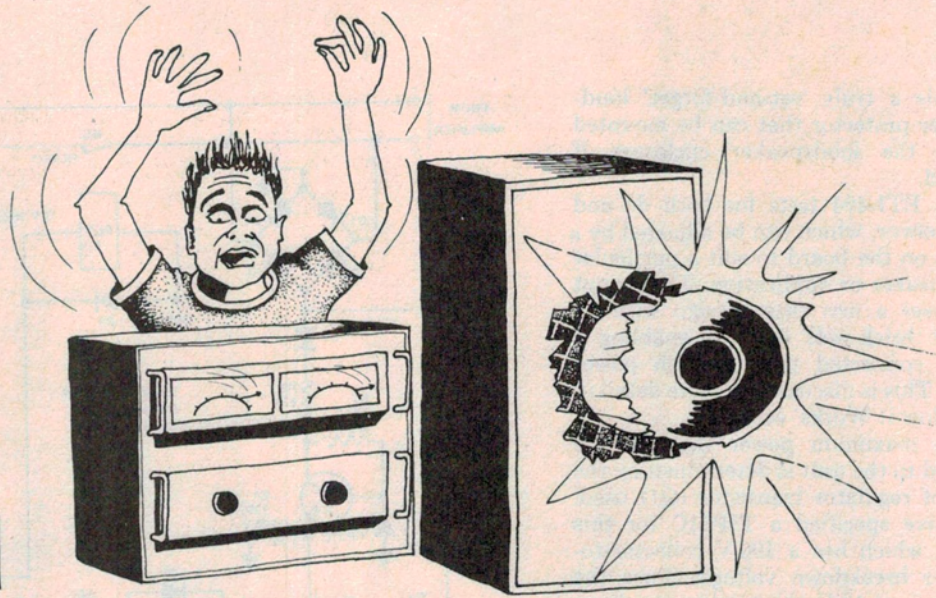
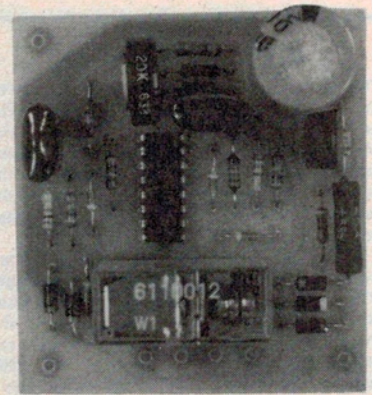


Signal powered loudspeaker protector

David Tilbrook



This unit affords both dc and over-power protection of loudspeakers or loudspeaker systems rated at up to 1500 watts! The unit requires no power supply and has no discernible audible effect on sound quality making it suitable for both hi-fi and sound reinforcement applications.



THE ETI-455 loudspeaker protector has proved to be a very popular project. It was published in March 1980 and since then we have had numerous phone calls from readers with stories of how the unit had saved their loudspeakers from almost certain disaster. Usually the power amplifier had gone faulty and applied the full dc supply rail to the loudspeaker terminals. Without the loudspeaker protector in circuit the result would be at least an open circuit bass driver and probably worse. The protector prevents this by monitoring the loudspeaker lines for the presence of dc, opening a set of relay contacts if this occurs, disconnecting the loudspeaker from the faulty amplifier.

The ETI-455 works well but requires its own power supply, either batteries or a small regulated mains supply. Another disadvantage results from the type of filter used to distinguish between dc and

the audio signal. This was a conventional passive filter set to around 10 Hz. The problem is that it is still possible with very large amplifiers to trigger the protector on low frequency audio content. So the circuit, although perfectly satisfactory for its quoted maximum power of around 100 watts or so, is unsuitable for very high powered amplifiers.

We decided to overcome these limitations in this new loudspeaker protector, the ETI-494. Since the old one was published we have had numerous requests for a circuit that could be mounted inside a loudspeaker enclosure. These requests have come largely from the sound reinforcement industry although the unit would obviously be applicable to all loudspeakers. The protector would not be able to be powered from a mains supply since it is not always desirable or even possible to

run mains to the loudspeakers. This is particularly true in a sound reinforcement or public address system. Similarly, batteries are unsuitable since access would have to be provided to facilitate testing and changing them when required. In addition, when we published the ETI-499 MOSFET P.A. Module (March 1982), we promised to follow up with a loudspeaker protector. This is it. The solution, used in this project, is to power the unit from the audio signal itself.

This is done in this case by placing a fullwave rectifier across the speaker lines and charging a 1000u capacitor through a 47 ohm resistor. The worst possible load presented to the speaker line is therefore 47 ohms and this is only while charging the capacitor and for signal voltages in excess of 12 V. This ensures that the unit has no discernible effect on audio quality but makes ▶

Project 494

possible a truly 'set-and-forget' loudspeaker protector that can be mounted inside the loudspeaker enclosure if desired.

The ETI-494 tests for both dc and over-power, which can be adjusted by a preset on the board to suit a particular loudspeaker or application. The circuit also uses a new filter design with an almost 'brick wall' response enabling it to be connected to very high power amps. This is discussed in more detail in the 'How it Works' section.

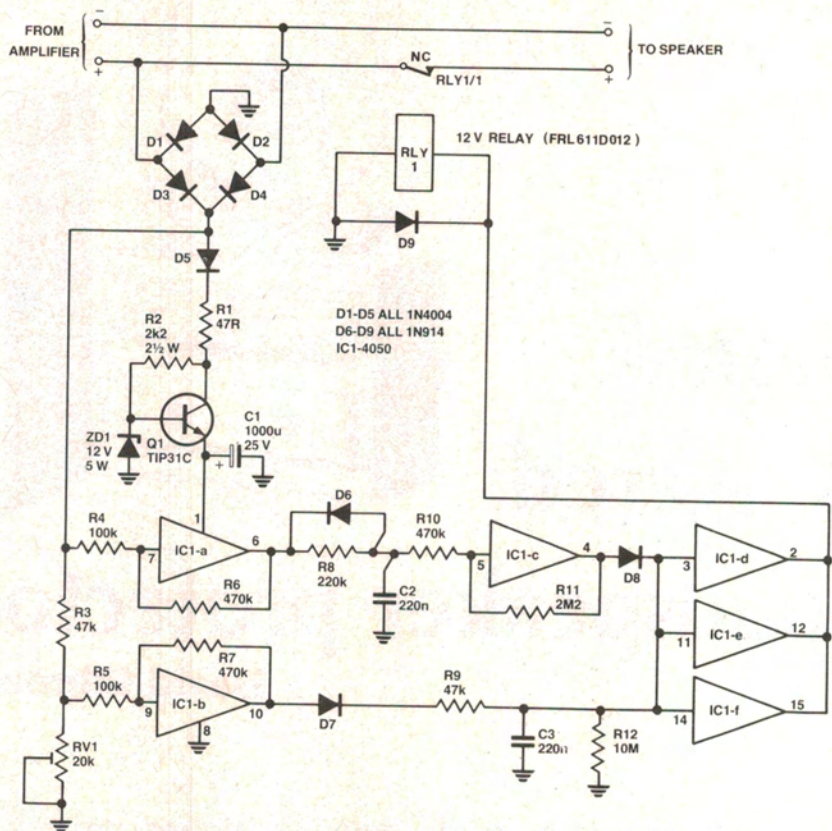
The maximum power that can be applied to the unit is determined by the type of regulator transistor (Q1) used. We have specified a TIP31C for this device which has a 100 V collector-to-emitter breakdown voltage. Since the emitter is at 12 V, the maximum voltage that can be applied to the unit is 112 V. This is equivalent to an amp capable of

HOW IT WORKS — ETI 494

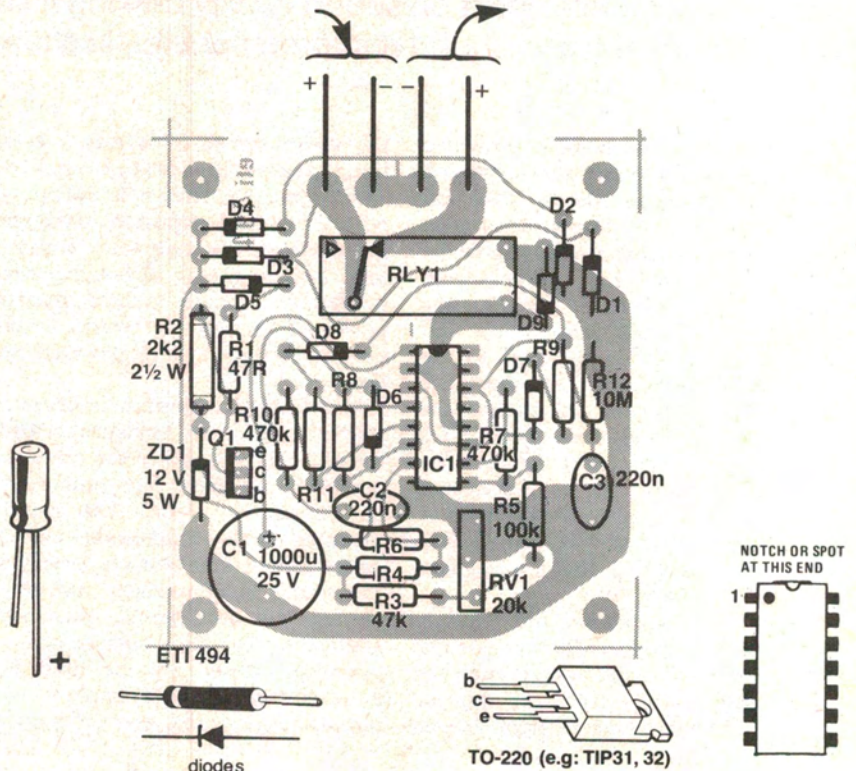
The signal from the power amp is rectified by the fullwave rectifier formed by D1-D4. The output of this is fed through a 12 V regulator circuit formed by Q1 and its associated resistors and zener diode, and charges the electrolytic capacitor, C1. The output of the rectifier is also fed to the input of the dc sense and over-power detection circuitry.

IC1 gates a and c form the dc filter. Resistors R4 and R6 form a Schmitt trigger with a small deadband. When the signal goes above the trigger voltage the output of the trigger swings hard to the positive supply rail of the IC, charging C2 through the 220k resistor, R8. Resistors R10 and R11 with gate c form a second Schmitt trigger monitoring the voltage across C2. If the voltage across C2 reaches the trigger voltage of this second Schmitt, gates d, e and f are activated, pulling in the relay contacts and disconnecting the loudspeaker. It takes about 100 ms to charge C2 through R8, and on normal audio content the output of gate 'a' will be driven low before this occurs, discharging C2 rapidly through D6. Only signals which do not have a zero crossing for longer than 100 ms will trigger the protector.

The over-power protector consists simply of a voltage divider feeding a third Schmitt trigger. Whenever the signal voltage exceeds the trigger voltage the output of gate 'b' is driven high and C3 starts to charge. If this condition persists for long enough the output gates are turned on and the relay pulls in. Note that both the dc and over-power sense circuits charge C3 when activated. The circuits are decoupled from this capacitor by diodes so that, once charged, C3 can only be discharged by the parallel resistor R12 (the effect of the input impedance of the gates is negligible). Since it takes about one second to discharge this capacitor, the relay will hold in for this time. The protector therefore reconnects the loudspeaker approximately one second after the fault condition has been removed.



FROM AMPLIFIER TO SPEAKER



loudspeaker protector

PARTS LIST — ETI-494

Resistors	.....	all ½ W, 5% unless noted
R1	.....	47R
R2	.....	2k2, 2½ W
R3, R9	.....	47k
R4, R5	.....	100k
R6, 7, 10	.....	470k
R8	.....	220k
R11	.....	2M2
R12	.....	10M
RV1	.....	20k min. trimpot

Capacitors

C1	.....	1000u/25 V RB electro.
C2, C3	.....	220n greencap

Semiconductors

D1-D5	.....	1N4004, EM404
D6-D9	.....	1N914, 1N4148
IC1	.....	4050
Q1	.....	TIP31C
ZD1	.....	12 V, 5 W zener

Miscellaneous

ETI-494 pc board; RL1 — Fujitsu FRL611D012, 12 volt SPDT 10 A contacts or similar relay (pc mount type).

Price Estimate
\$20-\$24

supplying approximately 784 watts into an 8 ohm load or 1568 watts into a 4 ohm load. If the amplifier to be used is capable of powers greater than these the regulator transistor should be substituted for a device with a higher V_{ce0} rating. The relay pulls around 40 mA when operated, so power dissipation in the regulator transistor will be around 4 watts when dropping 100 volts. Although this is not a particularly high

dissipation it is high enough to lie outside the SOAR rating of many high voltage transistors, so be careful when choosing an alternate regulator transistor.

Construction

Construction is straightforward since all of the components are mounted on the pc board. The usual precautions should be taken to ensure that all polarised components have been mounted with the correct orientation. The IC used is a CMOS type and is therefore static sensitive. Solder this last and preferably using an earthed soldering iron. It is a wise precaution to discharge yourself before handling the device by first touching an earthed metal appliance. For a more detailed description of precautions when handling CMOS refer to our article 'Electrostatic discharge — nemesis of electronic systems' in the June edition, 1981.

It is a wise precaution to space the 2.5 W resistor, R2, off the pc board slightly. In the case of a high powered loudspeaker going faulty with dc this component will get quite hot and spacing improves ventilation around the component and prevents the possibility of charring the pc board. If you can't obtain a 2.5 watt type (e.g. Philips PR52), then a 5 W type may be substituted.

Before mounting the unit check operation by connecting around 20 V dc across the speaker input terminals on the pc board. The relay should cut in after about one tenth of a second. If the

protector passes this test connect the speaker wiring. If the preset is turned fully down (turn it anticlockwise when viewing the board with the components on top and the relay to the right) the relay will cut in when the power exceeds around 20 watts for an extended period. The protector allows transients to the full supply rail to pass but will prevent a continuous 20 W from being applied to the loudspeaker. To increase this, turn the preset clockwise until the desired response is achieved.

Performance

We tested the loudspeaker protector for its effect on audio performance as well as its reliability. A variety of power amps were used to ensure that the load represented by the protector would not affect audio performance. Even a very low power amplifier, with a comparatively small damping factor (high output impedance) could drive the unit with no degradation to the sound quality. During every test the protector worked well and cut in at the correct time to prevent damage to the loudspeakers.

NOTE. *Some amplifiers are unstable when driven into an open circuit. This is particularly true of valve power amplifiers some of which destroy themselves the moment the speaker is disconnected. Loudspeaker protectors are however, not usually required for use with valve power amps since the possibility of dc on the speaker lines is remote, but over-power protection may be required.*