A power supply + standard telephone interface extension cord + lithium battery and flat cone speaker.

**Bar code wand (HB2C2006).**

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**Cellsite Transceiver**

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| 1/4 CMOS 0.55 inch | $15.00 | Infrared Vertical and Horizontal - Delta Osa Pattern for High Picture Quality - 512 dots (H) x 222 dots (V) Compatible with NTSC / PAL Format and Sync Inputs | $90.00 |

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Comes with printer, 12V of 1.4 Amp input + Horizontal Frequency 150kHz + Ability to 40 and 80 column. 5 inch Amber $25.00, 7 inch Amber $25.00, 9 inch Amber or Green $25.00

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**Open Face Construction + Standard Interface Connections.**

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**Embedded 486 Computer $99.00.**

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Kit: $18.75

120-250W Mosfet Power Mono Amplifier
AF-2 (4 lbs.)

Power Output: 250W into 4 ohms RMS(42VX2 6A transformer is used). 120W into 4 ohms RMS(33VX2 4A transformer is used).
Frequency Response: 3Hz-22,000Hz. THD: <0.03%. Signal to Noise Ratio: 91dB. Sensitivity: 1V RMS at 47K. Load impedance: 4 or 8 ohms. Power Requirement: ±46VDC 4A or ±60VDC 8A. May use Mark V model 012 Transformer. Suggested Capacitor 8,200uf 50V Model 2005. Suggested Metal Cabinet LG-1925S.

Kit: $69.99

300W High Power Mono Amplifier
TA-3600 (5 lbs.)

Power Output: 300W into 8 ohms RMS, 540W music power into 8 ohms. Frequency Response: 10Hz-20,000Hz. THD: <0.06%. Sensitivity: 1V RMS at 47K. Power Requirement: 106VDC 6A or ±75VDC 8A. May use Mark V model 012 Transformer. Suggested Capacitor 8,200uf 100V Model 020. Suggested Metal Cabinet LG-1925.

Kit: $189.00

120W + 120W Pre & Main Stereo Amplifier
TA-800MK2 (4 lbs.)

Power Output: 120W into 4 ohms RMS. 72W into 8 ohms RMS. Frequency Response: 10-20KHz. THD: <0.01%. Tone Control: Bass ±12dB, Mid ±8dB, Treble ±6dB. Sensitivity: Phono Input, 3mV into 47K. Line, 0.3V into 47K. Signal to Noise Ratio: 85dB. Power Requirement: 40V DC @ 6A. May use Mark V Model 001. Suggested Capacitor 300uf 100V Model 001. Suggested Metal Cabinet LG-1924S.

Kit: $62.92

80W + 80W Pure DC Stereo Main Amplifier
TA-802 (4 lbs.)

Power Output: 80W per channel into 8 ohms. THD: <0.05%. Frequency Response: DC to 200KHz. D-B, -3dB @ 1W. Power Requirement: 30V AC X 2 @ 6A. May use Mark V Model 001 or 008 Transformer. Suggested Capacitor 8200uf 50V Model 017.

Kit: $89.00

30W + 30W Pre & Main Stereo Amplifier
TA-323A (1 lb.)

Power Output: 30W into 8 ohms RMS per channel. THD: <0.1% from 100Hz to 10KHz. Sensitivity: Phono 3mV @ 47K. Tuner, Tape 130mV @ 47K. Signal to Noise Ratio: 80dB. Power Requirement: 22 to 36V AC, 3A. May use Mark V Model 002 Transformer. Suggested Capacitor LG-1924.

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KA-904 $125.99 Contains its own computer with a diskette (files of the basic(Assembler) language required for operation. Compile programs to discover how computers operate while gaining an understanding of hardware & software. With easy-to-follow manuals which explains by comprehensive diagrams. Requires 4 "AA" batteries.

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Kit: $59.99 49.99

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continued from page 34

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New York, NY 10036
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Fax: 212-782-9341
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Designed for engineers, managers, technicians, and hobbyists, this catalog is filled with hundreds of new test instruments and tools. Featured are quality products from brand-name manufacturers for testing, repairing, and assembling electronic equipment. New product highlights include Fluke's redesigned 70 "Series III" DMMs; Tektronix' TDS "600 Series" digital real-time oscilloscopes; and Metcal rework stations. Complete specifications are given for each product.

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Berkeley, CA 94710
Tel: 800-264-4729 or 510-549-6600

This expanded reference guide gives in-depth coverage of object technology. It is the single most comprehensive sourcebook/CD-ROM package available for Oracle Server. Giving complete, encyclopedic coverage of Oracle Server software releases 7 through 8, this volume will be invaluable for database administrators, developers, programmers, and high-end users.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>List</th>
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<td>F-73III</td>
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- **Qts:** 40
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<tr>
<th>Part #</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>277-010 MDT-29</td>
<td>$42.50</td>
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<td>277-011 DMS-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>277-040 MDT-40</td>
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<td>392-046 79-III</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>297-210 8 Ohm, 15W-75, 5-1/4&quot;</td>
<td>$127.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>297-215 4 Ohm, 15W-75, 5-1/4&quot;</td>
<td>$119.90</td>
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<td>297-230 8 Ohm, 17W-LQ, 6-1/2&quot;</td>
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<td>297-235 4 Ohm, 17W-LQ, 6-1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$145.90</td>
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<td>297-240 8 Ohm, 20W-75, 7-1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$139.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>297-245 4 Ohm, 20W-75, 7-1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$139.90</td>
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<td>Tektronix 2213</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tektronix 2215</td>
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<td>Tektronix 465</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tektronix 475</td>
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<td>Tektronix 475A</td>
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Storage: -10°C to 50°C (14°F to 122°F).
Power: 9V alkaline or Carbon-zinc Batteries (NEDA 1504).
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Net Weight: 400g.
DC Voltage (DCV):
Range: Resolution: Accuracy:
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200V 10mV ±1% (±1µV+20µg)
1000V 100mV ±1% (±1µV+20µg)
1000V 1V ±1% (±1µV+20µg)
Minimum Allowable Input: 1000V DC or peak AC.
DC Current (DCA):
Range: Resolution: Accuracy:
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200µA 1µA ±1% (±1µA+20µg)
20mA 10µA ±1% (±1µA+20µg)
200mA 100µA ±1% (±1µA+20µg)
1.0A 10mA ±1% (±1µA+20µg)
Overload Protection: mA Input: 2A/250V fuse.

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
9300G Rugged High Quality DMM with Rubber Boot $19.00

Positive Photofabrication Kit
Make your own PCB's
Kit includes the basic items needed to fabricate pre-sensitized printed circuit boards (does not include artwork). Also included is a basic process guide to assist the user in the basics of exposing, developing and etching a PCB. All items fit conveniently in the plastic development tray, and a tight fitting lid is included for handy storage. Additional recommended supplies for fabricating PCB's are: exposure bulb, etchant tank, eye protection, art-work, paper towels.

Kit Includes:
1. Each 3x5" pre-sensitized single sided PCB
2. Each 4x6" pre-sensitized single sided PCB
3. Each 500ml developer liquid
4. Each 500ml ferric chloride etching liquid
5. Each 28g AG batteries
6. Each plastic development tray
7. Each rubber gloves
8. Each instruction sheet

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
416-K Photofabrication Kit $27.95

Positive Photo Resist Pre-Sensitized Printed Circuit Boards
These pre-sensitized printed circuit boards are ideal for small production runs. They provide high resolution and excellent line width control. High sensitivity photo resists coated on 1oz. copper foil allows you to go direct from your computer plot or art work layout. No need to reverse art.

Single-Sided, 1oz. Copper Foil on Paper Phenolic Substrate

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
PP101 100mm x 150mm/3.91" x 5.91" $2.55
PP114 114mm x 165mm/4.6" x 6.6" 2.98
PP152 150mm x 250mm/5.91" x 9.84" 5.40
PP153 150mm x 300mm/5.91" x 11.81" 6.15
PP1212 335mm x 355mm/13" x 12" 12.78

Single-Sided, 1oz. Copper Foil on Fiberglass Substrate

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
GS101 100mm x 150mm/3.91" x 5.91" $3.90
GS114 114mm x 165mm/4.6" x 6.6" 4.80
GS152 150mm x 250mm/5.91" x 9.84" 8.69
GS153 150mm x 300mm/5.91" x 11.81" 10.20
GS1212 335mm x 355mm/13" x 12" 18.88

Double-Sided, 1oz. Copper Foil on Fiberglass Substrate

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
GS102 100mm x 150mm/3.91" x 5.91" $5.07
GS114 114mm x 165mm/4.6" x 6.6" 5.95
GS152 150mm x 250mm/5.91" x 9.84" 10.47
GS153 150mm x 300mm/5.91" x 11.81" 11.95
GS1212 335mm x 355mm/13" x 12" 22.09

Exposure System
Just place your pre-sensitized board and artwork centered under the exposure fixture. Place the convenient acrylic sheet over the board and artwork to hold everything in place. Turn on light. Visual Exposure takes about 5 minutes. Kit includes one fluorescent tube, stand and acrylic weight.

Features:
1. Exposures boards in about 5 minutes!
2. Convenient acrylic sheet to hold board in place during exposure (12.5" x 8.5")
3. Fluorescent light fixture with plastic cover designed to aid in proper light extractions for even exposure.

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
416-X Fluorescent Exposure System $31.95
416-B Extra Replacement Fluorescent Tube 16.95

Etching Tank
This handy etching system will handle PCB boards up to 8" x 9". Two at a time is ideal for etching your PCB's. System includes an air pump for etchant agitation, a thermostatically controlled heater for keeping etchant at optimum temperature and a tank that holds 1.56 gallons of etchant. A light fitting lid is also supplied to prevent evaporation when system is not being used. Typical etching time is reduced to 4 minutes on 1oz. copper board.

REDUCES

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
12-700 Etch Tank System $37.95

Developer
This product is used as the developer on our positive photo resist printed circuit boards. Includes instructions. 50 gram packages, mixed with water, makes 1 quart.

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
1 10 POSDEV Positive Developer $5.95 $5.80 $5.50
26

Etching Chemicals/Ferric Chloride
A dry concentrate that mixes with water to make 1 pint of etchant, enough to etch 400 sq. inches of 1oz. board.

CAT NO DESCRIPTION PRICE
ER-3 Makes 1 pint $3.50 $2.75

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**Specifications**
- Image Sensor: Internally transfer CCD 1/3" format
- Effective Pixel: 512x492V, pixels/NTSC 512x581V, pixels/PAL
- Scanning System: 2:1 Interlace
- Sync System: Internal sync
- Sync Pulse: 15.75kHz + H (15.625kHz) + H (+15kHz)
- Sub-Carrier: 3.57MHz + H = 300
- Resolution: 400 TV lines (H)
- More than: 400 lines
- Dimenion: 1/8" X 1/14" (D)
- Weight: 3oz.

**CAT NO DESCRIPTION**
- WDB-5407S Color Water Tight Bullet Camera $299.00 $299.00

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B&W Dome camera with integrated microphone. Ideal security system application, 12 VDC operation.

**Specifications**
- Image Device: 1/3" Interline Transfer CCD
- Picture Elements: EIA-542(F)X492(F)
- Scanning System: 2:1 Interlace
- Horizontal Resolution: 360 TV lines
- Sensitivity: Under 0.3 Lux
- Electronic iris (F-stop): E1A-160/1/100,000 sec
- Video Output: 1.0Vp-p, 75 ohm
- S/N Ratio: More than 50dB
- Power Supply: 12V DC (+20%)
- Gamma: More than 100 NA max
- Operating Temp: -10°C to -50°C
- Operating Humidity: 95% Max
- Weight: 100g
- Applied Lens: 3.0mm, f/2.3, 8mm
- Audio: A/E/I
- Microphone:änger IR
- Frequency Range: 20 Hz to 20 kHz
- Audio: S/N Ratio: More than 40dB
- Audio Output Level: 1Vp-p, 75 ohm
- Dimensions: 87 x 50mm

**PRICE EACH**
- WDD8-5650 B&W Dome Camera $144.00 $129.00

**1/3" CCD Board Cameras**

Available with pinhole lens with audio, standard lens with audio and standard lens with infra-red (IR) with audio. These are the world's smallest commercially available CCD board cameras.

**World's Smallest B&W Board Cameras**

**Specifications**
- Image Pick-Up Device: 1/3" CCD area sensor
- Picture Elements: EIA-542(F)X492(F)
- Pixel Pitch: EIA-9.65um (H) 7.5um (V)
- Scanning System: 2:1 Interlace
- Minimum Illumination: 0.03 Lux
- S/N Ratio: 45dB
- Lens Mounting: 4.3mm, 5mm pinhole
- Power Supply: DC 12V (+10%)
- Power Consumption: 1W
- Operating Temperature: 0°C to 40°C (94°F max)
- Scan Line Frequency: EIA 
- Video Output: 1.0VP-P, 75OHM
- Audio Output Level: 1Vp-p, 75 ohm
- Dimensions: 33mm (H) x 33mm (W)

**PRICE EACH**
- WDD-2000 $59.00 $49.00
- WDS-2005 1/3" B/W Standard Lens with Audio $89.00 $77.00
- WDS-2005 1/3" B/W Standard Lens with Audio $89.00 $77.00
- WD-P-4000 1/3" IR Camera with Audio $89.00 $77.00
- WD-PF-558BW Plastic Housing Option for B&W Board $13.00 $12.00
- Cameras (WDD-2000 & WDS-2005 ONLY) $12.00 $11.00

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August 1996, Electronics Now
This image contains a combination of text in various fonts and sizes, which seems to be part of an advertisement or catalog. The text appears to be a mixture of advertisements for different products, with a prominent section about a Covert Surveillance System, and a mention of a Covert Rover Robot Kit.

### Covert Surveillance System

**Vibrating Transmitter Detector**
- Detects:
  - Body Wires
  - FM Wireless Mics
  - AM Transmitters
  - UHF Transmitters

**TRVD-900**
- Detects:
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  - Tape Recorders
  - Video Equipment

**AI-5500 Complete Safety System**
- Detects:
  - All Phone Taps
  - All Body Wires
  - All Transmitters
- Disrupts:
  - All Transmitters & Body Wires With Its Built-In White Noise Signal Breaker

**WSS-300 Color Wireless Surveillance System**
- Features:
  - FCC Approved 2.4GHz Transmitter/Receiver
  - Radio w/ Built-In Color Camera/Transmitter
  - 380 (H) TV Lines
  - Super Low 2 Lux
  - 4-Channel Receiver • 300’ Transmission

**American Innovations, Inc.**
- Source Code: 807EN
- Sale Ends: 7/31/98

**Covert Color Video Lamp**
- Features:
  - 380 (H) TV Lines
  - 2 Lux Sensitivity
  - Undetectable Lens

**American Heart Association**
- © 1992, American Heart Association

### Covert Rover Robot Kit

**Carpet Rover Robot Kit $115.00**

Build your own functional Carpet Rover Robot

- The kit comes complete with all hardware, structural components, 2 Hitec servos, First Step Basic Stamp kit, software and an illustrated assembly manual.
- This robot is an excellent foundation for many experiments such as: obstacle avoidance, maze negotiation, computer art and line tracking. Large 3” wheels handle rough terrains. It is a lot of fun to build and even more fun to operate.

**More information on the website:**

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FM-5, Crystal Controlled Wireless Mike Kit $39.95

FM-5WT Fully Wired FM-5 $69.95

Tone-Grabber Touch Tone Decoder Reader

Dialled phone numbers, register codes, control signals, even where-abouts! Touch tones are used, your TG-1 will decode and store any number it hears. Simple hook up to any radio speaker or phone line in all that is required, and since the TG-1 uses a central office quality decoder and microprocessor, it will decode digits at virtually any speed. A 256 digit non-volatile memory stores numbers for 100 years - even when power is turned off, and an 8 digit LED display allows you to scroll through anywhere in memory. To make it easy to pick up numbers and codes, it forms a group of set of numbers that were decoded more than 2 seconds apart. The TG-1 runs from any 7 to 15 volt DC power source and is bi-vestage regulated, is 1/4 mile of reception, and works perfectly in the high power environment of this receiver. For stand-alone use add our matching case set for a clean, professionally finished project. We have a TG-1 connected up here at Ramsey factory on the FM radio. It's fun to see the phone numbers that are dialled on the radio show! Although the TG-1 requires less than an evening to assemble, and is fun to build, to list, we offer the TG-1 fully wired and tested in matching case for a special price.

TG-1, Tone Grabber Kit $99.95

TG-1WT, Fully Wired Tone Grabber with Case $148.95

AD125, 12 Volt DC Wall Plug Adapter $19.95

Super Pro Super FM Stereo Radio Transmitter

A fully professional frequency synthesized FM Transmitter station in one easy to use, handsome cabinet. Most radio stations require a whole equipment rack to hold all the features we've packed into the FM-25. But easily set by its simple Up/Down key buttons and the big LED digital display. Plus there's input low pass filtering that gives great sound no matter what the source (no moos squawks or switching sounds from cheap CD player input)! Peak Limiters for maximum 'punch' in your audio - without over modulation, LED bargraph meters for easy setting of audio levels and a built-in mixer with mike and line level inputs. Churches, drive-ins, schools and colleges find the FM-100 to be the answer to their transmitting needs, and you won't have trouble selling this kit at this price! Kit includes cabinet, whip antenna and 120 VAC supply. We also offer a high power export version of the FM-100 that's fully assembled. Power is limited to 25 watts output and the kit costs $429.95. The Pro FM-100 works in the FM range 88-100 MHz, easily picked up in a car, or for stand-alone use add our matching case set for extra SMT parts and we even include a few in-line resistors in case you sneeze and loose a part!

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