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How antennas work

Understanding SCSI

10

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Managing a service center



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THE PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE FOR ELECTRONICS AND COMPUTER SERVICING

Servicing & Technology

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Contents

FEATURES

4 **Personal computer servicing: Understanding SCSI** by Philip M. Zorian

This article introduces the reader to the use of small computer system interface devices (SCSI) by describing the advantages, and the drawbacks, of using them.

Managing a service center: Some 8 ideas for improving operations

by Gerry McCann and members of **NESDA**

There are a number of ways to make business more effective and profitable. This article is a list of the ideas that were shared at a meeting of service center people.

11 Vacuum tube matched pairs and bias

by Alvin G. Syndor

Heeding the words of wisdom in this article will help keep tubes operating within specifications and prolong their life.

14 Magnavox stereo sound section

by Steven J. Babbert The heart of the sound section in Magnavox chassis #25P506-00AA is IC200, an I2C-bus controlled BTSC SAP/stereo decoder and audio processor made by Philips.

20 How antennas work

by Dick Glass

Here is a review on how antennas work, for those who may have forgotten, or perhaps never learned.

40 Some ideas for improving operations

by Gerry McCann and members of NESDA These ideas were generated in the hope

that they may inspire other service centers to improve their businesses.

42 The Magnavox VRX video cassette recorder

by Bob Rose

VRX units have created a repair history. This article groups the problems that the author has experienced with these products into common themes.

DEPARTMENTS

2 Editorial

- 7 Literature
- 10 Photofact
- 19 Calendar
- Books
- **Test Your Electronics Knowledge**
- **Electronics?**
- 63 Reader's Exchange
- 64 Advertisers' Index

EDITORIAL INDEX

ES&T presents its annual article, department, and Profax 1998 indexes.

- 51 Article index
- 53 Department index
- 54 Profax index

ON THE COVER

Successful service centers don't gamble. They make success a sure thing by adhering to accepted management principles and sharing their ideas for success with other service centers. (Cover photo courtesy Philips Consumer Electronics Company)



page 8



page 11



26

- 29 Profax
- 39
- 45 Products
- 49 What Do You Know About
- 62 Classified



Managing a service center

The technical side of the consumer electronics service center is, without a doubt, of paramount importance. If the service center can't take in a customer's faulty product and return it to like-new (or almost like-new) condition, it doesn't matter what else the service center does, it will fail. However, proper management is also important, especially in these times of inexpensive products and thin profit margins.

For example, it's important for a service center to know how much to charge for servicing a given type of product. And the only way to know that, is to know what it costs the service center to provide such a service, and to charge that much, plus something more for profit. And it's important to know what actually goes into the cost of that service. It's not just the hourly wage of the technician for the amount of time it took to service the product. The cost of the technician also includes benefits, his unproductive time, such as vacations and sick time.

Other factors have to be included in the cost of that service procedure: overhead, such as rent for the building, utilities needed to keep the business operating, maintenance of the facility, tools, and test equipment, salaries of the support people who are essential to operating and managing the business, but who don't contribute directly to output of the company, such as the counter personnel, receptionist, owner, and service manager.

The point is that in order to manage a business properly, a "manager" should have at least some kind of rudimentary education in managing. Without that kind of training, it's difficult to be able to identify all of the costs that are involved in running a business, and to know how to recover those costs in pricing service labor, parts, and supplies.

For example, there are still components, parts, etc., that may go into a repair that may cost the service center less than a buck. So what should the service center charge for that part when it gets consumed in a service repair. Some untrained service managers might think that you might be able to get away with charging a couple of bucks for such an item, and others feel uncomfortable because they think that the charge may be excessive. But think again. What has it cost the service center to buy that item, stock it, inventory it, pay interest on the money used to buy it (or conversely, forfeit interest on the money that could have been set aside into some kind of investment). The actual cost to the service center to own that item may be several times the amount of cash paid for it. And how about the time it took the technician or parts person to cross reference that part, locate it in inventory, and retrieve it.

If the service center manager doesn't know what those costs are, or that he even should be considering them in pricing, the service center could be slowly going out of business and not even know it.

But being a manager is so much more than just directing the day-to-day activities of the service center. It also involves a lot of creative activities; or should. For example, if the income of the business seems to be dropping off, how does the manager determine what the cause is. And how does he find ways to correct the problem. Actually, a better question might be, how does he know that problems may be coming before they actually occur. In these days of products that are priced so that they are practically throwaways, the service center has to do one of two things: find a way to service products more economically, so that customers are still inclined to have their products serviced, or look for other products to service that are less likely to be abandoned by the owner when they fail.

The degree of future success of the business depends to at least some extent on how the management of the business handles that type of problem. Presumably all of the readers of this magazine are still in the business, so that means that they, or someone in the company where they work, did something right.

We're all familiar with the sad stories of the service centers that were successful during the good times in the business, but that fell by the wayside when things got tough. But proper management techniques might have kept that from happening. Because while some companies were going out of business, other companies weathered the storm, sometimes somewhat a little worse for wear, but sometimes coming out of the crisis in better shape than ever.

Many of these companies expanded the line of products that they service to include products that are not traditional consumer products: things like computers, and video games, even childrens' electric cars. Some got involved in servicing even farther out items: someone has to service those drive-through communications systems at McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Hardy's, etc.

In other words, service managers and owners in today's service centers need to think "outside the box." That is, it's important to always be on the lookout for trends that may be coming along in consumer electronics that may be going to affect business for the better, or adversely, and take advantage of the one and defend against the other.

In this issue, we have included two articles that include ideas brainstormed by a group of service center owners and managers who have come up with ideas for improving business, or their operations, or attracting customers.

For example, one idea suggests a way in which a service center can recover some of the service time invested in a product that is abandoned by the owner: rent them to clients who have to leave their products to be serviced. Another idea is to contact schools to solicit service business from their A/V equipment. Another individual suggests that service centers advise clients, in writing, in a preprinted form that some procedures may not be covered by warranties. Still another individual suggested that technical procedures such as ac leakage check, and supplies and chemicals be invoiced separately and charged for.

Many of these ideas have helped the companies that suggested them stay in business and remain successful. We invite you to read them, in the hopes that they strike a creative spark that will help some of you not only stay in business, but positively thrive. And we thank NESDA and its members for being gracious enough for allowing us to publish them.

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Electronic Servicing & Technology is edited for servicing professionals who service consumer electronics equipment. This includes service technicians, field service personnel and avid servicing enthusiasts who repair and maintain audio, video, computer and other consumer electronics equipment.

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Understanding SCSI: the small computer systems interface

by Philip M. Zorian

computer can be connected to. and made to communicate with, its peripherals, such as the hard drive, the printer, or the scanner, in a number of ways. Depending on the method chosen, the connection will be more or less reliable, faster or slower in transfer of data. more or less flexible, and more or less expensive. One very flexible, very fast scheme currently available for connecting computers with peripherals is the small computer system interface, abbreviated SCSI. The abbreviation for this interface scheme is usually pronounced "scuzzy." SCSI is less used, and therefore less well known, than many other interface schemes because it is more expensive, and somewhat more complicated to install.

The decision to upgrade to a SCSI Hard Drive, or a SCSI Scanner, is usually based on one important factor: the need for greater performance. With the ability to transfer data at a rate of 80 MB/sec., it is the interface of choice in applications where speed, time and quality make all the difference. It is important, however, to have a basic understanding of the "scuzzy" Interface before you make use of it. Although it may seem daunting, understanding this interface is not difficult. This article introduces the reader to the use of SCSI devices by describing both the advantages, and the drawbacks, of using them.

The host adapter card

SCSI devices require the installation of a Host Adapter Card onto the computer's motherboard. It is the card that provides the computer with a SCSI port. Once this card is installed into an empty PCI (Peripheral Component Interconnect) slot, you are then able to connect a SCSI cable from the computer to the SCSI device. It is the card, the connecting cable,

Zorian is the director of the video/audio department at the school for international training in Brattleboro, VT and is the owner of Phil's VCR Repair.



Figure 1. The host adapter card, the connecting cable, and the peripheral device make up the SCSI bus.

and the peripheral device that make up the SCSI bus (Figure 1).

The host adapter card, designed with its own dedicated processor, is the brain of the SCSI interface. It is the card that actually controls the SCSI device. This "onboard" intelligence gives the SCSI Interface the following advantages:

• It transfers data at a very high rate - up to 80Mb/sec.

• It allows the user to connect numerous SCSI devices, up to 15, to the same port.

• It enables two peripherals to work simultaneously; commonly referred to as multitasking.

Nevertheless, the host adapter card presents the user with two obstacles. First: there are several versions of host adapter card: SCSI-I, SCSI-2, SCSI-3, FAST & WIDE (Figure 2). Choosing the correct card can be difficult since each version is designed for a different purpose, and some of the specifications are difficult to understand. Second: installing the card

| SCSI SPECIFICATIONS | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|--|--|
| SCSI Version | Data Transfer Rate | Bus Width | Cable Connector | | |
| | (MB/Sec) | (bits) | (no # pins) | | |
| SCSI-1 | 8 | 8 | 25 | | |
| SCSI-2 | 5 | 8 | 50 | | |
| FAST SCSI-2 | 10 | 8 | 50 | | |
| FAST WIDE SCSI-2 | 10-20 | 16 | 68 | | |
| 8 Bit Ultra SCSI-3 | 20 | 8 | 50 | | |
| 16 Bit Ultra SCSI-3 | 20-40 | 16 | 68 | | |
| 8 Bit Ultra2 SCSI-3 | 40 | 8 | 50 | | |
| 16 Bit Ultra2 SCSI-3 | 40-80 | 16 | 68 | | |

Figure 2. There are several versions of host adapter card: SCSI-I, SCSI-2, SCSI-3, FAST & WIDE.

can be difficult, especially if problems arise with hardware/software conflicts, or driver installation. Both of these obstacles, however, are easily overcome.

Choosing the correct card is a process of matching the SCSI device with the computer (386, 486, Pentium, etc) and the Operating System (Windows 3x, Windows 95, etc). One of the leading makers of SCSI devices, Adaptec Inc., offers an excellent Website for making this choice. At <http://www.adaptec.com/tools/selectors/index.html>, simply choose the above parameters and the web site automatically provides you with two host adapter cards for your system — a recommended solution and a premium solution.

To overcome the difficulty of installing the adapter card, consider using the AdvanSys model ABP925 SCSI Card; it's a good choice for a Pentium class PC using Windows 95/98. Not only does their Website at <www.advansys.com>, walk you through the installation of a host adapter card, but the card also comes bundled with a powerful utility called SuperSCSI, SuperInstall version 2.2. This software utility renders the installation process painless, using graphics to walk through the driver installation. It automatically configures the direct memory access (DMA), input/output (I/O) address, and interrupt request (IRQ) lines; and it finishes by confirming that the drivers and the card were installed successfully, with no hardware or software conflicts.

Guide to connecting SCSI peripherals

Connecting a SCSI device to a computer requires the following steps:

1. Choose the peripheral device based on price, availability and technical requirements.

2. Choose a SCSI Host Adapter Card.

3. Obtain the correct connector cable. There are a four different SCSI connectors, (Figure 3). Most host adapter cards come bundled with a cable. If you are purchasing both the device and the card from the same dealer, there should be no problem obtaining the correct cable. The above web site can also help with this.

4. Install the card. This requires shutting down the computer, opening the case, locating an empty PCI slot (typically short and white), on the computer's motherboard and carefully inserting the host adapter card into the slot. Close the case.

Terminology

Some of the terms in this article will, no doubt, be unfamiliar to many readers. This glossary is included to provide definitions of some of those terms.

Address: The ID number of a device on the SCSI Bus. No two devices can have the same ID number.

Byte: A group of eight bits. This is the standard size unit for computer information. A byte holds the equivalent of a single character, such as the letter A.

MB/s MegaBytes per Second: One million bytes per second.

Data-Transfer Rate: The rate that a drive or other device can transfer bytes of information. Transfer rates are measured in bits or bytes per second.

DMA (Direct Memory Access): Circuitry that transfers data from memory to memory without using the CPU. Data is transferred much faster than using the CPU for every byte of transfer. On PCs, there are eight DMA channels.

Driver: Also called a device driver, a program routine that links a peripheral device to the operating system. When a new host adapter card is installed, its driver must also be installed. The operating system calls the driver, and the driver "drives" the device.

ID Numbers: Each device on the SCSI Bus must be set to a unique ID number. A subset of Plug and Play, called SCAM (SCSI Configured automatically), allows IDs to be set via software.

Interface: The connection and interaction between hardware, software and the user.

Hardware interfaces are the plugs, sockets, and cables. Software interfaces are the languages, and codes programs use to communicate with each other and to the hardware. User interfaces are the keyboards, mice, commands and menus used for communication.

I/O (Input/Output): Transferring data between the CPU and a peripheral device. Every transfer is an output from one device and an input into another

IRQ (*Interrupt ReQuest*): A hardware interrupt on a PC. 16 lines accept interrupts from devices such as a scanner or network adapter. Unless specifically programmed to interact together, two devices cannot use the same line. If a new expansion board is preset to the IRQ used by an existing board, one of them must be changed.

Peripheral: Any device attached to a computer system - printer, scanner, etc.

PCI (Peripheral Component Interconnect): A peripheral bus commonly used in PCs, Macintoshes and workstations. PCI provides a high-speed data path between the CPU and peripheral devices. There are typically three or four PCI slots on the motherboard.

Plug & Play: A feature of the Windows 95/98 operating system. It provides the computer with the ability to add a new component without the user having to perform any technical analysis.

SCSI Controller: An expansion board that adds SCSI capability to a computer.

Terminator: The device at either end of a SCSI chain must be terminated by setting a switch or plugging a resistor module into the open port.



Figure 3. There are a four different SCSI connectors. Most host adapter cards come bundled with a cable. If you are purchasing both the device and the card from the same dealer, there should be no problem obtaining the correct cable.

5. Attach the SCSI cable from the peripheral device to the SCSI port on the back of the computer.

6. Install the Termination Resistor. There is a basic rule that is unique to the SCSI interface: The last connected device at either end of the SCSI bus must be terminated with a terminating resistor.

7. Reboot the computer. Since the

arrival of Windows 95 with its Plug & Play feature, configuring the host adapter card and SCSI peripheral device is easier than with Win3.X.

Under Plug & Play, each time you boot up, the entire system is checked to see if any new devices are installed. If a new device is detected, the computer will try to identify it, for example, the host adapter card, and assign the necessary resources to it.

8. *If necessary*, install the software drivers that came bundled with the device

Conclusion

Before the arrival of the SCSI interface, each peripheral device required its own specific interface circuit in order to communicate with the computer. Connecting a printer or tape drive to a computer was difficult. The original purpose behind the SCSI interface was to make all peripheral devices look the same to the computer. Thus, a standard interface was created, requiring only a single adapter.

Although the SCSI interface offers many benefits, it can be difficult to troubleshoot when a peripheral is misbehaving. A follow-up article will describe problems that arise with the SCSI interface, and explain the methods used to analyze the Bus in a logical manner. The article will also introduce an important piece of test equipment: The SCSI Active Diagnostic Terminator from Granite Digital. This inexpensive tester provides critical information on the status of the Bus, especially when the system "hangs up."

Following are several tips on servicing of computer monitors, provided by M.I. Technologies

Manufacturer: Apple Model Number: M2943

Symptom:

Vertical shrinkage. Picture has about two inches of vertical sweep.

Corrective action:

Replace C312, 2200 uF/35V. This capacitor is located about 1/2 inch to the left front of the yoke plug.

Manufacturer: Apple Model Number: M2943

Symptom:

Power LED flashing. Unit makes a ticking sound.

Corrective action:

Replace Q403, 2SC3886A; Q405, 2SB 1375 (On a small heat sink in the center of the main PCB).

Note: Also check C413, 5.6NF/1.6KV. If this capacitor starts to break down, it can also cause damage to Q403, 2SC2886A.

Manufacturer: Apple Model Number: M2943

Symptom:

Pincushion, Horizontal oversize, Horizontal size controls not working

Corrective action: Replace Q405, 2SB1375 (On a small heat sink in the center of the main PCB).

Manufacturer: Apple Model Number: M2943

Symptom:

No control of the width. Too wide, and pin cushion bad.

Corrective action: Replace Q405, SB 1375 (Shorted)

Manufacturer: Apple Model Number: M2943

Symptom:

Missing colors, or intermittent or abnormal video.

Corrective action:

Resolder solder joints on the CRT board, including videoprocessor LM1203, Q961 for the blue, or one of the other two corresponding transistors for red or green. Also, check and resolder the three small (square) chunky transistors next to Q961 and Q901. Check the two or three black coax wires that are bowed like vertical arcs on the left side of the component side of the board.

Manufacturer: Apple Model number: M2943

Symptom: Intermittent heater voltage

Corrective action:

Replace IC002, MC 14551BCP. IC 002 turns on the base of Q003 to provide 6.13V to the filament.

Note: The switches of the multiplexer IC002 are controlled by pin 9, logic low for normal operation, Logic high for power saving mode.

Manufacturer: Apple Model number: M2943

Symptom:

HV is functional. Blank screen. No voltage to the heater.

Corrective action:

Replace Q003, 2SD667 on the power saving board. Test voltages are as follows: base 7.02V, emitter 6.13V, collector 6.37V.

Note: 6.4V comes from P501A in the middle at the very rear of the main PC board on a blue wire to the collector of Q003, 2SD667. The base of Q003 is driven by pin 6 of IC002, MC14551BCP.

Robert Yount, M. I. Technologies, Inc., 3310 E. Peterson Rd., Troy, OH 45373, 937-335-4560



New components catalog and internet features

Jameco Electronics has just released a new catalog and updated website. The free 148-page catalog features thousands of ICs, components, tools. test equipment, and computer products for OEMs, engineers, educators and service/repair technicians. More than 350 new products have been added including test/measuring equipment and accessories, USB products, robotic parts, and more potentiometers, capacitors, and LEDs.

The company also has an on-line Catalog at <www.jameco.com>.

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Cross referencing software

NTE Electronics has released Version 7.0 of their electronic cross reference software, QUICKCross. This new easy to use version contains all the updated semiconductor, relay, and flyback transformer cross reference databases, plus the new Aluminum Clad Power Wirewound resistors. A new selector guide for potentiometers and trimmers has been added,



which includes a cross reference for Spectrol and Precision Electronics device numbers to competitors' device numbers.

The software can also be downloaded at the company's website at <http://www. nteinc.com>.

Circle (91) on Reply Card

Floor safety catalog

New Pig Corporation has introduced a

new catalog to help customers develop a floor safety program to prevent slip and fall accidents. To help keep clean, safe floors, the complete product guide contains 67 new products, as well as existing products; seven easy practices; a free inspection checklist; easy to use selection charts; money-saving offers; and 11 technical sidebars.

Circle (92) on Reply Card



Circle (60) on Reply Card January 1999 Electronic Servicing & Technology 7

Managing a service center: Some ideas for improving operations

by Gerry McCann and members of NESDA

The ideas published here were generated by members of the National Electronics Service Dealers Association (NESDA) during a "Best Ideas Contest." We publish them in the hope that they may help other service centers, and perhaps inspire them to come up with their own ideas to improve their businesses.

1. For a quicker method of wiring during a drop ceiling installation, carefully use a slingshot mounted to a fishing reel with a small weight. After removing a few tiles, shoot the weight with fishing line and use the line to pull the cable without removing as many ceiling panels. (*Editor's note: I have also seen this done* with a toy bow and arrow).

2. As a front office conversation piece and humorous mascot, one inventive servicer showed off a three foot high "technician" doll. The impressive talisman is fully dressed in company uniform work clothes along with tool box, hat, name tag, company logos, and a smile. "He" is described as the "perfect tech," always ready to work and never complains.

3. When a television repair estimate is turned down and the unit is to be disposed of, salvage the tuner section. Collect the tuners and sell them to rebuilders. Also, watch for modules and other subassemblies of value. The reporting servicer finds a nice extra amount of income from these items salvaged during slower times. Some of the modules being found are reported to have dud value.

4. Sometimes it's in the wording: always sell "experienced equipment" not "used equipment."

5. Avoid accidents working on camcorders. Instead of using small alligator clips, which may slip off, to connect the



power source to camcorders under service, buy a collection of inexpensive dc car adapters. These connect to battery connectors on camcorders much more solidly and can be purchased very inexpensively from accessory vendors.

6. Here's a tip for recovering the service time invested in a product that has already been repaired and is abandoned by the owner. These units can be placed in your rental pool. Rent out to clients for the length of time their units are in for repair. You might establish a flat rate on commodity products and rent by the day or week on higher end or specialty items. It was suggested that the value of the rental product offered be kept comparable to the value of the client's unit because no damage deposit is commonly taken.

7. Contact community colleges. as possible new business for A/V, camcorder, TV, computer, monitor, and printer repairs. Don't forget video tape sales. Approach school librarians because they normally coordinate the institution's A/V products for classroom use. A new source of business: the school transportation buses of many areas have now become extensive electronics surveillance users. Because of the harsh environment they operate in, they are in constant need of video recorder and camera repairs.

8. Use a formal preprinted form to advise clients with warranty or service contract coverage, in advance, that some adjustment, cleaning, software, or other services may not be covered by warranty. You then have that document as a means to negotiate and collect the minimum technical charge when no hardware problem is found.

9. Several technical procedures that can be added to invoices were introduced such as AC leakage check charge, service supply charge, and chemical use fee. Prices ranged from \$2.50 to \$6.00 per completed service item.

10. Retailers always seem to be out of note paper around their telephones.

Create an advertising pad as a giveaway for your retail dealers. On one side of the sheet, list your company name, address, telephone number, etc. and the brands you are authorized for. If appropriate, put a map to your location(s) on the back. These preprinted pads of note paper become an "always available" handout from dealers to their customers. This advertising method is of reasonable cost if ordered in large quantities.

11. Instead of expensive chamois leather cloths, use a good quality coffee filter to clean video heads. This money saver has been used successfully for head cleaning by many service centers. The material does a good job, is lint free, and has never damaged a video head.

12. Develop an "owner responsibility" letter. This letter is worded so as to make the owner responsible for repair charges in the event that a third-party warranty company refuses to pay for the work, or becomes bankrupt. It was mentioned that some of this "disclaimer" verbiage can be found on the NESDA form.

13. In storage areas using large shelving and a mixture of outgoing and incoming television products, face the "completes" in one direction and the "incompletes" in the other direction for quicker and easier status identification.

14. One servicer reports finding an inexpensive large quantity source of surge suppressors and using these as "lagniappe," giving one to each customer when they return the repaired set. This company receives continuing praise and recommendations after completing PTV repairs.

15. Color codes of many kinds speed up work flow. Try color paper clips used on hard copy paperwork to identify status. Green: "incoming," Blue: "parts on order," Red: "no repair," etc.

16. Teach listening techniques to field technicians. Technicians should carefully listen to the client's complaint with the unit when first arriving on a site call. The complaint may be different from the one given over the phone when the service call was scheduled. This will often change or shorten the approach to the specific troubleshooting.

17. One servicer lowers repair counter stress by keeping a puppy dog up front. This was mentioned as a stress reliever and distraction for both clients and employees. A small friendly dog was described as working best. It was reported that when the dog had a day off, clients asked about him and missed him. Clients were reported to even have left dog treats hanging on the door. (Really)

18. Another front counter stress reliever was introduced: a nice fish aquarium, positioned close by and well kept, gives off an aura of peace and tranquillity. (But don't give the fish a day off)

19. A basket of various toys is kept near the front counter in the front office of a reporting servicer. This little extra keeps children busy and quietly distracted while their parents conduct business.

20. Interoffice e-mail addresses for all employees was suggested by one participant. Use as a modern system for internal company communications. With the use of many computers in most companies, this intranet concept achieves a level of "no more lost notes."

21. Local technician associations often act as industry watchdog groups. Be alert to contact local TV stations when they advertise they will run an "expo report" on electronics repair in your area. As a member of a local association, they will call or interview the local professional group for advice. For one association, this turned into a long time running local radio show manned on a rotating basis by association members. This can be a great way to promote your own business and your local association at a minimal cost with maximum effectiveness.

22. The front counter of the service center has been found to be the best place to promote your additional services. Create a promotional packet to attach to each client's invoice. Include a list of products and brands you are authorized for, and include a coupon for the next trip charge or future repairs and accessories.

23. In a poorly ventilated work area where solder station fumes are a concern,

an inexpensive vacuum cleaner can be mounted in the ceiling venting outside with a series of PVC tubing run to each solder station to evacuate the fumes from each area. (*Editor's note: Check federal* state and local ordinances first to see what kinds of venting are legal or illegal).

24. If you must relocate your business, began promoting the new location with a full previous-customer mailing at least one month before the move. Create a "preferred client discount card." One reported success was offering to pay sales tax on all repairs for one year when the "preferred client card" is used.

25. If you have prospective clients phoning in regularly asking the price of cleaning on various products, quote your posted price then offer a discount. Put a short time limit on the discount. Tell the caller that they must mention the "phone special" to receive the discount.

26. For computer servicers: create a Year 2000 compliance sticker to attach to all computer repairs which informs the client if their product complies to hardware specifications or if they should contact their software vendor for Y2K compatibility upgrades.

27. Computer servicing opens a new and important issue involving sometimes expensive software. Have a system and a predetermined format for assigning the responsibility of backing up software before problems occur to the owner. Disciplined paperwork systems avoid misunderstandings, lessen friction, and clarify owner software responsibilities. A well thought out sample of a modified NESDA form was passed around.

28. Regarding workmen's compensation insurance: The reporting servicer switched to an insurance broker away from a direct insurance agent. He found his employees could be rated in multiple categories instead of just a few. This helped save serious money. This suggestion to annually shop insurance and investigate using a broker instead of a dedicated company agent was echoed by the group.

29. An inexpensive regular 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 sheet of paper can be cleverly folded into

an interesting company brochure and envelope pocket for the repair invoice. This brochure might include such information as company name, address, products repaired, etc., and made available for clients at the front counter.

30. Collect a \$25.00 refundable disposal fee in addition to the minimum technical charge on older products left for repair. This fee helps to defray the cost of disposing of the older set when the need develops. Usually the owner returns for the set and their \$25.00.

31. Strip the chassis out of old console TVs, use them as inexpensive work tables and cooking benches.

32. One sales and service dealer reports the effectiveness of having a popular One-Hour Film Lab set up in the very rear of his business. Each customer must walk through the entire sales floor to get to the film lab — twice.

33. One service center sent out a direct mail piece, advertising of the remodeling of his service center. This worked very well as an incentive for almost every client to pick up their products.

34. Consistently mail out "Thank You" cards to each client from the previous week's work. This small gesture builds recognition, good memories, and results in return clients for the business.

35. A "priority service" multiple copy form was passed around. It explained that for a predetermined (filled in) price, the service company would expedite the repair in the following ways: 1) Unit would go immediately to the appropriate



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DAEWOO

| CN20014 | 086 |
|------------------------|------------|
| DTQ-26S1FC | 086 |
| FISHER | |
| G6B-19R8004 | 085 |
| PC-19R80 | 085 |
| GE CTC185AA2 | 082 082 |
| JVC AV279204 | 080 |
| OUASAR | |

| ANEDC303 | 4078 |
|----------|------|
| ANEDC305 | 4089 |
| SP2721UW | 4078 |
| SP2721W | 4078 |
| SP3221UW | 4089 |
| SP3221W | 4089 |

RCA

| CTC187CN3 | 4083 |
|-------------|------|
| G32643SKLX1 | 4083 |

SANYO

| AVM-1908C | |
|-----------|------|
| AVM-1908G | 4079 |
| AVM-1908S | |
| AVM-2508C | |
| AVM-2508G | |

| AVM-2508S | |
|------------|--|
| AVM-2538C | |
| G5C-2508C0 | |
| G5C-2508G0 | |
| G5C-2508S0 | |
| G5C-2538C0 | |
| G6B-1908C0 | |
| G6B-1908G0 | |
| G6B-1908S0 | |

SHARP

VA-A373UVCR-305 VC-A572UVCR-305 VC-A572U(A)VCR-305 VC-A574UVCR-305 VC-A574U(A)VCR-305

SYMPHONIC

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TOSHIBA

| CE27H15 | ······ | 1084 |
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| CE27H50 |) | 1084 |
| TAC9807 | ·۲ | 1084 |
| TAC9815 | ۷۷ | 4084 |

ZENITH

| A25A74R | 4081 |
|------------|-------|
| A25A76R | 4081 |
| A27A23W | .4090 |
| LGA29A23WM | .4090 |
| | |

technician without waiting in line. 2) The service manager would closely monitor the process of this repair. 3) Parts will be ordered the fastest way. with extra shipping charges added to billing. If repairs are not completed by the promised time, regular charges will apply, along with any extra shipping incurred. The form is then dated, timed, and signed.

35 A problem that frequently occurs on some later model televisions is an arcing — notable by the loud snapping noise. To cure this problems, clean up the anode wiring and the transformer area carefully. Apply three fully drying coats of GE Acrylic. This is available from GC Electronics and reportedly is known by the "White can with the Pink label."

36 Set your minimum diagnostic charge two dollars below the amount collected at the counter. This two bucks will often bring the owner of a turned down repair back in to pick up the unit.

37. When feeding coax through narrow spaces inside a low roof or between floor joists, use a small diameter PVC pipe to lead the way. This avoids the "pushing a wet noodle" dance. Then, feed the wire inside the PVC and out to an accessible area. Use angle bends to get around minor obstacles during tight cable feeds. Position the PVC pipe end towards the destination, push the cable through, and don't forget you will need a free end to slip the pipe off the now positioned cable.

38. Wiring installers: To orient yourself when drilling upwards from below in a crowded area, carry with you some long nails painted with a loud or fluorescent paint. Hammer one down from a sensible spot above. Measure above and below from the bright nail(s) for more accurate spotting during tight runs.

These ideas were generated by members of NESDA, the National Electronic Service Dealers Association, during a session called the NPSC '98 Best Idea Contest. This session took place during the NESDA National Professional Service Conference on August 13, 1998 in Orlando, Florida. We thank NESDA for giving permission to reprint them here. For more information about NESDA, call or write: NESDA, 2708 W Berry, Fort Worth, TX 76109-2356, 817-921-9061.

Vacuum tube matched pairs and bias

by Alvin G. Sydnor

Editor's note: Many current readers of this magazine have had little or no experience with vacuum tubes. And for the most part, except for the high voltages present in TV picture tube circuits, these technicians are used to dealing with solid-state circuitry that operates at 12V or less. Vacuum-tube circuits operate at voltages on the order of several hundred volts. If you decide to experiment with vacuum-tube work, exercise appropriate care while working around voltages that may be lethal.

Moreover, those glowing filaments in vacuum tubes generate a great deal of heat. Be careful when touching any part of a tube circuit. Some parts may be hot enough to burn.

For many years electronic technicians, design engineers, and electronic manufacturers have pondered the question of why tubes fail and there are numerous opinions and much controversy over matched pairs of power output tubes. Last month, we covered the importance of tube ratings and why they must not be exceeded.

If any one rating, or more than one of a tube's ratings, are exceeded for any appreciable period of time, tube damage can occur. Line voltage variations exceeding + 10 percent can also damage tubes.

There are many forms of bias and various ways to obtain bias, all of which are decisions that the circuit design engineer must make to meet the desired specifications. Insufficient bias, particularly in the case of power amplifier output tubes, can cause excessive plate dissipation, distortion, and damage to the tubes. Many of the high power tube amplifiers such as that shown in Figure 1 have adjustable bias potentiometers that are normally screwdriver-adjust types for the service technician only. Please note that there are many high-power audio amplifiers that have fixed bias and on which there is no means of adjusting the bias. See Figure 2.

The function of the bias-adjust poten-



Figure 1. Many high power tube amplifiers such as this one, have adjustable bias potentiomters, normally screwdriver-adjust types, that are for the service technician only.

tiometer is to set the optimum operating point of a tube that will allow the tube, or tubes, to function on the most efficient portion of its characteristic curve. Proper bias will also assure low distortion and extended tube life. The optimum bias point, once set, will be for the tubes that are in the circuit at the time of adjustment. If either tube is replaced, or if both tubes are replaced, the bias voltage must be set again, since the bias requirements vary from tube to tube.

It is also important to know that the function of bias on plate current and input signal is different depending on the class of operation. As an example, in a class A amplifier the grid bias and the input signal voltage on the grid are such that the plate current of the output tubes flows all the time. In a class AB amplifier, the grid bias and input signal voltage on the grid are such that the plate current in any specific tube flows a little more than half of the entire cycle.

Matching and the effects of mismatching

When dealing with push-pull output power amplifiers you will often be asked to replace the output with matched pairs, or you may find the owner has replaced the output tubes with matched pairs, with the assumption that the bias need not be checked or adjusted.

Matching pairs is a process of selecting tubes for satisfactory push-pull operation. Most tube suppliers will supply, for an additional cost, tubes that have been stabilized and matched for the application required. It is important to specify the

Syndor is a retired consumer electronics servicing technician.



Figure 2. Many high-power audio amplifiers have fixed bias, on which there is no means of adjusting the bias, such as the one shown here.

conditions and circuit that they will be operated in when ordering matched pairs. Unless they are stabilized and matched under similar operating conditions, they will drift apart and may even be mismatched initially.

The procedure used in matching tubes should be based on the class of operation in which the tubes will be operated. For example, when the tubes are operating in class Al, the matching is not as critical as when they are to be operated in class AB1 AB2 or class B.

Triodes that are to be operated in class AB1, AB2, or class B should be tested at a number of points on the tubes plate current grid bias curve. These points should be taken at zero signal input, and the bias set to correspond to the maximum permissible plate dissipation. The measured plate currents should agree at all points within 2 percent. Triodes that are to be operated in class AB2 or class B should be matched for amplification factor as well.

Even if there is a perfect match between tubes in a matched pair when they are initially installed, they will drift apart, so I believe that regardless of whether you are using matched pairs or not, the bias must be set for proper operation of the pair. Pentodes and tetrodes can be balanced by adjusting the screen voltages.

Whenever you see the output tubes running hot, and in some cases the plates are cherry red, you are seeing the effect of under-biased tubes, which can contribute to hum and distortion. When the tubes are over-biased, they will be running cool and the output will be distorted at any volume level. An amplifier that has its bias adjusted properly will sound clean and its tone will be much improved over one that needs its bias to be adjusted.

Before you start dealing with adjusting the bias, it is important that a series of tests be performed such as checking coupling capacitors, B-plus power supply, the bias supply, and its associated components. Also be aware that a short between electrodes of any tube within the amplifier can drive the power supply current beyond its limits and cause damage.

The importance of setting the bias is to make sure that the output tubes are not exceeding their plate current ratings for the applied plate voltage and control grid drive. The following procedure can be followed in adjusting the bias or what is sometimes called "balancing the output tubes" in a push-pull output circuit.

1. Connect a dummy load that matches the output impedance of the amplifier and is capable of handling the maximum output power of the amplifier.

2. Set the bias potentiometer at about 50 percent (midway).

3. Connect an oscilloscope across the dummy load.

4. Set the amplifier gain control at about 40 percent or 50 percent

5. Feed a 1,000 cycle signal into the amplifier's HI Z input

6. Adjust the signal level (to point where clipping occurs) to provide slightly over full rated output.

7. Adjust the bias potentiometer for equal clipping on the oscilloscope.

NOTE: If a distortion analyzer is available, it should be used in preference to an oscilloscope. When using the distortion analyzer, adjust the bias potentiometer for approximately 1 percent or 2 percent dis-

tortion which should be measured at full output, providing all else within the amplifier is operating within its specifications.

When operating Al push-pull triodes, a considerable degree of mismatch between the tubes is permissible without serious effects, provided that the tubes are being operated under single tube conditions with regard to grid bias. Under these conditions, there will be a slight effect on the maximum output power and odd harmonic distortion. Also, there will be some second harmonic distortion and some outof-balance producing current in the output transformer.

The fact that matched pairs are not absolutely necessary when operating in the Al push-pull circuits indicates that there is a wide latitude permissible. This is provided that the bias is retained at the value for a single tube, and also that the load resistance is not much less than the sum of the single tube load, or 4 times the average plate resistance.

Tube testers vs replacement test

Today tubes are available as "New,"

"New-Old-Stock," (NOS) and "Used-Tested-Good"(UTG). In most cases, you will have to take what you can get. If purchasing NOS or UTG tubes, you will very likely be getting a tube that has been sitting around for a considerable amount of time and there is no telling what the remaining life of the UTG tubes are.

In many instances, tubes that have not been used for a long time may show signs of sputtering or arcing, or they may even blow fuses when first put into use. This does not necessarily indicate that the tube is definitely no-good, because in many cases this defect can be overcome by performing a simple seasoning of the tube (s).

Such a tube should be operated at normal filament voltage, but with no plate or grid voltage being applied for at least 15 minutes. Next, apply about half of its normal plate voltage and operate about one-half hour, then operate the tube under its normal operating conditions for an hour, while monitoring its operating voltages. Some times you win, some times you lose. There is much controversy over tube testers verses tube replacement testing. By controversial, I mean that at least two sides that can be taken, and this is also true when we discuss tube testers versus replacement testing.

The necessity for comparing tubes of the same type under standardized conditions cannot be overstated. There are many who maintain that the best test for a tube is to simply replace the defective tube with the same type in the circuit. Those who subscribe to this say that this test is simple, and has the distinct advantage that the tube is being "tested" under actual operating conditions.

As far back as 1934, every RCA Receiving Tube Manual including the latest issue contains the following statement: "The tube tester cannot be looked upon as an authority in determining whether or not a tube is satisfactory. Actual operating test in the equipment in which the tube is to be used will give the best possible indication of a tube's worth." I will leave this controversy up to your good judgment and experience.



Circle (68) on Reply Card

Magnavox stereo sound section

by Steven J. Babbert

previous article in the state-ofthe-art-TV series dealt with the new-generation syscon used in a Magnavox chassis #25P506-00AA. The series will continue here with a look at the sound section. Before we begin, a brief description of the MTS (Multichannel Television Sound) system will be given. For an in-depth treatment of this system, see Sencore Tech Tip #213.

MTS system

The MTS system used for TV is similar in some ways to the conventional FM stereo multiplex system. The main components of the MTS signal are the mono channel, the stereo subchannel, and the SAP (Second Audio Program) channel. The mono channel consists of the L+R signal included to maintain compatibility with mono receivers. The stereo subchannel or "difference" channel consists of the L-R signal needed to recover the individual L and R signals at the receiver.

The L-R signal is combined with a 31.468kHz (twice the horizontal rate or 2H) carrier in a balanced mixer before transmission. This results in a DSBSC (Double Sideband Suppressed Carrier) signal. Carrier suppression reduces interference and allows a reduction in transmitter power. A pilot signal is included to be used by the receiver to phase lock a reference oscillator. The oscillator generates a subcarrier that is reinserted into the DSBSC signal to recover the L-R. Signal. The L-R and L+R signals are then matrixed resulting in the original L and R.

The SAP channel is frequency modulated onto a subchannel at a frequency of 78.671 kHz (5H). The L+R signal, the L-R sidebands, the pilot carrier, and the SAP FM subchannel are combined to form a composite audio signal by frequency modulating them onto the audio carrier of the TV channel.

Stereo decoder

The heart of the sound section in this chassis is IC200, an I2C-bus controlled BTSC (Broadcast Television System Committee) SAP/stereo decoder, and audio processor made by Phillips (Figure 1). Note that with the exception of the input/output interface devices, IC200 requires few external components and no alignment or adjustment controls. All adjustments are made electronically by the syscon via the I2C bus connected to pins 21 and 22. Ceramic resonator, Y209, sets the frequency of the reference oscillator at 503kHz (32H).

The TV audio carrier is demodulated in the main signal processor IC. The resultant composite signal comprising all of the above mentioned components is applied to pin 24 of IC200. The L-R and SAP signals will not be recovered until they are processed within IC200. The L+R signal, however, was recovered in the first FM demodulator in the main processor. This means that the L+R (mono) audio signal can be scoped at pin 24.

The amplitude of the signal at pin 24 is nearly line-level $(1V_{PP})$ and can be tested at this point using simple audio signal tracing methods. This will be helpful when troubleshooting no-sound or distorted-sound symptoms.

The signal amplitude is independent of the volume setting and should be present whenever any program is being received. If the L+R signal is normal at this point, then it is safe to assume that the other signal components are okay too; it is unlikely that a problem ahead of this point would only effect, for example, the L-R signal or pilot carrier. Note that the undemodulated audio components mixed with the audio signal at pin 24 will appear as noise during any signal tracing test. This is normal and does not indicate a problem. In other words, expect to hear some noise mixed with the audio signal at pin 24.

Auxiliary inputs

Left and right/mono aux. input signals are passed through optocouplers 1C81 and IC61 to maintain isolation between the hot chassis and the user and/or external equipment. The left channel signal level is dependent on the gain of driver transistor Q81. The gain is adjustable via R80 in the emitter circuit. Note that components on the input side of the optocoupler use a floating ground.

The output signal from the optocoupler is applied to common-emitter stage Q82. Negative feedback from the emitter of Q82 is applied to the base of the transistor in IC81 via R90. This acts to stabilize the amplifier. The signal at the collector





of Q82 is passed through common-emitter buffer stage Q83 and routed to pin 7 of the stereo decoder IC. Operation of the right/mono channel is the same. The signal is routed to pin 36. Signal source selection is controlled by the syscon via the 12C bus.

Audio output

The audio output section used in this chassis could not be any simpler. Left and right output signals from pins 1 and 42 of IC200 are routed to IC240 and IC230. The TDA7052 is a BTL (Bridge-Tied Load) audio amplifier (Figure 2).

Note that these ICs require no external components other than the RC network used for input coupling. The speaker is connected directly to pins 5 and 8. Isolation transformers are used for right and left variable audio outputs.

Troubleshooting

Problems in the sound section of these sets should be relatively easy to isolate. The output amplifiers can be tested individually by signal injection if they are suspect in a dead-channel situation. Signal injection and tracing can also be used to test the right and left auxiliary

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Figure 2. The TDA7052 is a BTL (Bridge-Tied Load) audio amplifier. Note that these ICs require no external components other than the RC network used for input coupling. The speaker is connected directly to pins 5 and 8.

input circuits. Don't overlook the possibility of power source problems when any of these circuits are not passing signals.

In a case where one or both channels are dead and you have verified that the output amplifiers and the signal at pin 24 are okay, it is likely that IC200 is faulty. This integrated circuit is also likely to be faulty if auxiliary input signals reach pins 7 and 36 but do not pass through IC200 in the auxiliary mode. IC200 may also be suspect if a single function, such as SAP or stereo does not work.

If IC200 is not functioning there is, of course, a possibility that it is not receiving the appropriate data from the syscon via the 12C bus. However, if the other bus-controlled functions are working, such as the tuner and picture control circuits, then it is likely that the data is okay. If any of the above mentioned problem conditions exist and the supply voltage is normal, IC200 is probably defective and should be replaced.

It is almost certain that at least one of the output amplifiers will be working no matter what type of sound problem you have as long as voltage source # 19 is up. It is very unlikely that both amps will fail simultaneously. A working amp can be used for signal tracing, saving the time needed to set up additional test equipment.

Connect any non-polarized capacitor of 1µF or larger to one end of a clip lead as shown in Figure 3. The capacitor will block dc while passing the audio signal allowing you to bypass suspect stages. By connecting the lead between pin 24 and the input of the amp, you will be able to determine whether the L+R signal is present. If the L+R signal is not present, then the trouble is probably in the main signal processor section. This method can also be used to trace signals through the auxiliary input circuits, provided they are connected to an audio source. The L+R signal can be injected into the auxiliary input using a second lead and capacitor if necessary.

With a general understanding of the state-of-the-art television sound section, you should be able to tackle most problems without difficulty. In fact, with the information presented here, you might find this chassis easier to service than many older monophonic chassis.



Figure 3. A working amp can be used for signal tracing, saving the time needed to set up additional test equipment. Connect any non-polarized capacitor of 1μ F or larger to one end of a clip lead. The capacitor will block dc while passing the audio signal allowing you to bypass suspect stages.

ES&T Calendar

Int'l. Cons.Electronics Show (CEMA) January 7–10, 1999 Las Vegas Convention Center and Hotels Las Vegas, NV CEMA (VA): 703-907-7600 www.cemacity.org

Western States Conference (Regional Associations Conference) Feb. 18–20, 1999 Queen Mary Long Beach, CA Bob Lunn (AZ) Phone/Fax: 602-943-0596 Lunncet@aol.com

1999 All Service Convention March 10-14 Radisson Resort Parkway Hotel Orlando, FL Sponsoring Associations: **Professional Service** Association - PSA **Electronics Technicians** Association - ETA Florida Electronic Service Association - FESA Satellite Dealers Association - SDA ETA 604 N. Jackson, Greencastle, IN 46135 765-653-8262 Fax: 765-653-4287 e-mail: eta@indy.tdsnet.com Website: http://www.eta-sda.com

Tri-States Annual State Convention '99 March 11–14, 1999 Hood River Inn Hood River, OR Mike McCray (OR) 503-288-5356 Fax 503.288.0359 mmccray @cowboyz.com

Electronic Distribution Show: EDS '99 May 18–20, 1999 Educational Programs May 17th Las Vegas Hilton Hotel Las Vegas, NV Electronic Distribution Show Corporation 222 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2160 Chicago, IL 60606 312-648-1140 Fax: 312-648-4282 Website: http://www.edsc.org e-mail: eds@edsc.org

National Professional Service Convention August 2–7, 1999 (Trade Show August 4 and 5) Hotel Intercontinental Dallas, TX

NESDA 2708 W. Berry Fort Worth, TX 76109-2356 817-921-9061 Fax: 817-921-3741 Website: http://www.nesda.com

PCS '99 September 22–24, 1999 New Orleans, LA 703-739-0300

Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association (CEMA) 2500 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA 22201-3834 703-907-7600 Website: http://www.cemacity.org

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Circle (66) on Reply Card

How antennas work

by Dick Glass

Editor's note: High definition TV (HDTV) is beginning to be available in the United States. For the time being, until some issues in the cable industry are resolved, broadcast TV will be the only way HDTV is available to many people. That means that antennas will be of increasing interest. With that in mind, and considering that for many years antennas have been de-emphasized in favor of cable delivery, this magazine will be publishing articles on the subject of antennas to try to help readers get up to speed on antennas and their installation and application.

The half-wave dipole antenna is the most common type of antenna for radio-TV communications. Mechanically, it is made of two pieces of wire.

The length of the half wavelength dipole antenna in Figure 1 is about 2.5 feet. This is the right size to be resonant (or receptive) to TV channel 11 (channel 11 frequency is 199MHz). We will find out how to determine antenna length later. For now, understand that this dipole antenna is correct to receive a horizontally polarized RF (radio frequency) signal of 199MHz.

When the RF 199MHz signal voltage is properly transferred from the final power amplifier in a transmitter, through the air, to this half wavelength dipole, the antenna element charges and discharges in much the same manner as a capacitor charges and discharges.

A signal voltage applied to plate A in a circuit produces a charge on plate A, which sets up an electrostatic field between the plates. This field causes the input signal voltage to be impressed across the plates of the capacitor (Figure 2). If one plate of a capacitor is much smaller than the other, (Figure 2 lower, or Figure 3) maximum voltage will not be impressed across it because the larger plate would not be able to set up, or react, with the metal plate opposite it, except for the areas of metal opposite each other. Actually, all of the area of the larger plate will still have an electrostatic field reacting with the small plate, but since the



Figure 1. The half-wave dipole is the most common type of antenna used for radio/TV communications.



Figure 2. The signal voltage from the transmitter is impressed on the antenna in a manner similar to connecting a signal to a capacitor.

capacitance of a capacitor is inversely related to the distance between the plates, you can see that the top edge of the large plate A will have much less influence on the small side B (in Figure 2) than that portion directly across from it (Larger in Figure 2 lower, smaller in Figure 3).

Notice the capacitor with a small sized plate would not pass the signal as well as one with proper sized plates, but it would pass some of the signal. An antenna can be considered to act like two plates of a capacitor, having an electrostatic field between the two rods that make up a dipole. Notice that the electric field may not be as concentrated as it is in a capacitor (that has two equal size plates that are barely separated). While the field may not be as intense, still, there is an electrostatic field which (as it varies in strength and frequency) will cause an electromagnetic field. This field will travel away, or propagate from the antenna at the speed of light. (186,000MPS).

An antenna works in the same manner as a charging and discharging capacitor, creating a varying electrostatic field that, like ripples on the water, travels away from the antenna rods, perhaps forever. (We know that we can receive radio



Figure 3. Where the elements of an antenna are closer together, the electric field is stronger.



Figure 4. The antenna generates an electric field as a result of the signal coming from the transmitter.



Figure 5. Setting the elements of the antenna at an angle to each other, rather than parallel, allows the field generated to be propagated.

waves from Jupiter and Mars — millions of miles from Earth).

Spread the field

A capacitor usually has plates of equal size, separated by air, or by an insulator such as glass, mica, wax paper, or even an electrolyte. Usually, the metal capacitor's plates are very close to each other, and parallel.

But what happens if the plates are not parallel? We have seen what happens when one plate is much smaller than the other. Now, if the plates are not parallel, then at one point the plates are close to each other, but get farther and farther apart. The electrostatic field will be of greater magnitude where the plates are close together, and much less where the plates are farther apart. The important thing here is to realize that the entire plate



Figure 6. If the elements of the antenna are placed at an angle of 180 degrees with respect to each other, the field created will be propagated to the maximum extent.

still has an electrostatic field, even though the field will not be as intense where the plates are farther apart (Figure 2, 3, or 4.)

Should you then turn one plate at right angles, as in Figure 5b, the field will be distorted even more from that of two parallel, close-together plates, such as a capacitor has. But still, there is a field created as one plate becomes either positive or negative in relation to the other.

In Figure 6a, you see the plates of the capacitor at 180 degrees. This is the worst placement possible, but, still, an electrostatic field will be created as shown. While this electrostatic field may be much weaker than that created between



Figure 7. An auto antenna uses the fender as the other half of the dipole.



Figure 8. If the length of the antenna is onehalf of one wavelength of the broadcast radio wave, the signal impressed on the antenna will be a maximum value.

the plates of a real capacitor (Figure 3), it is actually better for the purpose of transmitting a signal because the field is allowed to propagate outward without the

restriction of the confining metal plates of the capacitor.

Next, instead of attaching the wires that connect the antenna to the middle of the elements, connect them between the rods as shown in Figure 1. The two plates, or two elements of our capacitor, still can be charged through the feed wires, but now, the charging and discharging may leave a high voltage at the feed point, while the opposite end of that piece of the antenna rod is still at a minimum at some instant. As the charging signal varies, the current and the voltage fed into the antenna elements change along the length of the rods, thus creating a pulsating electrostatic field, which, in turn, emanates outward as an electromagnetic field.

The explanation of this is that the capacitor must absorb some electrons in order to become positive or negative. These electrons must travel from the feed point to the other end of the element (or plate, if a real capacitor). Since the current leads the voltage in a capacitor, the antenna current will be maximum where the voltage is minimum and vice-versa. As long as the signal is varying, and near the proper wavelength for the antenna



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Figure 9. This signal for channel 11 shows that the signal contains most of its energy at the center of the band.



Figure 10. This diagram shows the broadcast channel bandpass allotment by the FCC versus the actual passband.



Figure 11. Two antennas of the same length will respond to the same resonant frequency.

elements, this action will continue to happen and the varying electrostatic field will produce radio signals.

While we are familiar with the very small signals used in radio communications, Nicola Tesla demonstrated that not only can you transmit voltage variations across hundreds of miles of the earth's surface, but it is actually possible to transmit power without using wires also.

Antenna resonance

If you connect a set of rabbit ears to your TV set, it will receive enough variations in the electromagnetic TV signal, (which originated at the broadcast antenna), to produce picture and sound. However, if the length of the rabbit ears antenna's V-shaped dipoles are only about 1 inch long, you will receive very little or no TV signal. Your chances of receiving enough signal to show even a faint picture are small. However, the chances are better that you can receive an ultra high frequency UHF channel (like channel 69) than of receiving a low channel, like channel 2.

Maximum transmitted signal occurs when the length of the antenna elements are nearly as long as the half-wave length of the frequency being input into it. We say "Nearly" because electric signals travel slightly slower in metal than in air, or in a vacuum (electrical signals do not need air to propagate; they do just fine in a vacuum and travel just as far and fast). In metal conductors, the speed of electrical impulses is 95% or less than in space.

We could use a full wavelength size element for our antenna but since a halfwave will radiate the maximum voltage peaks as well as the full-wave will, why waste metal?

We can even use a quarter-wave antenna. Auto radios use quarter-wave antennas to reduce physical size (Figure 7). The antenna (a Marconi) works as if it were a half-wave antenna, but one half of the physical length of the antenna is reflected by the auto body metal. The metal used for the reflected portion of an antenna is called a ground plane.

Transmitting antennas — receiving antennas — same length

If you are attempting to receive a signal with an antenna that is not the proper size (the proper size for TV channel 11 is 2.5 feet) the electromagnetic waves will not be received as well as they would be with the exactly correct-sized elements (Figure 8). If you could get the ripples on a rope you are undulating to be exactly the right size, you could "Crack the whip." If you can get a child's swing pushed with just the right amount of force, at just the right time in its arc, it will swing high. If you get the ripples in a tub of water to build by reinforcing each wave with your hand or a paddle, the wave will be big enough to splash something or somebody. There is a natural frequency of resonance with just about everything.



Figure 12. The signal from the broadcast antenna travels through space for perhaps many thousands of miles.



Figure 13. When the broadcast antenna and receiving antennas are aligned in the same direction, the signal received by the receiver will be the strongest it can be.



Figure 14. If the transmitting and receiving are polarized in opposite directions, the received signal will be weaker.



Figure 15. A fender-mounted auto antenna is vertically polarized.



Figure 16. A standard roof-mounted TV antenna is horizontlally polarized.



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Figure 17. The radio pioneers Hertz and Marconi developed different types of antennas.

If the half-wavelength size of the broadcast radio wave is the same as the 1/2 wavelength size of the receiving antenna, maximum voltage can be impressed across the two "plates" of the "capacitor," which are the two elements of the receiving antenna.

Think of the wind blowing past an antenna element at 40 to 50 mph. The elements will hum as they resonate mechanically against the blowing wind. This resonance has nothing to do with RF frequency resonance except to show that the antenna is sympathetic, or receptive, to the incoming force. In each case, the antenna reacts or responds. If the anten-

 $1/2\lambda$ $1/4\lambda$ HERTZ MARCONI

Figure 18. This drawing shows the Hertz and Marconi antennas from above.

na responds to the tiny radio signal's magnetic variations, it can develop the voltage variations across a coil of wire, or a resistor, and begin the process of amplifying and detecting.

Frequency bandpass

An antenna will respond, or resonate, to frequencies that they aren't exactly "cut" for. They won't collect quite as much of the signal, but they may collect a usable, even satisfactory, amount. Because one antenna may, for practical purposes, need to cover an entire band of frequencies, rather than only a single narrow channel, this phenomenon is important.

Note in Figure 9 that TV channel 11 contains most of its energy near the center of the band. Both ends of the band taper off sharply, thus the signal does not normally mix, or interfere with, an adja-





Figure 19. As the signal radiates out from the antenna in all directions, the signal is reduced in amplitude proportional to the distance it has traveled from the antenna.

cent channel. Most of the energy on the station is contained near the video and sound carrier frequencies.

The antenna for TV channel 11 would be perfect if it had a bandpass like the broadcast channel allotment specified by the FCC (Figure 10).

With such a perfect antenna frequency response, no signals above 204MHz or lower than 198 MHz could be received. No interference from channel 10 or channel 12 would occur.

The real world of antennas

So, you can see that while the typical channel 11 antenna does receive channel 11 frequencies best, it can also pick up channels 10 and 12, nearly as well (Figure 11). Can that be why some rooftop antennas need only 3 or 4 elements, yet they still seem to receive channels 2 through 13 well enough to be satisfactory?

The importance of this article is to show you that antennas really do work. We have shown that a transmitting antenna is charged with an excess or deficiency of electrons in proportion to the ripples of the signal voltage. These RF variations travel away from the transmitting antenna at the speed of light. They can be received by an identical-length antenna at your house. It is a little like transformer action (Figure 12).

Polarity

Another important concept about antennas and signal propagation is polarity. If the receiving antenna elements are parallel to the transmitting antenna elements, they can receive the electromagnetic impulses or signal voltage variations sent by the broadcast station. If both are not parallel, little or no signal can be received. Try aiming a rooftop antenna towards the station, then twist it so that the flat elements are perpendicular to the earth, rather than parallel to it. The signal developed by the antenna will measure much less on a field strength meter when it is perpendicular, as the TV transmitter antenna (in most cases) is parallel to the earth, even though it may be far up a vertical antenna tower. Take a look at the following Figures 13 through 16 to see what is meant by polarity:

Hertz and Marconi

Heinrich Hertz, of Hamburg, Germany, and Guglielmo Marconi, of Bologna, Italy, made early discoveries about radio, antennas, and electromagnetic waves, and developed antennas that still bear their names. The early antennas used for radio transmissions were the first of two types: Hertz, and Marconi (Figure 17).

Think of the Hertz antenna as a halfwave long wire antenna, parallel to the earth (although it can also be used vertically). Think of the Marconi as an auto fender-mounted antenna, one-quarterwavelength, using the auto body as the reflected quarter-wave portion.

A bird's-eye view of the Hertz and Marconi antennas are as shown in Figure 18. The Hertz antenna, in the early days of radio, was often strung between poles, as the dimensions were much longer than for TV antennas. In the early part of the 20th century, VHF and UHF frequencies were thought to be too high to be used for any practical purposes. Meanwhile, the broadcast AM radio frequencies started out at 500kHz. This frequency has a wavelength of near 2000 feet. As higher frequencies were achieved, and thus antenna elements became shorter, vertical polarity became just as popular as horizontal.

The radiation pattern for each antenna type will show why one might use a Hertz rather than a Marconi. Note in Figure 19, that a vertically polarized monopole antenna distributes the electromagnetic waves in a 360-degree pattern. The radiation pattern for a Marconi dipole antenna is shown in Figure 20. The Hertz longwire antenna will distribute the waves in two directions — both parallel to it. Actually, the Hertz distribution pattern is



Figure 20. The pattern of the propagation of a signal from a Marconi or dipole antenna.



Figure 21. To take advantage of the ability of an antenna to be "broadband," some TV antennas are constructed using a "folded" dipole as shown in this illustration.

more the shape of a dome, or better yet, a Quonset hut, as it also radiates up, in addition to radiating in both parallel directions across the land.

The Marconi radiation pattern will have a null directly above it and the 360-degree outward propagation will look something like a teardrop if you could see it in a side view. It is really less like a teardrop than like the front wings of a butterfly. This propagation shape occurs because of obstacles such as trees, metal buildings, hills, and so forth that will absorb some of the ground wave as it travels across the land. Note the leading, or higher up portion of the transmitted signals, not affected by hills and ground junk, will be stronger than those closer to the ground. Knowing this, you can see why getting your antenna up above the clutter usually will produce a stronger signal.

Thickness of the elements

A key understanding of antenna resonance and frequency response concerns the actual thickness of the metal used in the elements. If your antenna is constructed using a fine wire, it will respond to only one frequency; that is its resonant frequency. Frequencies higher or lower will be received less easily or not at all. You may recall optimizing the length of your Marconi CB (Citizen's Band) fender-mounted antenna.

Changing the length of that skinny-rod antenna only a fraction of an inch made a considerable difference in the power you were able to transmit, and also in the reception ability. The frequency desired for the CB band is 27 MHz. You do not want 26 MHz or 29 MHz signals cluttering up your radio front end.

TV antennas are commonly made with one set of elements expected to receive 2 or 3 channels about equally as well. The metal rods are thicker than most CB antenna whips. The thick TV antenna metal element allows signals adjacent to the resonant frequency to also be received, nearly as well as the resonant frequency. Thus, one element may receive channels 11, 12, and 13 about equally as well.

To take advantage of the ability of an antenna element to be "broad band," some TV antennas are constructed using a "folded dipole" as shown in Figure 21. The folded dipole looks (to the received signal) to be, not 3/8-inch or less thick, like the metal rods, but rather, about 2 or 3 inches thick (the distance between the parallel portions of the folded element.) This confuses RF signals so that they don't seem to know exactly what the resonant frequency is. They go ahead and resonate for frequencies well above and well below the actual folded dipole maximum length end-to-end.

Take the associated quiz to see that you have a grasp of antenna concepts and how antennas work.

How antennas work Quiz

1. If 6.24×10^{18} electrons were forced into one plate of a capacitor (or one of the halves of a dipole antenna) the number of electrons would be equivalent to:

- a. one volt b. one Ω (ohm) c. one watt
- d. one coulomb

2. If 6.24×10^{18} (6, 240,000,000,000, 000,000) electrons are forced into one plate of a capacitor (or one half of the dipole antenna) that plate, or half-antenna, will be:

- a. positive
- b. negative
- c. neutral
- d. burned up

3. If much less or much more, than a coulomb of electrons is placed onto the antenna element, then between the two sections of the antenna dipole there will be a (an):

- a. electrostatic field
- b. electromagnetic field
- c. Marconi field
- d. Hertz field

4. The resistance between one element of an ordinary half-wavelength dipole and the other portion of the dipole is Ω (ohms).

a. 0

b. low ohms reading, depending on frequency

c. high ohms reading, depending on frequency

d. infinite

5. The impedance between one section of a half-wave dipole antenna and the other is Ω (ohms).

- a. 0
- b. 72
- c. 300
- d. infinite
- 7. The impedance between the termi-

nals on a folded dipole antenna, at resonance, is _____ Ω (ohms).

a. 0 b. 72 c. 300 d. infinite

8. A folded dipole, as compared to an ordinary dipole, has _____bandwidth.

a. narrower

- b. wider
- c. the same

d. wider bandwidth at resonance narrower at all other frequencies

9. A Marconi antenna is usually mounted ______ to the ground.

- a. parallel
- b. vertical
- c. isotropically

d. with coulombs isolating the main element from ground

10. The wavelength in feet of an RF (Radio Frequency) signal is calculated using the formula:

- a. I = E/R
- b. Wavelength = 984/f kHz
- c. Wavelength = 984/f MHz
- d. Wavelength = 984,000/f

11. The polar pattern of a Marconi, vertically-mounted antenna is:

- a. A Figure 8
- b. an exclamation mark
- c. a question mark
- d. a circle

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| | в — д |
| p — 11 | q — ç |
| o—01 | 4 d |
| q — 6 | в — Е |
| q — 8 | 5 — P |
| с — Г | b — I |
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| | |

Glass is President of ETA and SDA. He is owner of Glass Antenna Systems, Inc., which sells and services satellite systems and off-air antennas and operates two small cable systems and a master antenna system. This article is exerpted from "The Antenna Book," a publication that is available from The Electronics Technicians Association, 602 N. Jackson St., Greencastle, IN 46135, Tel: 765-653-8262.

-M-BOOKS___

Audio Systems Technology, Level II: Handbook for Installers and Engineers by NSCA, PROMPT Publications, 336 pages, paperback, \$39.95

Audio Systems Technology, Level II: Handbook for Installers and Engineers is designed to correspond with Level II work elements on the NICET tests. Intermediate level content is presented on audio installation as it is practiced in the industry today.

Some of the topics covered in Audio Systems Technology, Level II. Handbook for Installers and Engineers include basic audio calculations, acoustical measurements, trigonometry and geometry, wiring and cable, effective business communication, and bench test equipment. Additional information about getting certified by NICET is included, with tips and strategies to help the test-taker improve their chances of success on the NICET exams. This book is for you if: You want to be NICET-certified in audio systems, you are a developing audio installer or engineer, you want to enhance your knowledge of audio systems design and installation, or you are experienced but want to brush upon intermediate-level audio. Also look for the Level I book in the Audio Systems Technology series!

Authors James S. Brawley, Jr.; Bob Bushnell; Karen B. Hunt; Matt Marth; Ted Uzzle; Bill Whitock; Melvin J. Wierenga; and Ian R. Wolfe contributed chapters that draw from their specialized fields of technical expertise.

PROMPT Publications, 2647 Waterfront Parkway E. Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46214-2041

Tube Substitution Handbook, Revised Edition by Barry Buchanan and William Smith, PROMPT Publications, 160 pages, paperback, \$19.95

Tube Substitution Handbook, Revised Edition is an accurate, up-to-date guide to determine direct substitutes for receiving tubes and picture tubes.

Tube Substitution Handbook, Revised Edition will be useful to antique radio buffs, Classic car enthusiasts, ham operators, and collectors of vintage ham radio equipment. In addition, marine operators, microwave repair technicians, and TV and radio technicians will find the handbook to be an invaluable reference tool. *Tube Substitution Handbook, Revised Edition* is divided into three sections, each preceded by specific instructions. Those sections are as follows: Section 1: Vacuum Tubes, Section 2: Picture Tubes, Section 3:Tube Basing Diagrams. The diagrams provide handy reference to pin numbers for the tubes listed in the above sections of the book.

Barry Buchanan and William Smith are engineers with Howard W. Sams & Company. They amassed the information for this book while designing Photofact service documentation.

PROMPT Publications, 2647 Waterfront Parkway E. Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46214-2041

Audio Systems Technology: Handbook for Installers and Engineers, Level I by Larry W. Garter, CET, PROMPT Publications, 336 pages, paperback \$34.95

Audio Systems Technology: Handbook for Installers and Engineers, Level I is an excellent guide for the beginner or experienced audio installer who desires to learn the "entry level" basics of audio installation, and information, tips, and strategies for taking the NICET exam.

NSCA's Audio Systems Technology: Handbook for Installers and Engineers, Level I is a one-stop information source for today's audio technician. It can be used as a study guide to prepare for NICET audio technician certification exams, as well as a comprehensive reference for the installer of audio systems both out in the field and at the bench. Designed to correspond with Level I work elements on the NICET tests, this book presents the basics of audio system installation as it is practiced in the industry today.

Here are just a few of the topics: Basic electronic circuits, basic math basics of microphones and loudspeakers, basic wiring switches and connectors codes, standards and safety reading plans and specifications. This book is for you if: you want to be NICET-certified in audio systems, you are a new or inexperienced audio installer, you want to learn about the basics of audio systems design and installation, and if you are experienced,

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but want to brush up on audio basics. Also look for Level II book in the Audio Systems Technology series.

Larry Garter is the owner and senior consultant at Techplex, a technology infrastructure designer, and he is also contracted by the NSCA as an instructor for the Certified Audio Technician Training Program. He is a member of the Audio Engineers Society, BICSI and NSCA, and is NICET certified at Level 2 in Audio Systems

PROMPT Publications, 2647 Waterfront Parkway E. Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46214-2041

Understanding Neural Networks by John Iovine, PROMPT Publications, 256 pages, paperback, \$29.95

Understanding Neural Networks explores the world of artificial intelligence by uncovering current subjects in neural network research and forecasting potential advancements in neural network technology that are simply science fiction to us now.

In Understanding Neural Networks. author John Iovine explains the differences between traditional rule-based (symbolic) computer processors and the mind-boggling possibilities of neural networks (artificial intelligence). Following an introductory explanation of the science and history of development, lovine delves deeper into the subject, covering subjects such as: Biological and mathematical neurons, artificial neuron software project training, a neural network speech recognition circuit, neural paradigms, back propagation, teaching computers to speak, computers that smell, fuzzy logic, artificial life and more. Just as space flight in Buck Rogers movies proved to be a window to the future, so may the concept of the "HAL 9000" computer. If these subjects intrigue you, Understanding Neural Networks will help you understand the nuts-and-bolts of neural networks, along with the whys, hows, and, for the dreamers, the what-ifs.

John Iovine is an avid electronics hobbyist and author of many electronics books. His articles frequently appear in electronic magazines.

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Test Your Electronics Knowledge

by Sam Wilson







Figure 3. What total distance will the boat have traveled when it reaches the other bank?

1. What is the name of the number that expresses the likelihood of an occurrence of a specific event?

2. When the switch is closed, the dc output voltage of the half-wave rectifier in Figure I should be about _____.

3. What is the value of 1/3 divided by 3/4?

4. What do the initials DTV stand for?

5. What is the voltage across Rx in Figure 2?

6. If you are given two carbon-composition resistors, you can tell which has the highest power rating by its color code. That statement is:

A. correct.

B. not correct

Wilson is the electronics theory consultant for ES&T.

7. A man is rowing a boat across a river that is 400 feet wide. He starts in a direction straight across at point A and the river carries him down stream 300 feet to get all of the way across. How many feet does he actually travel to get all the way across the river? See Figure 3.

8. Is the following statement correct? Digital modulation is always the most efficient method of radio transmission.

- A. correct
- B. not correct

9. Three resistors having identical resistance values are connected in series across a 120V dc source. The voltage across the center resistor is:

A. Cannot determine unless the value of the resistors is known.

B. 40V

10. What is the frequency of the waveform in Figure 4?

(Answers on page 53)







Figure 4. What is the frequency of this waveform?

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Circle (73) on Reply Card

Some ideas for improving operations

by Gerry McCann and members of NESDA

The ideas published here were generated by members of the National Electronics Service Dealers Association (NESDA) during a "Best Ideas Contest." We publish them in the hope that they may help other service centers, and perhaps inspire them to come up with their own ideas to improve their businesses.

1. Use a motion detector at the front door to greet customers. "Freddy the Frog" was suggested. The floor standing figure "ribbets" when a client enters. This often brings a smile to the lips of even cranky clients.

2. The accountant of one business owner suggested he buy his company trucks, then lease them to the business. This study of financing has helped him save taxes.

3. Keep outside technicians supplied with brochures and info on the latest technology and when it is expected to come on the market. Have copies of current articles that mention the approximate cost of new technology. This program of information encourages clients to approve repairs of existing units instead of waiting for newer technology. Current HDTV articles were passed around as an example.

4. One service center owner placed an exotic fish tank in the front lobby of his business. Watching the fish had a calming effect on front counter clients. Comments were made that the nature of our service business brings unhappy folks to our counters and we must be prepared to repair both the product and the buyer's disappointment.

5. A 25% increase in billable labor was realized by one service manager by clock-



ing time on each repair closely and billing for it. The Sperry Tech system of time averaging was an alternative mentioned.

6. One attendee extends labor and parts warranty to 6 months on C.O.D. jobs. This was found to increase client satisfaction at a minimal cost.

7. Create a full Service Resource manual. This can become a major addition to a company policy and procedure manual. The fine sample shown contained forms for manufacturers consumer relations contacts, plus information on how and when to contact each division. A full list of each manufacturer, current service reps, steps to processing warranty, etc. This resource is used to train new employees, as well as a quick information referral for all employees.

8. Use an HTML Browser and an Intranet system. This system uses the technology for instant information. For example, when a client calls in with product or accessory questions, the employee has a menu to select category for info requested. Pictures of products, forms, etc. can be imported from manufacturers home pages for instant accessibility.

9. When selling a universal remote control, put the code for client's set on the invoice. Since remote controls are such an important element of home electronics, these will be readily available to the owner if the manual is lost or misplaced.

10. A variation of the above was offered. Write the codes onto a paper sticker place it under the battery cover when selling universal remote hand units.

11. An Intranet Concept was further mentioned. Using a company Intranet for communications internally in the service center is emerging as a modern platform for more than E-mail: sharing schematics, warranty information, parts and accessory descriptions, and scheduling were noted.

12. In order to protect units from being damaged in transport, constructing a stretcher was suggested. A 24 x 30 sheet of plywood was used. The top was carpeted, 4 pieces of appliance blanket was attached to the sides, which covers the product envelope style. Straps were used to hold the product on. Galvanized pipes were added underneath and extended outward to make carrying easier.

13. Create a pick up and delivery route on certain days of the week at local shopping centers and elderly complexes. This idea was successfully promoted through the local Chamber of Commerce. Use an ice cream truck bell to attract attention. have portable receipts available for clients. A U-haul type truck with a rear lift works best. This servicer caters to many elderly communities in their area.

14. Make up numbered information binders for each manufacturer you represent. Different colored transparent folders for product classifications works well: TV, VCR, Camcorders, etc., with corresponding color pages. Technicians can easily put schematics in folders with large numbers and apparent location now obvious.

15. As service units come in, use a large folder to place schematic, invoice, time card, etc. This envelope follows the service unit through completion.

16. Include a question on your (QOS) Customer Satisfaction Survey asking the name of an employee who was particularly helpful. Reward the employee named on the returned form with an extra \$5. Employees have a special challenge to take a personal interest in each client and this becomes positively noticeable. This policy will also create a need for an ample inventory of personalized business cards.

17. Advertise any special talents your staff can provide. Multilingual capability was mentioned. Don't miss the small but important human components of the service business.

18. Change your phone system to one chime instead of several ringing thru out the building. This lowers noise levels and reduces stress.

19. Create a dealer information package. Include hook-up diagrams, care tips on products, customer service phone numbers, info on TPW's represented, etc. When thought out well, placed in a nice binder and kept current, this book can become a constant reference and source of service referral and can be in the control area of each retail floor of your dealers.

20. Use post cards with stamps for customer satisfaction surveys.

21. Large removable Red Dot stickers can be used on the front of products coming in to the service center to denote when priority service is requested or additional service is required. The placing of the large Red Dot sticker in view of the set owner introduces a physical evidence of urgency.

22. In place of music on hold, use nature tapes mixed with info about your service center. This makes waiting more relaxing and pleasant for the client. We must go out of our way to understand the proper attention being paid to the temperament of service transactions.

23. Instead of written QOS surveys, use the phone to check with repair clients two weeks after each repair to make sure they are satisfied and don't have any questions or problems. Always remember to ask: 'What else needs fixing?"

24. If your service counter is semi-technical, try to solve clients complaint at the front counter by asking about complaints. If the problem can be solved by simple cleaning. degaussing, etc., do these instantly. The word of mouth advertising this promotes is well worth the time.

25. In today's servicing, we are moving more large-screen products. If your building doesn't have a loading dock, construct your own free-standing trucking ramp. Build a loading dock platform, with a long smooth deck plate so one man can dolly load and unload a truck.

These ideas were generated by members of NESDA, the National Electronic Service Dealers Association, during a session called the NPSC '97 Best Idea Contest. This session took place during the NESDA National Professional Service Conference, on August 8, 1997 in Las Vegas, NV. We thank NESDA for giving permission to reprint them here. For more information about NESDA, call or write: NESDA, 2708 W Berry, Fort Worth, TX 76109-2356, 817-921-9061.

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Circle (62) on Reply Card

The Magnavox VRX video cassette recorder

by Bob Rose

The Magnavox VRX VCR has been in consumer hands for about a year now. It includes the following models: VRX 222AT21, VRX 242AT21, and VRX 262AT21. The service literature

Rose is an independent consumwe electronics business owner and technician.

for these models is Manual 5847, available from Philips Consumer Electronics Company. The manual is in three parts consisting of sections 1a and 1b, which detail the VCRs specifications, operating instructions, adjustment procedures, schematics, and cabinet and electrical parts. Section 2 covers every aspect of the deck mechanism, including a parts list.

Since the VRX models are similar to products with the Funai brand name on them, this manual will allow you to service a variety of brands. I checked through my Funai literature, and I believe their manuals for model numbers LV 227G and/or LV446G will work for these

| PWR. 00 VCR | יהוה. ינו נו | REC M PM | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|--|--|
| | | | | |

| LED MODE | INDICATOR ACTIVE | | |
|---|---------------------|---|--|
| CASSETTE "IN" CASSETTE "OUT" | | ON OFF | |
| VCR/TV VCR MODE VCR/TV TV MODE | " VCR " " VCR " | ON OFF | |
| CLOCK | " 88:88 " " PM " | ON ON | |
| POWER ON | "PWR " | ON | |
| REC | " REC " | ON | |
| REC PAUSE | " REC " | Blinks at 0.8Hz interval | |
| T-REC, OTR | | ON (T-REC OFF, T-REC incomplete Blinks at 0.8Hz interval) | |
| When reel and capstan mechanism is not functioning correctly | "00 " | Blinks at 0.8Hz interval | |
| When tape loading mechanism is not func- tioning correctly | "00 " | Blinks at 1.6Hz interval | |
| When cassette loading mechanism is not functioning correctly | Î O O II | Blinks at 3.2Hz interval | |
| When the drum is not working properly | "00" | Blinks at 6.4Hz interval | |
| S-INH Condition | All modes | Blinks at 0.8Hz interval | |

Figure 1: The above symbols will appear on the indicator panel to indicate the current mode or operation of the VCR. On-Screen modes will also be monmentarily displayed on the TV screen when you press the operation buttons.



Figure 2. Deck mechanism of the VRX video cassette recorder.

units, for the most part. However, do keep in mind that there may be critical differences, and different part numbers, so if you use the Funai manual, do so only as a general guide, not as gospel. The "LV" designation identifies these VCRs as those sold under the Sylvania brand. Remember that "Sylvania" no longer refers to a Philips brand.

How can I describe these units?

Electrically, these VCRs offer a variety

of options that we consumers have grown accustomed to and do not markedly differ in this respect from the more expensive brands. The power supply, which is a high failure circuit in any device, appears to be relatively trouble free. The exception will be capacitors that have a close voltage tolerance. Funai has had modest problems with certain microprocessors in previous units. The "jury is still out" with respect to the VRX units, but it appears that these new units will function quite well (and reliably) electrically.

Mechanically, the VRX VCR's offer a lighter, compact deck than previously manufactured. The manufacturer has found a way to use fewer parts, which means that the manufacturing and selling costs have decreased. The VCR is surprisingly light. I can hold one between my thumb and fingers without fear of dropping it. I have to confess that this bothers me. I am from "the old school" which means that the heavier a unit is, the more metal it has in it rather than plastic and it will tend to be a little bit more reliable. Only time and use will tell us how mechanically reliable the new units will be.

Even though they have been out only for about a year, the VRX units have a repair history. Some of the problems are unique as you will see (if you haven't already experienced them!). I will attempt to group the problems with which I am familiar around common themes.

Problems with the front panel display

You may be called on to service one of these VCRs because all or part of the segments of the display don't come on. The display has a black mask surrounding it. Would you believe the mask can shift and block the display! The cure is to disassemble the unit and reposition the mask.

The problem can also be caused by cold or broken solder joints around the pins that anchor the display to the PCB. There have also been reports of broken copper runs to the pins of the display.

LED problems

The photodiode continues to be a problem. In some instances, the diode itself is defective and must be replaced. How does the problem show up? A friend of mine bought a new combi unit. He was pleased with its performance, especially the picture quality. However, after he had it for two months, he said it woke him up about two o' clock one morning turning itself on and off! He wanted to know if he needed an exorcist or a repair person! The problem was a defective photodiode.

The part designation for the VRX photodiode units is D511. Under normal circumstances, the LED "lights up like a Christmas tree" when ac is applied. It turns on the tape end sensors which send lows to the CPU. The CPU interprets the low as "no cassette present" and keeps the mechanism in an off state. If the light path is interrupted, the CPU will receive a high. It interprets the interruption in the light path as a command to turn the unit on and begin the play sequence. If no tape is present in the basket, the CPU will turn the VCR on and off several times before it powers down. If you examine the display, you will see that the "cassette in" symbol is blinking at a 3.2Hz rate, which means the cassette loading mechanism is not functioning correctly.

The literature explains the problem like this: D511 deteriorates to the point where its emission is insufficient to turn the end sensors on. The microprocessor does not receive the "low" it expects and interprets this as a command to turn the VCR on. The manufacturer cautions us not to replace D511 with a part from an older unit because the older parts cannot supply the necessary output. I can confirm that they are correct! The Philips part number is 4835 130 87139.

Incidentally, these new units will tell you what is bothering them if you know how to interpret the data. Figure 1 lists "the trouble indicators" and how to interpret them. If you use these indicators, you can often know what the trouble is before you take the top off the VCR.

Now, suppose you load a tape and the unit goes into shutdown three to nine seconds after the tape starts to play. You wonder if the capstan is working, but you know it has to be because the counter is working. The first thing to check is the alignment and physical integrity of the prism. Reports indicate prism alignment problems are common, especially if you have taken the deck out of the unit. I have not seen this particular problem, but I have seen a host of broken prisms.

The prism is of a different configuration than the type of prism we are accustomed to. It is so configured because the VRX mechanism uses D511 to sense the end-of-tape and reel rotation. Its part number is 4835 402 97727.

Suppose you load a tape and put the

VCR into play or record mode and it shuts down in about fifteen seconds. The problem could be a defective D511. Before you replace it, check to see that the black barrier between the take up reel and start sensor is in place. If the glue that holds it has come loose and/or the barrier has moved, it will block light from the prism to the take up reel and create this very symptom.

Picture problems

I have seen a unit or two that had a snowy picture during playback. If you jarred the VCR, the picture might clean up for a moment or two. The VCR is so constructed that the B13 lever can strike C301 and break it loose causing the picture problem. The cure is to reposition the capacitor and resolder it.

Mechanical problems

There are two mechanical problems I want to deal with. First, you may notice excessive noise when the unit is in FF or RW mode. The cause is the capstan belt rubbing against components on the main PCB. The cure is to reposition the components. Second, the carriage (cassette basket) does not seem to be as substantial as it has been. If you have serviced any VRX units, you will understand. The parts breakdown for the cassette basket is displayed in the "deck mechanism view 3" diagram (see Figure 2 for a view of a portion of this mechanism).

I have had problems with the teeth of items B350 breaking off and getting stuck in the grease in the tracks of B351 and B344. If this happens, the mechanism will jam when tapes are inserted or ejected. The cure is to remove the debris, replace the grease, and perhaps replace one or both B350 parts (4835 522 37347). Item B302, the rack, also breaks. I have no Philips part number for this piece. If you don't want to put the basket together piece by piece, order the whole assembly, 4835 103 97092. It is inexpensive and may in fact save you time.

If you have encountered problems I haven't seen and/or haven't discussed, let me know. I am interested in collecting and passing on information, and I always enjoy talking with people who are in our line of work.

Programmable high-power regulated dc power supply

BK Precision introduced the Model 1790 high-power, 20A regulated dc power supply. According to the manufacturer, the supply's excellent constant voltage/current operation, ability to preset current limit without load, high stability, and close regulation (+/-0.01%), make it a viable choice for use in high current, variable voltage lab, and production applications.

This analog, remotely programmable power supply also features remote voltage sensing, overvoltage protection



(optional), and phase controlled pre-regulation and linear post regulation. Two large 3-digit LED voltage and current displays, constant voltage/current indicator, stand-by DC Output ON/OFF switch, and a momentary contact switch for setting constant-current are front panel mounted.

Circle (100) on Reply Card



Capacitor tester

The Capacitor Wizard is an instrument that is specially designed to check capacitors of luF and larger "in circuit," eliminating the need to remove the capacitor for accurate tests. The unit measures ESR (equivalent series resistance). High ESR is an indicator of a bad cap.

The meter is easy to use, says the manufacturer. Connect the meter to the capacitor and look at the display: red for bad caps and green for good.

Circle (101) on Reply Card

Epoxy kits for PCB repair

Repairing cosmetic damage to printed circuit boards is possible with Epoxy Kits from Circuit Repair Corporation. To use, simply mix, add the right coloring to match your board's hue, and apply. The epoxy cures to a strong and durable finish, restoring the integrity and appearance of your repaired PCB.

Epoxy Kits include EP-01 Epoxy, a clear, low viscosity, superior strength epoxy, precisely measured out in two compartment plastic pack-ages, so that



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Circle (74) on Reply Card January 1999 Electronic Servicing & Technology 45 the user doesn't have to measure. The EK-10 Epoxy Kit includes 10 packages of EP-01 Epoxy, 10 mixing sticks, mixing cups and foam swabs. The EM-10 Epoxy/ Mask Kit also includes 3 different coloring agents for proper color matching. A wide selection of additional coloring agents is available.

Circle (102) on Reply Card

Inductive speaker probe and tone generator

Wavetek introduces the new 540 Series, the 5425P Inductive/Sensing Speaker Probe and the 541TG Tone Generator/Sender. These products are compatible with each other, as well as with other similar devices sending or sensing tones. Designed for moves, adds and changes to telephones, LANs, security systems, audio/visual systems, etc.



The Model 5425P probe detects tones and provides an audible signal to inform the user of the correct wire carrying the tone signal. Extra features include an LED lamp and sensitivity adjustment knob. The LED light provides visual indication and glows with the correct wire. The sensitivity adjustment knob allows for quieter operation in crowded areas or louder operation in noisy settings.

The Model 541TG tone generator sends an alternating frequency "warble" signal for detection by the speaker probe. An RJ11 connector for quick plug-in to standard telephone jacks, datacom RJ45 jacks 3, and a pair of alligator clips for quick attachment to any wire pair are all included. Its 3-position switch selects warble tone, off or continuous output. An LED indicates continuity and warns users of an active circuit.

Circle (103) on Reply Card

Projection television repair and maintenance video

This instructional video from Electronix starts by explaining the similarities and differences between projection sets and standard televisions, including basic theory. Next, different types of troubleshooting are covered, along with tube replacement and alignment. Convergence adjustment, a too often challenging problem, is reviewed in detail. The last segment of the program addresses common failures and their likely solutions. This video assumes that the viewer has had some basic experience with television repair.

Circle (106) on Reply Card

Training package for digital multimeters

Fluke has teamed up with the professional educators at American Technical Publishers, Inc. (ATP) to develop a comprehensive instructional program on the proper use of digital multimeters (DMMs). The new training package, *Digital Multimeter Principles*, is designed for use in company training programs, schools, and by educators to teach DMM fundamentals.

The training package includes the *Digital Multimeter Principles* textbook; the instructor's *Resource Guide* with hands-on exercises, a step-by-step outline, and 42 color transparencies; *Electrical Principles and Practices* and *Electrical/Electronic Systems* textbooks; two videotapes covering DMM operation and safety procedures; and a Components Kit for use with the hands-on exercises. The package also includes a Competency Skill Checklist and Certificate of Completion for the instructor's signature.

While the training package is intended for use in a seminar or classroom setting with a qualified instructor, there are individual items offered for self-study. The *Digital Multimeter Principles* textbook, the *Digital Multimeter Principles* *Resource Guide*, the Digital Multimeter Principles videotape, and the ABCs of DMM Safety videotape are all separately priced and comprehensive.

Circle (107) on Reply Card

High current variable voltage ac supplies

Global Specialties introduces two high-current variable line ac sources, featuring continuously variable outputs from 0Vac to 130Vac at 0A to 10A (Model 1510, p/n 105-1510), and 0Vac to 130Vac @ 0A to 15A (Model 1515, p/n 105-1515)



Both models have a wide operating frequency range from 47Hz to 450Hz, making them especially suitable for testing and repairing products that have stable but changeable frequencies, such as in avionics and repair.

Both models have built-in analog voltmeters and ammeters with 2% full scale accuracy, power ON/OFF, and special ON/OFF voltage load switches.

Both models also feature separate input and output fuses for double protection and a rugged design, portable with unique adjustable handles.

Circle (108) on Reply Card

Soldering iron

The new PS-80 Soldering Iron from PACE allows for reliable soldering at lower temperatures. SensaTemp control and a platinum temperature sensor provide accuracy for repeatable performance with no calibration required. Its innovative handle design is lightweight, comfortable, and stays cool during use, says the manufacturer. With over 75 thru-hole and surface mount tip choices, this iron is designed to meet a variety of production and rework requirements.

Circle (109) on Reply Card

What Do You Know About Electronics? The Determinant

by Sam Wilson

In a previous issue in a TYEK question, you were asked to evaluate a determinant like the one shown in Figure 1. The noble editor of ES&T reminded me it is probable that many of our readers haven't looked at that math for a long time, so, they may not remember Cramer's Rule. I'll take care of that now.

The two-by-two determinant in Figure 1 is part of a solution of the two simultaneous equations in Figure 2. They are simultaneous equations because there is a value of X and a value of Y that can be used in both equations and the equations will be correct. I'll show you that case in the determinant problem that follows.

As shown in Figure 2, the unknown values are X and Y. The question is: What value of X and of Y can be substituted into both of these equations to make them true? The first step is to make sure that the equations with X and Y, and the known values, are aligned vertically as shown in Figure 2.

Now the coefficients of X and Y are written in the same alignment to make the determinant (D) - sometimes called Delta (Δ). Cramer's rule says that the value of D can be obtained by subtracting the product of the ups from the product of the downs. See Figures 3 and 4. The rule, as stated, applies only to a 2 by 2 matrix.

The determinant is (D) the denominator of the final solution. The numerator for the solution of X and Y is obtained as follows: substitute the knowns column (10 and 3) for the coefficients of X. The solution now looks like Figure 5. Find the value of X by using Cramer's rule on the numerator as shown in Figure 5. Then substitute the knowns column for the coefficients of Y. See Figure 6. Find the value of Y.

You now have the values of X and Y for the simultaneous equations. You can prove that your values of X and of Y are



Figure 1. This two-by-two determinant is part of a solution of the two simultaneous equations in Figure 2.

correct by substituting each value into the original equations:

5X + 2Y = 10

$$5(2.25) + 2(-0.625) =$$

11.25 - 1.25 = 10 (See Equation 1 in Figure 2)

and 3X + 6Y = 3

3(2.25) + 6 (-0.625) =

6.75 - 3.75 = 3 (See Eq. 2 in Figure 2.) The next question is: Where will you find a situation where you can use two simultaneous equations? Usually a circuit with two power supplies is used for an example. However, I'm going to use a circuit with one power supply and two loops — often called "meshes." My reason for doing that is that the problem can be easily solved as a basic series-parallel problem and that will check the answer given by determinants. Refer to Figure 7. The problem is to find the value of current through R₂.

As I said before, we can solve that problem easily as a series-parallel problem. When I write $R_2//R_3$, I mean the value of R_2 and R_3 connected in parallel.

The total resistance (R_T) as "seen" by the battery is:

$$R_T = R_1 + R_2 / / R_3 = 8 + 2 = 10\Omega$$

The total current (I_T) is $V/R_T = 10/10$ = 1A

The current through R_2 can be found by the reciprocal method.

$$I_2 = I_T x (R_3/R_2 + R_3) = 1 x (6/9) = 2/3A$$

| $5\mathbf{X} + 2\mathbf{Y} = 10$ | Equation 1 |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| 3X + 6Y = 3 | Equation 2 |

Figure 2. A "determinant" provides one method of solving a system of two equations with two unknowns.



Figure 3.To evaluate the determinant of Figure 1, cross multiply as shown here.

Observe that 2/3 of the 1A total current flows through R_2 , so 1/3 of the current flows through R_3 .

Now, we will use determinants in the solution for the current through R_3 . See Figure 7. We have already determined that the current through R_3 is 1/3A, so, the following solution should be a proof of that solution. I'm going to romp through a couple of basic network theorems and laws before I start the solution.

Kirchhoff's Voltage Laws — The algebraic sum of the voltage drops and voltage rises for any closed loop is zero; and the algebraic sum of the currents at any junction is zero.

I'm going to give a solution that is totally out of sync with my training. In fact, it may totally destroy my epizookus. I'm going to assume electron current flow. So, when assumed current enters the negative side of a voltage, I'll call it a voltage drop (-), and when an assumed current enters the positive side of a voltage, I'll call it a voltage rise (+).

I'm going to use Maxwell's loop equations to solve the problem. That is a generalization of a Kirchoff law. For the Kirchhoff's solution, you use as many

$$D = (5 \times 6) - (3 \times 2) = 24$$

Figure 4. This is the result of the cross multiplication of Figure 3.

Wilson is the electronics theory consultant for ES&T.

$$X = \frac{\begin{vmatrix} 10 \\ 3 \end{vmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 6 \end{vmatrix}}{24} = (10 \times 6) - (3 \times 2) = 54 = 2.25$$

Figure 5. To solve for X in the simultaneous equations, in the numerator, substitute the knowns column (10 and 3) for the coefficients of X. The determinant (D) is the denominator of the final solution.

$$Y = \frac{\begin{vmatrix} 5 \\ 3 \end{vmatrix}}{24} = \frac{(5 \times 3) - (3 \times 10)}{24} = \frac{-15}{24} = -0.625$$

Figure 6. To solve for Y in the simultaneous equations, in the numerator, substitute the knowns column (10 and 3) for the coefficients of Y. The determinant (D) is the denominator of the final solution.

junction current equations as needed to include all of the currents in the circuit, and as many voltage loop equations as needed to include every voltage.

With our problem, as drawn in Figure 7, that would require three equations and three unknowns (one current equation and two voltage loop equations) if you use Kirchhoff's method. With Maxwell's solution (sometimes called the Maxwell-Helmholz solutions), we can solve the problem with only two voltage loops, and, therefore, two equations with two unknowns.

Note: Maxwell's method is sometimes (erroneously) called a solution by Kirchhoff's laws.

I have systematized the Maxwell's method by always assuming clockwise currents as shown by I_1 and I_2 in Figure 8. Put down your pen and listen to me.

You don't need to write and tell me I have assumed the wrong direction for I_1 , and I_2 . As I said, I always assume a clockwise direction for assumed currents. If my assumption is wrong, my answer for I_2 will be the correct numerical value, but it will have the wrong polarity.

For voltage loop ABEFA (starting and ending at A)

$$-8I_1 - 3I_1 + 3I_2 - 10 = 0$$

Observe that there are two polarities of voltages across R_2 . Both polarities must be counted for each voltage loop. For loop BCDEB

$$-6I_2 - 3I_2 + 3I_1 = 0$$

First we combine the I_1 's and I_2 's, then align the unknowns and knowns.

$$-11I_1 + 3I_2 = 10$$

+ $3I_1 - 9I_2 = 0$

Figure 8. Writing the voltage equations for the two loops in the circuit of Figure 7 results in these two equations with two unknowns.

The value of D is shown in Figure 8. The determinant and solution for I_2 is shown in Figure 9.

The current I_3 through R_3 has been shown to be 1/3A. Describing a solution by determinants is much like describing how to tie shoe laces without illustrations. I assigned that problem once in a technical writing class. (Don't try that at home).

Observe that the sum of the currents through R_2 and R_3 is 1A.

$$Y = \begin{vmatrix} -11 & 3 \\ 3 & -9 \end{vmatrix} = 99 - 9 = 90$$

$$I_2 = \begin{vmatrix} -11 & 10 \\ 3 & 0 \\ 90 \end{vmatrix} = \frac{0 - 30}{90} = -\frac{1}{3}A$$

$$I_1 = \frac{0 & -9}{90} = -\frac{90 - 10}{90} = -1A$$

For R₂ the actual current through it is:

$$I_1 = I_2 = -I_1 - (-I_2)$$

$$= -I_1 + I_2$$

$$= -1A + \frac{1}{3}A$$

$$= \frac{2}{3}A$$

Figure 9. To solve Figure 8 for the values of I1 and I2, use determinants, as shown here.



Figure 7. When using electronics mathematics to find values of voltage or current results in systems of two equations with two unknowns, you can use determinants to arrive at the solution.

1998 Article Index

| | Month | Page | | Month | Page |
|--|-------|------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| ASSOCIATION GUIDE Guide to national, state, and regional associat | tions | | Teaching at community colleges by Sheldon Fingerman | May | 50 |
| by the ES&T Staff | Jun | 46 | PARTS AND EQUPMENT PURC | HASING | r T |
| BASICS HDTV by John Ross | Jul | 18 | Replacement parts/Servicing information by the ES&T Staff | Dec | 10 |
| Learning about PC networks by John Ross | Jan | 37 | Sources of replacement parts by the ES&T Staff | Feb | 8 |
| Lighting and magnification by the ES&T Staff | Apr | 12 | Your salvage can make you money by Bob Rose | Sep | 50 |
| Satellite TV dishes/systems by John Ross | Jul | 39 | SERVICING Camcorder servicing by the ES&T Staff | May | 20 |
| New generation system control circuits by Steven Babbert | Sep | 39 | Camcorder servicing: Diagnosing by Phil Zorian | Jul | 24 |
| How to get started in vacuum tube servicing by Alvin G. Sydnor | Oct | 45 | CD player servicing by Homer Davidson | Feb | 42 |
| Understanding and specifying LCDs by Simon Wyre | Oct | 46 | Circuit board and parts handling by the ES&T Staff | Nov | 06 |
| Switched-mode power supplies by John Ross | Nov | 24 | Electronics Technic | ians 🚺 | X |
| Upgrading a PC by John Kull | Dec | 46 | and Satellite Dealers Associ | ation | DA |
| CHEMICALS Electronic servicing chemicals by the ES&T Staff | Jul | 06 | In Conjunction with Professional Service Association Florida Electronic Service Associ present the | n (PSA) ar ation (FES | nd SA) |
| GLOSSARY Glossary, servicing technician's by the ES&T Staff | Mar | 20 | 1999 All Service Con The convention for electronic and appliance and technicians. | e service de | ealers |
| INFORMATION RESOURCES | | | Orlando, Florida, March 10 | -14, 1999 | 9 |
| Continuing education in servicing by the ES&T Staff | Aug | 47 | The All Service Convention will include an all day tra technical and management seminars, and tr | ade show, info aining forums. | rmative |
| Cross reference update by Victor Meeldijk | Jun | 06 | The associations will be administering Certification internationally recognized credent | on Exams, offe ials. | ering |
| Servicing resources on the internet by the ES&T Staff | Jun | 57 | All those who register with ETA to attend complimentary copy of either ETA's <u>Ante</u> <u>Associate CET Exam Study Guide Book 1</u> . | d will receive enna <u>Book 1</u> (A \$24.95 v | e a ., or /alue.) |
| MANAGEMENT Safety in the service center by the ES&T Staff | Oct | 14 | For more information contact ETA at 765-653-82 602 N. Jackson, Greencastle, IN 46135 Fax: 763-653-4287 e-mail: eta@indv.tdsnet.com | 62 or 765-653 | 3-4301 |
| Service center management: Measuring technician effectiveness by John Gooley | Jan | 13 | Web site: www.eta-sda.com | E LECT | KONNIC AA SERVICE SID |

Circle (64) on Reply Card January 1999 *Electronic Servicing & Technology* 51

| I | Month | Page | | Month | Page |
|---|-------------|------|---|-----------|------|
| Computer repair, How to start a by Victor Meeldijk | Jul | 08 | Software, diagnostic by the ES&T Staff | Nov | 08 |
| Disk servicing by the ES&T Staff | Oct | 16 | Software: Service management by the ES&T Staff | Apr | 06 |
| From tuner to picture tube by Homer Davidson | Jun | 50 | SOLDERING/DESOLDERING Soldering and desoldering update: Extending soldering tip life | Nov | 10 |
| Magnavox relay-free power supply by Steve Babbert | Apr | 016 | SURVEY REPORTS | | |
| Mechanical subsystems servicing by the ES&T Staff | Dec | 22 | Reader survey report by the ES&T Staff | Feb | 18 |
| Microwave oven repair basic | Nov | 15 | Readers' survey report by the ES&T Staff | May | 49 |
| Motors in consumer electronics by Victor Meeldijk | Mar | 08 | TECHNOLOGY New technology update by the ES&T Staff | Feb | 14 |
| On-site servicing by the ES&T Staff | Apr | 10 | New technology update by the ES&T Staff | Sep | 18 |
| Service mode adjustment for the newer televisions by Bob Rose | Jun | 24 | TEST ACCESSORIES/BENCHE EQUIPMENT/PROBES DMM update by the ES&T Staff | S/ | 14 |
| Servicing audio products by John Ross | May | 24 | Oscilioscope update by the ES&T Staff | Sep | 06 |
| Servicing computer monitors by John Ross | Oct | 06 | Test accessories update by the ES&T Staff | Sep | 42 |
| Servicing a dead-set RCA CTC185 by Bob Rose | Oct | 24 | Test benches by the ES&T Staff | Jun | 15 |
| Servicing satellite television systems | | | Test equipment showcase | Dec | 24 |
| by John Ross | Jul | 39 | Test equipment update | Jun | 22 |
| Servicing VCRs by John Ross | Feb | 22 | Test probes update | Jun | 18 |
| Startup-shutdown problems in Philips' A8 chas by Bob Rose | ssis Nov | 51 | TROUBLESHOOTING | 5 | 04 |
| VCR service by Ken Simmons | Jul | 50 | by Homer Davidson | Dec | 06 |
| Zenith: Startup, shutdown, and horizontal drive by Steve Babbert | e Jun | 40 | Isolating logic faults at the component leve by Tom Jones | l May | 08 |
| SOFTWARE | | | Troubleshooting techniques: Microprocess troubleshooting | or Aug | 06 |
| Business management systems: Implementing | a | | 67 DOU NOSC | | |
| software solution into your organization by Jeff Murray | Jan | 20 | Troubleshooting tube circuits by Alvin Sydnor | Aug | 16 |
| General software by the ES&T Staff | Feb | 12 | Video board troubleshooting guide by Stephen Bigelow | Jan | 06 |

1.11

ES&T 1998 Department Index

| | Month | Page | | Month | Page |
|--|------------|------------------|---|----------------------------|-------------------|
| SUCCESSFUL SERVICING Ken's electronic service by Ken Simmons | Feb | 46 | What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Apr | 54 |
| TEST YOUR ELECTRONICS KNO Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Jan | DGE 24 | What Do You Know About Electronics Sam Wilson | Jul | 46 |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Feb | 20 | What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Aug | 58 |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Mar | 15 | What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Sep | 52 |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Apr | 44 | What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Oct | 52 |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Jul | 23 | What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Nov | 56 |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Aug | 54 | Test Your Electronics Knowledge | | |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Sep | 26 | Answers to test (from page 39) | | |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Oct | 21 | Probability Greater than 160V | | |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Nov | 23 | 3. 1/3 divided by 3/4 = 1/3 x 4/3 = 4/9 4. Digital TV | | |
| Test Your Electronics Knowledge by Sam Wilson | Dec | 21 | 5. 0V — The circuit is a Wheatstone Brid 6. B — You can tell which has the higher its larger physical size. | lge. power rati | ing by |
| WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ELECTRONICS | | | 7. 500 feet — Note from Figure 3 that a 3 gle is involved. | , 4, 5 right | trian- |
| What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Jan | 44 | 8. B — "Analog amplitude modulation is t method of transmission in an analog channe <i>IEEE Spectrum</i> — April 1991). | he most eff 1." (Quotec | ficient I from |
| What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Feb | 51 | 9. B — If the resistors have equal resistant third of the voltage drops across each resister | nce values or. | , one- |
| What Do You Know About Electronics by Sam Wilson | Mar | 55 | 10. $F = 1/T = 1/0.9sec = 1.11Hz$ | | |

Profax Ten-Year Directory

(January 1988-December 1998)

Profax # Profax # January 1988 May 1989 Zenith PV800 color monitor 3017 Zenith CM-14-0/B-3(1) color TV (Models SE2721H/SE2725R/SE272H) Hitachi color TV, CT 1358 chassis 3018 3046 February 1988 GE color TV, 1987 CTC 136 3047 GE VCR, 2018W Model 3019 June 1989 March 1988 RCA P42000-S1 projection TV GE 8-4500 projection TV 3020 (additional Models: April 1988 RVM46700, 46GW700, P46000) 3048 NAP projection TV, E54-10 chassis 3021 NAP color TV, chassis E54-15 Zenith color TV, C2020H chassis 3022 (Magnavox RD8518 and RD8520; May 1988 Philco Model P8190S; RCA PVM050 color TV 3023 Sylvania PSC410 and PSC420) 3049 Hitachi CT2652, CT2653 color TVs 3024 July 1989 June 1988 Hitachi CT2066 color TV 3050 Hitachi color TVs RCA CTC135 color TV 3051 CT2647/CT2648/CT2649 chassis 3025 August 1989 NAP projection TV, E54-15 chassis 3026 GE CTC135-S1 color TV 3052 July 1988 Zenith CM-140/B-2(I) color TV 3053 GE Model 1VCR2006W VCR 3027 September 1989 Zenith color TV, CM-139/B-0 (B) chassis 3028 RCA CSM055 col. TV/AM/FM/clock radio 3054 **August 1988** October 1989 Hitachi color TV, CT1344 chassis 3029 Hitachi CT2086 B/W chassis G7NU3 color TV 3055 NAP color TV, E51-56 chassis 3030 Zenith PV4661H rear-projector col. TV 3056 September 1988 November 1989 RCA color TV, PVM035 chassis 3031 GE 1987 8-4500 projection color TV 3057 GE color TV, NC-05X3/06X1 chassis 3032 RCA/GE CTC 145/146 color TV 3058 October 1988 December 1989 Hitachi CT3020W/CT3020B color TV 3033 Zenith CM-140/Digital (C) chassis color TV Zenith CM-139/B-3 (I) SD2511G/ (ModelsSE3135P/SE3191H/SE3535H/ZB2771H/ SD2581H color TV 3034 ZB2771H2/ZB2777H/ZB2777H2/ZB2797P/ November 1988 ZB2797P2/ZB2797Y/ZB2797Y2/ZB3193H/ZB3193Y/ Hitachi VHS VCR, Model VT-63A 3035 ZB3539T/ZB3539Y) 3059 NAP RD4502SL/RLC312SL color TV monitors 3036 January 1990 December 1988 Hitachi CT 1395W G7NSU2 color TV 3060 GE proj. TV, PW chassis Model 40PW3000KA01 3037 February 1990 January 1989 Zenith CM-139/B1 (Y) and (K) color TV receivers Hitachi color TV, CT1955, NP85XA chassis 3038 Models SD2097S (Y) and SD 1327W3, SD1327Y, NAP color TV, series 19C2 chassis (Magnavox) 3039 SD1327Y3 (K) 3061 February 1989 **March 1990** RCA/GE color TV, CTC145/146 chassis 3040 RCA/GE CTC 148/149-S2 chassis color TV 3062 April 1990 Zenith col. TV, CM-140/b-2 (G) chassis (Models SE2503G/SE2505P, SE2507N/SE2509H) 3041 Hitachi G7XU2/3 chassis color TV March 1989 G7XU2-Models CT2087B/W, A087 (MT2870 NAP color TV, chassis E34-11 through MT2878) 3042 Hitachi color TV, chassis G7XU3-Models CT2088B/W, A088 (MT2880, CT1941/CT19A2, NP83X chassis 3043 MT2886, MT2887) 3063 **April 1989** May 1990 GE VHS VCR, Model 1VCR2002X 3044 Zenith PV-140/Digital (G) Rear Proj. digital TV Hitachi CT1955 color TV 3045 receiver, Zenith surround stereo system 3064

| June 1990 | | October 1992 | |
|--|------|---|---------|
| Hitachi CT4580K, VP7X2 chassis projection TV | 3065 | Sharp Model 13C-M100 color TV | 3093 |
| July 1990 | | November 1992 | |
| Zenith PV454-1P chassis color TV | 3066 | Sharp Model 27C-5200 color TV | 3094 |
| August 1990 | | December 1992 | |
| RCA/GE TX81 chassis color TV | 3067 | Hitachi VT M150A VCR | 3095 |
| Septemeber 1990 | | | |
| RCA/GE CTC156 chassis color TV | 3068 | 1992/1993 Profax Schematics Special Issue: | |
| October 1990 | | Curtis Mathes Projection TV: Models SMP 4100, 460 | 0. 5210 |
| Hitachi VP9X1 chassis color TV | 3069 | Hitachi Camcorder Model UM-E2A | -, |
| November 1990 | | Memorex Pocketvision 26 Catalog Number 16-163 | |
| RCA/GE CTC169 (PV) chassis color TV | 3070 | Mitsubishi VCR Model HS-U55 | |
| December 1990 | | Panasonic color TV Model SR400EK | |
| RCA CTC91 chassis color TV | 3071 | RCA/GE VCR Model VG4202 | |
| January 1991 | | Sharp color TV Model 27SV65 | |
| RCA CTC99 chassis color TV | 3072 | Toshiha color TV Model CF2077A: CX21772 | |
| February 1991 | | Zenith color TV Models SD5515/SD5535/SD555G | |
| RCA CTC107 chassis color TV | 3073 | | |
| March 1991 | | January 1003 | |
| RCA/GE CTC168 chassis color TV | 3074 | Sharp Model 20C-5300 color TV | 3096 |
| April 1991 | | Fabruary 1003 | 5070 |
| RCA/GE CTC86 chassis color TV | 3075 | Sharp chassis No. 2581 color TV | 3007 |
| May 1991 | | Sharp VCD Model VCA45U | 3008 |
| RCA/GE KCS203 chassis B&W TV | 3076 | March 1003 | 3090 |
| Tune 1991 | 0070 | Sharp Model 20C \$200 | 3000 |
| RCA CTC96 chassis color TV | 3077 | Sharp VCP Model VC H86U/C | 3100 |
| Inly 1991 | 5077 | April 1003 | 5100 |
| RCA CTC107 chassis color TV | 3078 | Sharn Model 27SV70 | 3101 |
| Angust 1991 | 5070 | May 1003 | 5101 |
| Hitachi CT1947/CT19A7 chassis color TV | 3079 | Nay 1775 Sharp VCD Model VC H970U/C VC 9970U/C | 2102 |
| Sentember 1991 | 5077 | Sharp Model 20SB65 color TV | 3102 |
| Hitachi CT2541/2542 chassis color TV | 3080 | | 5105 |
| October 1991 | 5000 | Sharp VCD Model VC A502U VC A504U/C | 2104 |
| RCA/GE CTC167 chassis color TV | 3081 | Sharp VCK Model VC-A5050, VC-A5040/C | 5104 |
| November 1991 | 5001 | July 1995 Sharp VCD Model VC H00211/C VC H00411/C | 2105 |
| RCA/GE CTC166 chassis color TV | 3082 | Sharp VCK Model VC-H9030/C, VC-H9040/C | 5105 |
| December 1991 | 5002 | Sharp VCD Model VC U87U/C | 2106 |
| RCA/GE CTC 169 chassis color TV | 3083 | Sontombor 1003 | 3100 |
| Ianuary 1992 | 5005 | September 1995 Sharp Models 10F M40D 10 EM50D color TV | 3107 |
| RCA/GE CTC168 chassis color TV | 3084 | October 1003 | 5107 |
| Feburary 1992 | 5001 | DCA color TV Model CTC176 | 2108 |
| Hitachi AP13 color TV | 3085 | November 1003 | 5108 |
| March 1992 | 5005 | Hitachi Broj, color TV Models 55EY7K, 50EY6K | |
| Hitachi VT-M40A color TV | 3086 | AGEV3D/AV SOESID/V AGEV3DS/AVS | 3100 |
| April 1992 | 5000 | 40EA5D/4K, 50E51D/K, 40EA5D5/4K5 | 5109 |
| Hitachi 3267E VCR | 3087 | Sharp color TV Model 10E M50 | 2110 |
| May 1992 | 5007 | Sharp color 1 v Model 19E-1050 | 5110 |
| RCA/GE CTC 168-53 color TV | 3088 | 1003/1004 Profes Schematics Special Issues | |
| Tune 1992 | 5000 | Curtis Mathea VCP/Model GV720/740 | |
| Hitachi VT-M231A VCR | 3089 | Hitachi TV/Model ND 921 V | |
| Inly 1992 | 5007 | IPM Monochrome Display/Model 8503 | |
| Hitachi VT-F551A VCR | 3090 | Magnavov TV/Model DD00450101 DD0046T101 | |
| August 1992 | 2070 | Mamorey Portable Compact Disc Player/Model CD 27 | 360 |
| RCA/GE color TV No 7-7800A | 3091 | Memorey VCP/Model 20 | 500 |
| September 1992 | | Mitenhishi TV/Model CS 2525D/CV 2526D | |
| RCA/GE TX82 color TV | 3092 | 191130015111 1 9/1910001 CS-3333R/CK-3330K, CS2125D/CV 2126D | |
| | 3072 | CSJ1JJK/CK-J1J0K | |

| Panasonic CTM1353R | |
|---|------|
| JC Penney TV/Model 2003 | |
| Sharp color TV/Sigma 9700 chassis | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics color TV/RCA CTC | 175 |
| Toshiba VCR/Model M222, M222C, M227C, M227I | |
| | |
| January 1994 | |
| Memorex Portavision 9-inch color VHF/UHF | |
| TV monitor | 3111 |
| Feburary 1994 | |
| Hitachi VHS VCR Models VT-F350A, | |
| VT-F351A, AW | 3112 |
| March 1994 | |
| Sharp color TV Model 20SB55m chassis No 20R1 | 3113 |
| April 1994 | |
| GE VCR Models 9-7100, 9-7115, 9-7120, 9-7215 | 3114 |
| May 1994 | |
| Hitachi VCR Model VM-2400A (U,PX), AW | 3115 |
| June 1994 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics color TV: TX825 | 3116 |
| July 1994 | |
| Sharp CTV Models 13F-M40, | |
| 13F-M50, 13F-M100, 13F-M150 | 3117 |
| August 1994 | |
| Hitachi Video camera/recorder | |
| Models VM-2700A, VM-3700A (U,C) | 3118 |
| September 1994 | |
| Sharp CTV Models 25F-M40/50/100/120, | |
| chassis No SN 41 | 3119 |
| October 1994 | |
| Hitachi VCR Model VM-1700A (U,C) | 3120 |
| November 1994 | |
| Hitachi VCR Models VT-F380Z/ | |
| F381A, VT-F382A/F385A | 3121 |
| December 1994 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics color TV: TX825 | 3122 |

1994/1995 Profax Schematics Special Issue:

Hitachi VCR Model VM-1600A Memorex VCR catalog no. 16-620 Panasonic VCR Models PV-4962, PV4941-K, PV-4960-K JC Penney TV/VCR Model 2163 Quasar Model CTM-1355R & TP-1330EE RCA color TV Model CTC168-S4 Sharp color TV models 20C-S100 & 20C-S120 Tatung color monitor Toshiba VCR Model SV-F990 Zenith color TV receiver CM-139/B-1 Zenith CM-143/Digital (A)

| January 1995 | |
|--|------|
| Sharp video cassette recorder Models | |
| VC-A502U, VC-A506U, VC-A507U | 3123 |
| February 1995 | |
| Sharp color TV Model 19TF30, chassis SN40A | 3124 |

| March 1995 | |
|---|---------|
| Hitachi video cassette recorder Model VT-F482A | 3125 |
| April 1995 | |
| RCA video cassette recorder Model VR530 | 3126 |
| May 1995 | |
| RCA video cassette recorder Model VR530 (cont'd) | 3126 |
| June 1995 | |
| Hitachi projection television Models | |
| 50UX 18B/19K, 46UX 16B/17K | 3127 |
| July 1995 | |
| JC Penney combination Model 2163 | 3128 |
| August 1995 | |
| Sharp video cassette recorder Model | |
| VC-H925U/H927U | 3129 |
| September 1995 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics color TV Model | 2120 |
| | 3130 |
| Sham TV/VCD camba Madal | |
| Sharp $1 \sqrt{\sqrt{CR}}$ combo Model | 2121 |
| 15 V 1-F40/15 V 1-F100 November 1995 | 3131 |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics VCP Model | |
| VG2030 | 3132 |
| NG2050 December 1995 | 5152 |
| IC Penney color television Model 1048/1049 | 3133 |
| se remey color elevision model 1040/1049 | 5155 |
| 1995/1996 Profax Schematics Special Issue | |
| Panasonic TV Model CTM-2092S Chassis AI EDP20 | 3 |
| JC Pennev TV Model 2157 | - |
| JC Penney TV Model 2294 | |
| Sharp TV/VCR Combination Models 20VT-G60, 20V | T-G100, |
| 20VT-G200 | , |
| Sharp VCR Model VC-H946U, VC-H948U | |
| Thomson VCR Model VR516 | |
| Thomson color video camcorder Models CC525, CPS | 014, |
| CPS015 | |
| Thomson TV, AM radio cassette combination Model 7 | 7-7800A |
| Toshiba TV Model CF2771A | |
| Zenith projection TV L-Line C-8 Chassis | |
| Zenith color TV receiver Models SD2501W, SD2509F | ł |
| • | |
| January 1996 | 0.04 |
| Zenith wall projector Model PV-144 | 3134 |
| Hitophi VCD Model VT Un605 A | 2125 |
| March 1006 | 3135 |
| March 1990 Zonith digital direct view | |
| Model CM 142 | 2126 |
| Anril 1996 | 5150 |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics VCR | |
| Model VR321 | 3137 |
| May 1996 | 5151 |
| Sharp color television | |
| Models 25E-M100 & 25E-M120 | 3138 |
| June 1996 | |
| Sharn TV/VCD combination Model 27VS C200 | 2120 |

| Profax # | Profa | ax # |
|----------|-------|------|
|----------|-------|------|

| July 1996 | |
|--|------|
| JC Penney color TV receiver Model 2307 | 3140 |
| August 1996 | |
| Zenith color TV receiver Model CM-142/C-1 | 3141 |
| September 1996 | |
| Sharp VCR Models VC-A555, 556 | |
| VC-H955, 956, 958U | 3142 |
| October 1996 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics Color TV | |
| Model CTC177 | 3143 |
| November 1996 | |
| RCA/GE VCR Model VR520/523 | 3144 |
| December 1996 | |
| Memorex moviecorder Model 127 | 3145 |
| | |
| 1996/1997 Profax Schematics Special Issue: | |
| Hitachi video camera Model VM-E25A (U,C) | |
| | |

| Hitachi video camera Model VM-E25A (U,C) |
|--|
| Panasonic VCR Model PV-4066 |
| JC Penney color TV receiver Model 2158 |
| JC Penney color TV receiver Model 2509 |
| Sharp TV/VCR combination Model 20C-V300 |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics projection TV Model PTK 171 |
| Toshiba color TV Models 6F35661, CX37662 |
| Zenith digital color TV Receiver J-Line Model PV-143 |
| Zenith color TV Model S1322S, SMS 1324SS/X, SMS1325S |

| January 1997 | |
|--|------|
| Hitachi Color TV Models 35UX80B/CZ58, | |
| 35UX70B/CZ57 | 3146 |
| February 1997 | |
| Thomson video cassette recorder Model PTK171 | 3147 |
| March 1997 | |
| Thomson video cassette recorder Model PTK171 | |
| (cont'd) | 3147 |
| April 1997 | |
| Sharp color TV Models 27H-S200, CH27S20 | 3148 |
| May 1997 | |
| Hitachi video cassette recorder Model | |
| VT-F390A/F391A | 3149 |
| June 1997 | |
| Sharp color television Model 25H-M100 | 3150 |
| July 1997 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics video | |
| cassette recorder Model VR71HF | 3151 |
| August 1997 | |
| Sharp TV/VCR combination Model 20VT-H60, | |
| 20VT-H200, 20VT-CH6 | 3152 |
| September 1997 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics color video | |
| camcorder Model CC710 | 3153 |
| October 1997 | |
| Toshiba video cassette recorder Model M-651/651C | 3154 |
| November 1997 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics color TV | |
| Model CTC170 | 3155 |

Profax #

| December 1997 | |
|--|------|
| Sharp video cassette recorder Model VC-A25U, C | |
| A55U, C | 3156 |
| January 1998 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics video cassette | |
| recorder Model VR800HF | 3157 |
| Feburary 1998 | |
| Zenith rear projections color TV receiver | |
| Model PV-145/c8 (A) | 3158 |
| March 1998 | |
| Thomson Consumer Electronics color video | |
| camcorder Model CC390 | 3159 |
| April 1998 | |
| Sharp video cassette recorder Model | |
| VC-A70U, VC-H100U | 3160 |
| May 1998 | |
| Sharp color TV Model 13H-M60/100/150, | |
| CH13M6/10/15 | 3161 |
| June 1998 | |
| Sharp color TV Model | |
| 19H-M60/100/150, CH16M6 | 3162 |
| July 1998 | |
| Sharp video cassette recorder VC-A575U, A578U, | |
| H973U, H974U, H975U, H976U, H978U | 3163 |
| August 1998 | |
| Sharp TV/VCR combination | |
| 25VT-H200, 25VS-H300 | 3164 |
| September 1998 | |
| Sharp video cassette recorder Model VC-A523U | 3165 |
| October 1998 | |
| RCA color TV Model CTC172 | 3166 |
| November 1998 | |
| Thomson RCA/GE Color video | |
| camcorder Model CC415 | 3167 |
| December 1998 | |
| Sharp video cassette recorder Models | |
| VC-H902U, VC-H906U, VC-H907U | 3168 |

Company Index — 1988–1998

| Profax # | Month/Year |
|----------|--|
| | |
| | |
| Special | 1992/93 |
| Special | 1993/94 |
| | |
| 3027 | Jul 88 |
| 3019 | Feb88 |
| 3032 | Sep 88 |
| 3020 | Mar 88 |
| | |
| 3037 | Dec 88 |
| 3044 | Apr 89 |
| 3047 | May 89 |
| 3052 | Aug 89 |
| 3057 | Nov 89 |
| | Profax # Special Special 3027 3019 3032 3020 3037 3044 3047 3052 3057 |

| | Profax # | Month/Year | | Profax # | Month/Year |
|-------------------------------------|----------|------------|----------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Models 9-7100, 9-7115, 9-7120, | | | IBM | | |
| 9-7215VCR | 3114 | Apr 94 | Model 8503 Monochrome Display | Special | 1993/94 |
| НІТАСНІ | | | MAGNAVOX | | |
| CT1344 chassis color TV | 3029 | Aug 88 | Model RD094SC10L RD0946T101 | | |
| CT1358 chassis colorTV | 3018 | Jan 88 | color TV | Special | 1003/0/ |
| CT2647/CT2648/CT2649 chassis | | | | Special | 1775774 |
| color TVs | 3025 | Jun 88 | MEMOREX | | |
| CT2652, CT2653 color TVs | 3024 | May 88 | Catalog Number 16-163 | | |
| CT3020W/CT3020B | 3033 | Oct 88 | Pocketvision 26 TV | Special | 1992/93 |
| VHS VCR, Model VT-63A | 3035 | Nov 88 | Model CD-3360 Portable CD | | |
| CT1955 color TV, NP85XA chassis | 3038 | Jan 89 | Player | Special | 1992/93 |
| CT1941/CT19A2, NP83X | | | Model 29 VCR | Special | 1992/93 |
| chassis color TV | 3043 | Mar 89 | Portavision 9-inch color VHF/UHF | | |
| CT1955 colorTV | 3045 | Apr 89 | TVMonitor | 3111 | Jan 94 |
| CT2066 color TV | 3050 | Jul 89 | catalog no.16-620 VCR | Special | 1994/95 |
| CT2086 B/W chassis G7NU3 clr. TV | 3055 | Oct 89 | Model 127 Moviecorder | 3145 | Dec 96 |
| CT139SW G7NSU2 color TV | 3060 | Jan 90 | | | |
| G7XU2/3 chassis color TV | 3063 | Apr 90 | MITSUBISHI | | |
| G7XU2 - Models CT2087B/W, A087 | | | Model CS-3535R/CK-3535R | | |
| (MT2870 through MT2878) | | | CS3 135R/CK3136R color TV | Special | 1992/93 |
| G7XU3 - Models CT2088B/W, A088 | | | Model HS-U55 VCR | Special | 1992/93 |
| (MT2880, MT2886, MT2887) | | | NAD | | |
| CT4580K, VP7X2 chassis proj. TV | 3065 | Jun 90 | | | |
| VP9X1 chassis color TV | 3069 | Oct 90 | E51-56 chassis color TV | 3030 | Aug 88 |
| CT1947/CT19A7 chassis color TV | 3079 | Aug 91 | E54-10 chassis, projection TV | 3021 | Apr 88 |
| CT2541/2542 chassis color TV | 3080 | Sep 91 | E54-15 chassis, projection TV | 3026 | Jun 88 |
| chassis AP13 color TV | 3085 | Feb 92 | RD4502SL/RLC312SL color TV | 2024 | |
| Model 3267B VCR | 3087 | Apr 92 | monitors series 19C2 chassis | 3036 | Nov 88 |
| Model VT-F551A VCR | 3090 | Jul 92 | (Magnavox) color TV | 3039 | Jan 89 |
| Model VT-M40A VCR | 3086 | Mar 92 | chassis E34-11 color 1 V | 3042 | Mar 89 |
| Model VT-150A VCR | 3095 | Dec 92 | chassis E54-15 color 1V | 3049 | Jun 89 |
| Model VT-M231A VCR | | | (Magnavox RD8518 and RD8520; Phi | | |
| Model UM-E2A Camcorder | Special | 1992/93 | Model P81905;Sylvania PSC410 and | PSC420) | |
| Models 55EX7K, 50EX6K, | | | PANASONIC | | |
| Projection color TV | 3109 | Nov 93 | Model SR400EK color TV | Special | 1007/03 |
| 46EX3B/4K, 50ES 1B/K, | | | Model CTM1353R color TV | Special | 1003/0/ |
| 46EX3B5/4KS | | | Models PV-4962 PV4941 -K | Special | 1995/94 |
| NP 83LX color TV | Special | 1993/94 | PV4960-K VCR | Special | 100/1/05 |
| VCR Model VT-F350A, | | | Model CTM-2092S Chassis | Special | 1774/95 |
| VI-F351A, AW | 3112 | Feb 94 | ALEDP203 | Special | 1995/96 |
| Model 35UX80B/CZS8 | | | VCR Model PV-4066 | Special | 1996/97 |
| 35UX/0B/CZ5/ color TV | 3146 | Jan 97 | | opeena | 1990191 |
| Model V1-F390A/F391A VCR | 3149 | May 97 | JC PENNEY | | |
| Model VM-2400A (U,PX), AW VCR | 3115 | May 94 | Model 2003 color TV | Special | 1993/94 |
| Model VM-1700A (U,C) VCR | 3120 | Oct 94 | Model 2163 TV/VCR | Special | 1994/95 |
| Models V1-F380Z/F381A, V1-F382A/ | 2121 | | Model 2163 combination | 3128 | Jul 95 |
| F385A VCR | 3121 | Nov 94 | Model 1048/1049 color TV | 3133 | Dec 95 |
| Mods. $VM-2/00A$, $VM-3/00A$ (U,C) | 2110 | | Model 2157 TV | Special | 1995/96 |
| Vid. cam/rec. | 3118 | Aug 94 | Model 2294 TV | Special | 1995/96 |
| Model VM- 1600A VCR | Special | 1994/95 | Model 2307 color TV | 3140 | Jul 96 |
| Modele 50UX 18D/10V | 3123 | Mar 95 | Model 2158 color TV | Special | 1996/97 |
| projection television | 2127 | Iven OF | Model 2509 color TV | Special | 1996/97 |
| ALLY 16P/17V | 5127 | JUD 95 | D CA | | |
| Model VT HY605 & VCP | 2125 | Eab 06 | | 2021 | a |
| Model VM E254 video comoro | Special | 1006/07 | PVIVIU35 chassis color TV | 3031 | Sep 88 |
| model vivi-L23A video camera | special | 1770/7/ | r v MUSU color 1 V | 3023 | May 88 |

den de

58 Electronic Servicing & Technology January 1999

| | Profax # 1 | Month/Year | | Profax # | Month/Year |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| P42000-S1 projection TV | 3048 | Jun 89 | CTC168 chassis color TV | 3084 | Jan 92 |
| (additional Models: RVM46700, | | | CTCl68-53 chassis color TV | 3088 | May 92 |
| 46GW700, P46000) CTC 135clr. TV | 3051 | Jul 89 | Model 7-7800A color TV | 3091 | Aug 92 |
| CSM055 color TV/AM/FM/ | | | TX82 chassis color TV | 3092 | Sep 92 |
| clock radio | 3054 | Sep 89 | Model VG4202 VCR | Special | 1992/93 |
| CTC9 1 chassis color TV | 3071 | Dec 90 | TX825colorTV | 3116 | Jun 94 |
| CTC99 chassis color TV | 3072 | Jan 91 | TX825 color TV | 3122 | Dec 94 |
| CTC107 chassis color TV | 3073 | Feb 91 | Model VR516 VCR | Special | 1995/96 |
| CTC96 chassis color TV | 3077 | Jun 91 | Models CC525, CPS014, CPS015 | | |
| CTC107 chassis color TV | 3078 | Jul 91 | color camcorder | Special | 1995/96 |
| CTC176 chassis color TV | 3108 | Oct 93 | TV AM radio cassette combination | | |
| CTC175 chassis color TV | Special | 1993/94 | Model 7-7800A | Special | 1995/96 |
| Model CTC 168-S4 color TV | Special | 1994/95 | Model CTCl87 colorTV | 3130 | Sep 95 |
| Model VR530 VCR | 3126 | Ap/May 95 | Model VG2030 VCR | 3132 | Nov 95 |
| | | 1 2 | Model VR321 VCR | 3137 | Apr 96 |
| RCA/GE (Thomson Consumer Elec | tronics) | | CTC I// colorTV | 3143 | Oct 96 |
| CTC145/146 chassis color TV | 3040 | Feb 89 | Model VR520/523 VCR | 3144 | Nov 96 |
| CTC145/146 color TV | 3058 | Nov 89 | Model PTK1/1 projection TV | Special | 1996/97 |
| CTC148/149-S2 chassis color TV | 3062 | Mar 90 | Model PTK1/IVCR | 3147 | Feb/Mar 9/ |
| TX81 chassis color TV | 3067 | Aug 90 | Model VR/IHF VCR | 3150 | Jul 97 |
| CTC156 chassis color TV | 3068 | Sep 90 | Model CC/10 color camcorder | 3153 | Sep 97 |
| CTCl69 (PV) chassis color TV | 3070 | Nov 90 | Model CTCI/U color TV | 3155 | INOV 97 |
| CTCl68 chassis color TV | 3074 | Mar 91 | Model VR800HF VCR | 2150 | Jan 98 Mor 08 |
| CTC86 chassis color TV | 3075 | Apr 91 | Model CTC172 | 2166 | Mai 96 Oct 08 |
| KCS203 chassis B&W TV | 3076 | May 91 | Model CC(115 color video comporter | 2167 | Nov 08 |
| CTCl67 chassis color TV | 3081 | Oct 91 | woder CC415 color video camcolder | 5107 | 1407 20 |
| CTCl66 chassis color TV | 3082 | Nov 91 | SHARP | | |
| CTC169 chassis color TV | 3083 | Dec 91 | Model 13C-M100 color TV | 3093 | Oct 92 |

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Profax # Month/Year

Profax # Month/Year

den de

| Model 27C-5200 color TV | 3094 | Nov 92 | Model 19H-M60/100/150. | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|---------------|
| Model 27SV65 color TV | Special | 1992/93 | CH19M6 color TV | 3162 | Jun 98 |
| Model 19E-M50 | 3110 | Dec 93 | Model VC-A575U, A578U, H973U | 0.01 | vun >o |
| Model 19E-M40R, 19E-M50R | | | H974U, H975U, H976U, H978U VCR | 3163 | Jul 98 |
| color TV | 3107 | Sep 93 | Model 25VT-H200, 25VS-H300 | | |
| Model 20C-5300 color TV | 3096 | Jan 93 | TV/VCR combination | 3164 | Aug 98 |
| Model 20C-5200 color TV | 3099 | Mar 93 | Model VC-A523U VCR | 3165 | Sep 98 |
| Model 20SB65 color TV | 3103 | May 93 | Model VC-H902U, VC-H906U, | | 1 |
| 25S1 chassis color TV | 3097 | Feb 93 | VC-H907U VCR | 3168 | Dec 98 |
| Model 27SV70 | 3101 | Apr 93 | | | |
| Sigma 9700 chassis color TV | Special | 1993/94 | TATUNG | | |
| Model VC-A45U VCR | 3098 | Feb 93 | color monitor | Special | 1994/95 |
| Model VC-A504U/C VCR | 3104 | Jun 93 | TOSHIRA | | |
| Model VC-H86U/C VCR | 3100 | Mar 93 | Model CE2077A: CX21772 | | |
| Model VC-H87U/C VCR | 3106 | Aug 93 | color TV | Special | 1002/03 |
| Model VC-H870U/C. VC-8870U/C | 0100 | | Model M222 M222C | Special | 1992195 |
| VCR | 3102 | May 93 | M227C M227I VCR | Special | 1003/0/ |
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| Model 20SB55 chassis No. 20R1 | 5105 | 5 di 75 | Models 6F35661 CX37662 | Special | 1775170 |
| VCR | 3113 | Mar 94 | color TV | Special | 1006/07 |
| Models 13F-M40 13F-M150 | 5115 | | Model M-651/651C VCR | 3154 | Oct 97 |
| 13F-M100 13F-M150 | 3117 | Jul 94 | | 5151 | 001 77 |
| Models 25F-M40/50/100/120 | 5111 | 541 51 | ZENITH | | |
| chassis No SN 41 | 3119 | Sep 94 | CM-139/B-0 (B) chassis color TV | 3028 | Jul 88 |
| Models 20C-S100 20C-S120 | 5117 | Sep 71 | CM-139/B-3 (I) SD2511G/ | | |
| color TV | Special | 1994/95 | SD2581H | 3034 | Oct 88 |
| Models VC-A502U VC-A506U | opeeiai | 1994/95 | C2020H chassis color TV | 3022 | Apr 88 |
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| color TV | 3124 | Feb 95 | CM-14-0/B-3(1) color TV | 3046 | May 89 |
| Model VC-H925U/H927U VCR | 3129 | Aug 95 | (Models SE2721H/SE2725R/SE2727) | H) | |
| Model 13VT-F40/13VT-F100 | 512) | Aug 55 | CM-140/B-2(I) color TV | 3053 | Aug 89 |
| Models 20VT-G60 20VT-G100 | | | PV4661H rear-projector color TV | 3056 | Oct 89 |
| TV/VCR combination | 3131 | Sen 95 | CM-140/DIGITAL(C) chassis | | |
| 20VT-G200 Chassis VN-51 | 5151 | 5cp 75 | color TV | 3059 | Dec 89 |
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| Model VC-H946U_VC-H948U | opeciai | 1775770 | ZB2771H/ZB2771H2/ZB2777H/ | | |
| VCR | Special | 1995/96 | ZB2777H2/ZB2797P/ZB2797P2/ | | |
| Model 25E-M100 25E-M120 | Special | 1995190 | ZB2797Y/ZB2797Y2/ZB3193H/ | | |
| color TV | 3138 | May 06 | ZB3I93Y/ZB3539T/ZB3539Y) | | |
| Model 27VS-G300 | 5150 | Widy 90 | CM-I 39/B2 Models SD5515, | | |
| TV/VCR combination | 3130 | Jun 06 | SD5535, SD5556 | Special | 1992/93 |
| Models VC A555 556 VC H055 | 5159 | Juli 90 | Model CM-139/B-l color TV | Special | 1994/95 |
| 056 05811VCP | 3142 | San 06 | CM143/digital (A) | Special | 1994/95 |
| Model 20C V300 | 5142 | Sep 90 | L-line C-8 Chassis TV | Special | 1995/96 |
| TV/VCR combination | Special | 1006/07 | Model SD2501W, SD2509H | Special | 1995/96 |
| Models 27H S200 CH27520 | Special | 1990/97 | color TV | | |
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