Project 451

A hum filter for hi-fi systems

There are few things more annoying in life than attempting to track down and remove all sources of hum from a hi-fi set up only to be partially successful, no matter how hard you try. This project should remove the last vestige of that 50 Hz pest from your system. Go 'notch' that nasty!

David Tilbrook

SO YOU'VE just spent most of your spare money, unpacked everything from the boxes, connected it up and turned it on. What on earth is that awful noise?

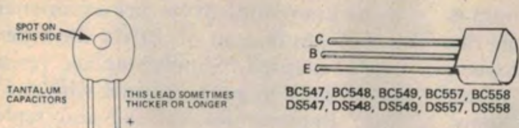
Maybe this is a bit of an exaggeration, but it does illustrate the problems some of us have with mains induced hum. Often it's necessary to position the various components of a hi-fi system close together and this can cause problems.

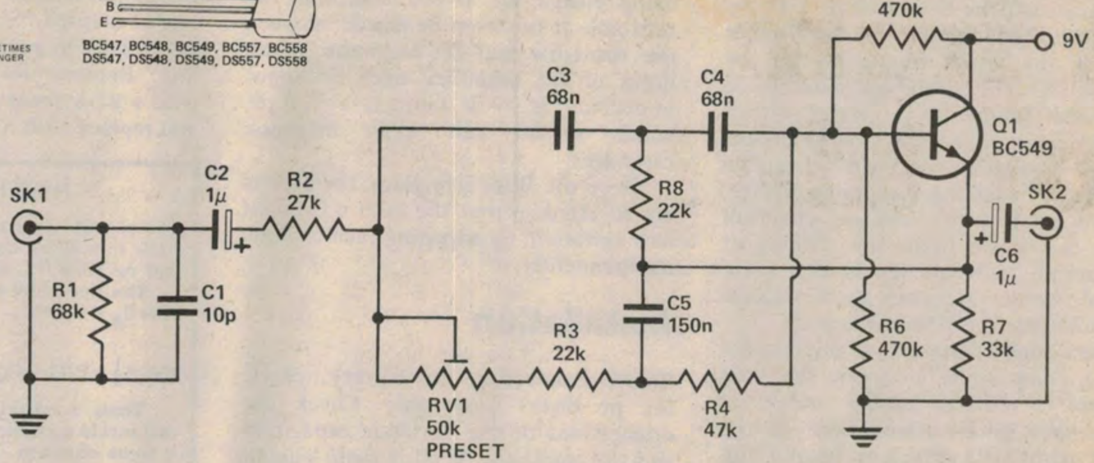
The magnetic field around the transformer in the power amplifier can couple to the preamp or tape deck. Also, the location of nearby 240V mains wiring can cause problems that can be very difficult to overcome. In theory, if the equipment and leads have been properly shielded and earthed this problem shouldn't exist. In practice it's a very different story.

This project aims at overcoming some of the problems of mains induced hum by using a notch filter at the hum frequency of 50 Hz. At this frequency any signal present will be attenuated. At frequencies either side of the notch the response should return to the unattenuated input level.

The 'Q', or Quality Factor, of a tuned circuit — which the RC network in this circuit forms, determines the bandwidth, or narrowness, of the amplitude response of the circuit (see the diagram). As this circuit forms a notch filter, the Q of the circuit determines the narrowness of the notch.

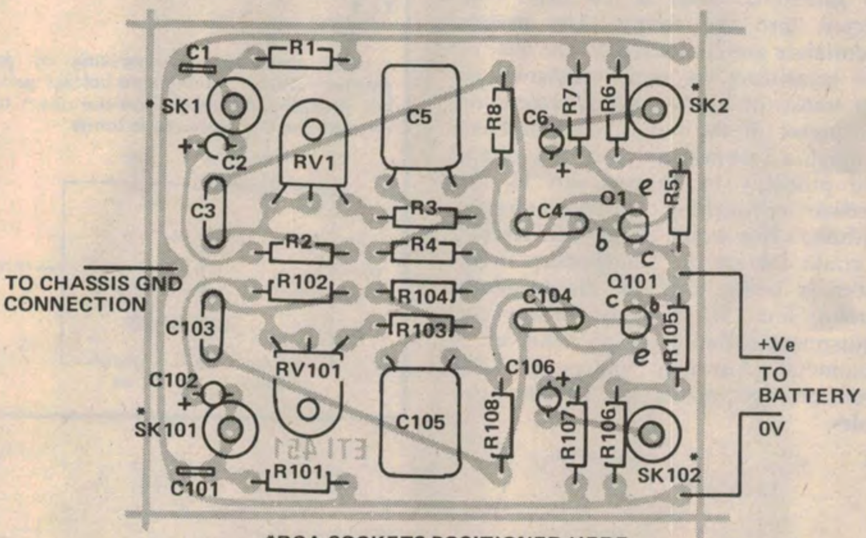
With a high-Q notch the frequency response of the circuit will dip suddenly around the notch frequency. Frequencies ▶



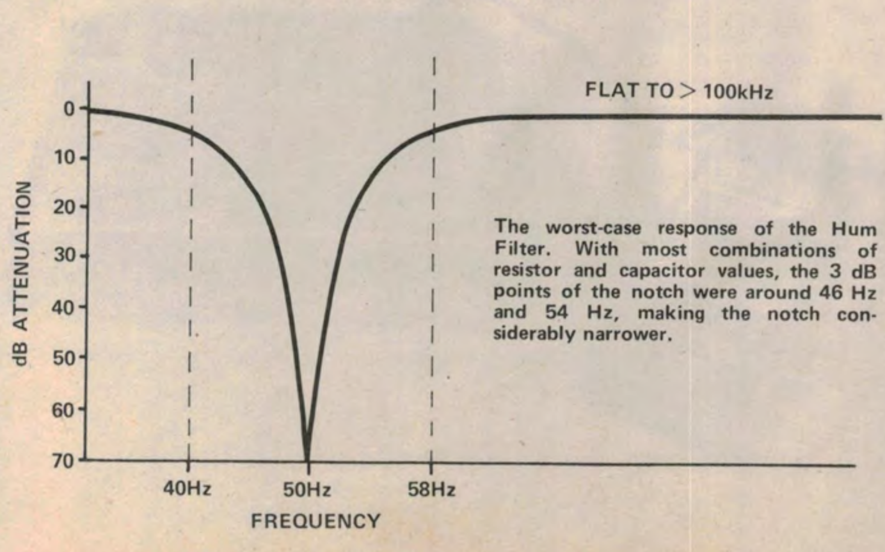


NOTE
ONLY ONE CHANNEL HAS BEEN SHOWN FOR CLARITY. THE COMPONENT NUMBERING OF THE OTHER CHANNEL BEGINS at 101 i.e. R101 R102 etc.

The printed circuit board is reproduced on page 148 or 149.



*RCA SOCKETS POSITIONED HERE ON FRONT PANEL OF CHASSIS



The worst-case response of the Hum Filter. With most combinations of resistor and capacitor values, the 3 dB points of the notch were around 46 Hz and 54 Hz, making the notch considerably narrower.

PARTS LIST - ETI 451

Resistors all ¼ W, 5%
R1, R101 . . . 68k
R2, R102 . . . 27k
R3, R103 . . . 22k
R4, R104 . . . 47k
R5, R6, R105,
R106 . . . . . . 470k
R7, R107 . . . 33k
R8, R108 . . . 22k

Capacitors
C1, C101. . . . 10pf ceramic
C2, C102. . . . 1μ tant
C3, C4, C103,
C104 . . . . . . 68n greencap
C5, C105. . . . 150n greencap
C6, C106. . . . 1μ tant

Potentiometers
RV1, RV101 . 50k min preset

Semiconductors
Q1, Q101 . . . BC549, BC109, DS549, etc.

Miscellaneous
ETI 451 pcb, box to suit, 4 panel mounting, RCA sockets.

Components for 100 Hz operation
R4, R104 . . . 22k
R8, R108 . . . 10k

Replace R3 with wire link.

a little either side of the notch centre frequency will be little affected. If the Q is low, frequencies some way either side of the notch frequency will be attenuated. The actual attenuation at the notch frequency is greater with a high-Q circuit than with a low-Q circuit.

High-Q circuits have the disadvantage that slight changes in component values, due to temperature changes etc, will affect the centre frequency. Tuning of the circuit to frequency is also quite critical. Lower-Q circuits do not suffer so much from this disadvantage..

The design Q chosen for this project was a compromise between the constraints of critical tuning and drift effect and good attenuation at the notch with little affect on nearby frequencies. Peak attenuation at the notch centre frequency of 50 Hz is around 80 dB while attenuation of only 3 dB is obtained at 40 Hz and 58 Hz. There is some audible effect on the bass response of a system, but this is minimal.

Construction

Mount the resistors and capacitors on the board first. Be sure the orientation of the tantalum capacitors is correct. These are polarized and can only be installed one way round. Next, install the preset pot. If you elect to use the same case we did, the preset must lie flat on the board. This is best done by bending the pins 90° first and then soldering onto the printed circuit board. Finally, solder the transistor in place.

The input and output connections are best made by mounting the four RCA sockets directly above the input and output pads on the pc board. Strong wires can be soldered onto the RCA sockets and the entire board slid onto the four wires. This serves the purpose of holding the board in place as well as forming the input-output connections. A short insulated wire should be connected to the gound point provided on the pc board (see overlay diagram) and to the chassis. The RCA sockets are grounded by their mounting nuts, so be sure to use a metal case.

The circuit is run from a single No. 216 nine volt battery. The current consumption of the prototype was 200μA so the battery life should be good for several months. If it is found that battery life is not long enough a power switch could be fitted.

The filter can be used almost anywhere in the amplification chain since its overload margin is very high (typically 8 V p-p). It should obviously be placed after the point where the hum is being picked up. If the hum is in the turntable it can even be placed between the turntable and the magnetic phono input of the amplifier since the input impedance is 47 k shunted by 10 pF, which should suit most magnetic cartridges.

Once the filter is in place, the presets are adjusted so that the hum is brought to a minimum by adjusting each channel independently.

Installation

Before connecting the battery, check the pc board thoroughly. Check the orientations of the tantalum capacitors and the transistor. If all is right, plug in the battery and seal the base.

In the unit we built, holes were drilled in the chassis immediately above the preset pots. This allows the filter to be fine-tuned after it has been connected into the circuit. The presets themselves are connected to the base of the transistors via some resistance, so the transistor bias voltage is present on the preset. If the pot is to be adjusted through a hole in the chassis this voltage will probably be shorted out by the screwdriver touching the earthed chassis. Although this won't damage the circuit, it could damage the loudspeakers if the filter is being used in the magnetic phono line. It certainly makes the adjustment meaningless, so either use a non-metal adjustment tool or use LED mounting grommets to insulate the holes.

If the hum problem you are experiencing is 100 Hz instead of 50 Hz the filter is easily adapted. Simply replace resistor R3 (22 k) in each channel with a wire link. Remove R4 (47 k) and replace with a 22 k resistor. Remove R8 (22 k) and replace with a 10 k resistor. ●

HOW IT WORKS

The circuit consists of a "Twin-T" notch filter formed by capacitors C3, C4 and C5 and resistors R3, R4, R8 and preset PR1.

The operation of the Twin-T requires that $C_3 = C_4 = \frac{C_5}{2}$

and $R_3 + PR1 = R_4 = 2R_8$

These conditions must be met with reasonable accuracy if a good, deep notch is to be obtained. The preset corrects to a certain extent for errors due to component mis-match and assumes that the notch can be adjusted to the exact frequency of the hum to be rejected.

The frequency of the notch is then given by

$$f = \frac{1}{2\pi R_4 C_4}$$

The transistor is operating as an emitter follower, giving zero voltage gain, but providing feedback into the notch to increase the Q to acceptable limits.