

IF YOU FREQUENT HAMFESTS, ELECTRONICS flea markets, or any other type of surplus outlet, you know the pros and cons of buying from those sources. On the one hand, they're an excellent source of hard-to-get parts as well as a haven for bargain hunters. On the other, however, just about everything is sold "as is," with no guarantee of any kind—it's strictly "let the buyer beware." If you've ever come home with a pile of components, only to find out that half of them were useless, you know that not all bargains are what they seem.

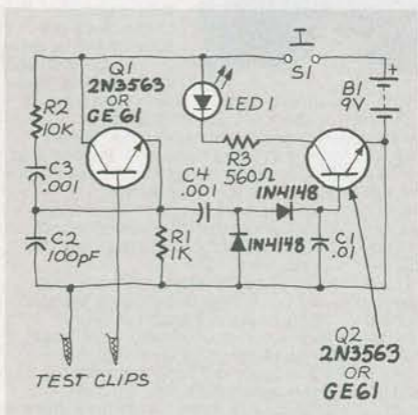


FIG. 1

The ideal solution to that problem, of course, is to find some way to weed out the obviously bad parts before you buy them. The circuit I'll be describing here has proved useful for just that purpose when digging through stacks of crystals, as well as in troubleshooting my equipment. It is small, easy-to-build, and will, at a glance, let you know if a particular crystal will oscillate. Let's look at the

