

INTRODUCING SPEECHLAB

THE FIRST HOBBYIST VOCAL INTERFACE FOR A COMPUTER!

Now your computer can respond to vocal commands by the simple addition of a \$250 single-board unit.

MAGINE being able to talk to your computer and have it respond by way of a hard-copy device or by activating some external appliance! Computer hobbyists can now enjoy this facility by building "Speechlab," a new, low-cost (under \$250) computer peripheral. To use it, all one does is plug the single Speechlab pc board into an Altair-bus connector (used by many microcomputer manufacturers), enter a special program, and the computer does the rest.

It's a state-of-the-art approach at a moderate cost.

One section of the program allows the user to "train" the computer to accept a vocal input (via a microphone), analyze the spoken word, and create a digitized version that is stored in memory. The second part of the program allows the user to speak to the Speechlab and have the computer generate the output selected for that particular sound.

The vocabulary size of Speechlab is a

function of the speech recognition algorithm used and the amount of memory available. For the program used in this article, it is 64 bytes per spoken word.

The unique characteristics of Speechlab open many formerly closed doors. Since Speechlab will operate with any audio input (not necessarily a recognized language), a person who's vocally handicapped can operate almost any number of appliances (TV receiver, stereo system, solenoid-operated door,

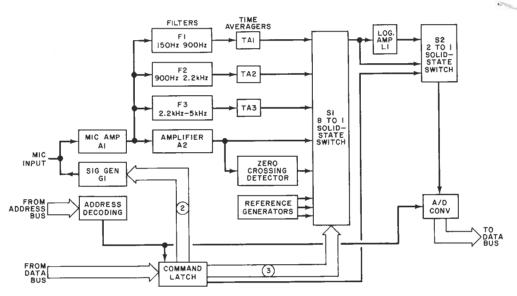


Fig. 1. The mic input is amplified, filtered and applied to S1 along with raw audio, zero-crossing detection, and three reference voltages.

Output of S1 is computer selected by switch S2 for digitizing.

etc.) using a repeatable sound such as a grunt. One can use Speechlab, too, as a vocal processor to add spoken commands to many computer games (such as the "Star Trek" game), or enter the world of artificial intelligence and advanced programming.

Circuit Operation. The basic block diagram of Speechlab is shown in Fig. 1. The audio input is amplified by A1 and applied to three 80-db/decade rolloff band-pass filters F1, F2, and F3. These filters encompass the ranges of 150 to 900 Hz, 900 Hz to 2.2 kHz, and 2.2 kHz to 5 kHz, respectively. These ranges correspond to the frequency ranges of the first three resonances of the average human vocal tract.

Each filter is passed to a time averager (*TA1*, *TA2*, and *TA3*) to generate a voltage proportional to the level of the speech waveform within each band.

The amplified audio signal from A1 is further amplified by A2 to generate an unfiltered waveform that can swing ± 2 volts about a rest level of 2 volts. This signal is also applied to a zero-crossing detector that generates a voltage proportional to the number of times the speech waveform crosses the 2-volt rest level in a given period of time, thus generating a measure of the dominant frequency in the speech signal.

These five voltages—TA1, TA2, TA3, A2, and ZCD—are fed to solid-state switch S1 along with three reference voltages used for calibration and self test. A computer output command selects one of these five voltages to be passed through S1.

The selected output from *S1* is passed to a second solid-state switch (*S2*), and to a logarithmic amplifier (*L1*) that emphasizes the low-level signal be-

fore being passed to S2. Switch S2 can select either the direct output from S1, or the output from L1, and pass this selected signal to a 6-bit A/D converter where the voltage is converted to a digital value. The output of the A/D converter is fed to the computer data bus.

All operations of the Speechlab are controlled through a single I/O port (address AFhex). As shown in Fig. 2, six bits are used: bit-5 disables the 8-to-1 multiplexer (S1), and is used when switching between bands; bit-4 controls signal generator G1 which is used either to drive the microphone so that it acts like a miniature loudspeaker for prompting during voice input, or to drive the filters and zero-crossing detector during calibration and test; bit-3 selects either linear or logarithmic scaling of the voltage applied to the A/D converter; while bit-2, bit-1, and bit-0 select one of the eight signals from S1 for A/D conver-

The input data word contains the 6-bit A/D output in bits 0 through 5, bit-6 is unused and is always 0, while bit-7 is the A/D converter status with a 1 corresponding to busy, and 0 corresponding to finished.

Speechlab is physically configured to occupy one slot in the Altair bus, and the complete schematic is shown in Fig. 3 through Fig. 7.

Construction. The two foil patterns (Speechlab uses one double-sided pc board) are shown half-size in Fig. 8. (Blow up to full size on *film* only.) Component layout is shown in Fig. 9.

All the components are mounted on one side of the board, with all the soldering done on the noncomponent side. Sockets are recommended for all IC's since most of them are MOS-types that

may be damaged by improper handling.

Integrated circuits *IC1*, *IC4*, *IC7*, *IC8*, *IC9*, *IC15*, and *IC16* should be selected so they are capable of delivering a 4-volt output when using a 5-volt supply. Dual flip-flop *IC14* can be from any manufacturer but Fairchild, as their truth table is somewhat different from the conventional table.

Start construction by installing the voltage regulator (*IC6*), all the discrete components, and the IC sockets—do not install the IC's at this time. Check the board for correct parts installation, and to make sure that there are no solder bridges between adjacent foil traces. Mount the board in an Altair bus connector, and check for the presence of 5 volts at the output of the voltage regulator and at the appropriate socket pins. Remove the board from the computer.

Install IC2 through IC5, IC10 through IC14, and IC17 through IC22. Install the board back in the Altair bus connector, and turn on the computer. Load the test

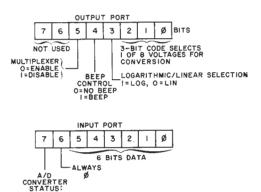
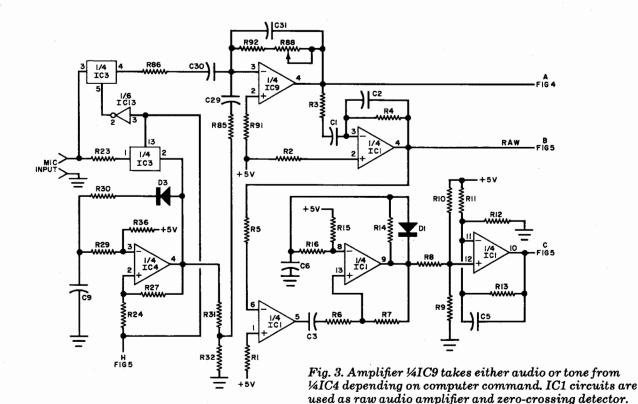


Fig. 2. Input and output port bit configuration.



PARTS LIST

Unless otherwise noted, the following capacitors are 10% Mylar types, and all picofarad sizes are CM05 types. C1, C16, C21, C43, C47, C49, C52, C57-0.0047 µF C2, C31—100 pF C3, C17, C20—270 pF C4, C7, C8, C10, C12, C19, C27, C32, C33, C34, C35, C36, C37, C44, C55, C61, C62-0.1 µF, 25-V disc C5, C14, C18, C24, C54, C60-0.01 µF C6, C42, C45, C53, C56-240 pF C9, C40, C48-0.022 µF C11, C29-47 pF C13-15 µF, 25 V tantalum C15, C22, C51, C59-0.0015 µF C23-0.0022 µF C25, C26, C28, C38-1 µF C30, C39, C46-0.047 uF C41-0.1 µF C50, C58-0.001 µF D1, D3 through D6-1N4148 or 1N914 diode D2-1N746 diode IC1, IC4, IC7, IC8, IC9, IC15, IC16-LM3900 quad amp IC2-4051 8-to-1 analog multiplex IC3-4016 quad analog switch IC5-LM311 comparator IC6-78M05 5-volt regulator IC10-4024 7-stage binary counter IC11, IC18-74C174 D flip-flop IC12-4050 hex buffer IC13, IC22-4049 hex buffer inverter IC14—4013 (see text) dual-D flip-flop IC17—74LS30 8-input NAND gate IC19-8097 three-state hex buffer IC20-8093 three-state quad buffer IC21-4001 NOR gate MIC-Mura DX-121 dynamic microphone (part of stereo set Mura DX-242)

L1-22-µH choke Unless otherwise noted, the following resistors are 1/4-W, 5% R1-619,000 ohms, 1% R2-1 megohm, 1% R3-6810 ohms, 1% -332,000 ohms, 1% R5-200,000 ohms, 1% R6,R20,R21-30,000 ohms R7, R100-3 megohms R8, R9, R10, R12, R14, R16, R104-1 megohm R11-910,000 ohms R13-2.7 megohms R15, R48-10 megohms R17,R18-20,000 ohms R19, R22, R106-10,000 ohms R23-1000 ohms R24, R27-1.2 megohms R25, R34, R39-470,000 ohms R26, R38—750,000 ohms R28, R31—100,000 ohms R29-110,000 ohms R30-39,000 ohms R32-47,000 ohms R33, R41-68,100 ohms, 1% R35, R96,R102-75,000 ohms R36-3.9 megohms R37, R46-357,000 ohms, 1% R40, R50, R52, R54, R56, R58, R60 R61-10,000 ohms, 1% R42-12,100 ohms, 1% R43, R49-4750 ohms, 1% R44-4320 ohms, 1% R45, R47-681,000 ohms, 1% R51, R53, R55, R57, R59-4990 ohms, 1% R62-274,000 ohms, 1% R63---7500 ohms R64, R66, R72, R75-160,000 ohms R65, R71-12,000 ohms

R67, R70-300,000 ohms R68-931,000 ohms, 1% R69-2 megohms R73-620,000 ohms R74, R76, R90, R92--62,000 ohms R77---15,000 ohms R78, R83, R84-147,000 ohms, 1% R79, R80, R87—51,100 ohms, 1% R81,R82,R89-174,000 ohms, 1% R85-330,000 ohms R86-680 ohms R88—100,000-ohm pc trimmer potentiometer R91-270,000 ohms R93-249,000 ohms, 1% R94 4300 ohms R95, R97, R103, R105-360,000 ohms R98, R101-820,000 ohms R99-845,000 ohms, 1% R107-158,000 ohms, 1% R108-4700 ohms R109, R111, R117, R119-82,000 ohms R110, R116—5100 ohms R112, R115—180,000 ohms R113—549,000 ohms, 1% R114—1.6 megohms R118—510,000 ohms R120-6800 ohms R121-2000 ohms Misc.—Sockets (one 8-pin, thirteen 14-pin, seven 16-pin), regulator mounting hardware, tie-wrap etc. Note 1: The following is available from Heuristics Inc., 900 N. San Antonio Rd. (Suite C-1), Los Altos CA 94022 (Tele: 415-948-2542): complete kit of all parts including pc board, sockets, microphone, hardware manual, and 200-page lab manu-

al, SpeechBasic, and assembly language

programs at \$249. (California residents

please add 61/2% sales tax.)

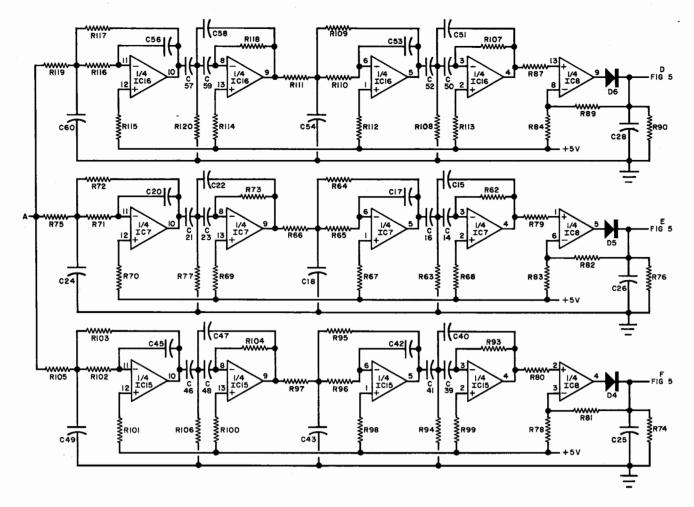


Fig. 4. Three bandpass filters and their associated time averagers. They encompass three ranges corresponding to frequency ranges of the first three resonances of an average human vocal tract.

program of Table I at 100 (hex). NOTE: all program data in this article is in hex.

You must jump to your monitor routine at address 0164-0165. Load address 195 with 05 and run the program. This will input the fixed reference voltage levels to the A/D converter and check the signal paths from switch *S1* to the computer data bus.

After running this program, examine locations 200 through 20F, 300 through 30F, and 400 through 40F. Location 200 through 20F should contain 12 ± 4 , 300 through 30F should contain 24 ± 4 , and 400 through 40F should contain 36 ± 4 .

Insert the remaining IC's in their sockets, load location 195 with 10, and run the test program (Table I). This test uses the signal generator (G1) to create an input for the filters, amplifiers, and zerocrossing detector, and thereby checks the remaining signal paths on the board and calibrates the microphone preamplifier. After running the program, examine locations 200 to 20F to see if it contains 16 to 18. If not, adjust potentiometer R88 and rerun the program until these outputs occur.

Calibration and Test Program.

The test program (Table I) is a generalpurpose calibration, test, and diagnostic program for the Speechlab. It loads at location 100 and requires memory from 100 to 600 for program and data areas. Locations 163-165 should be loaded with a jump to your monitor address so that the program will return control to your monitor after execution. If you do not have a monitor, place a halt at this location.

The program collects four 256-byte buffers of data from four of the eight pos-

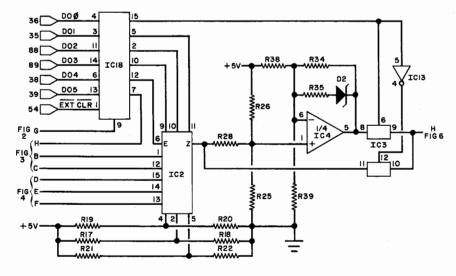
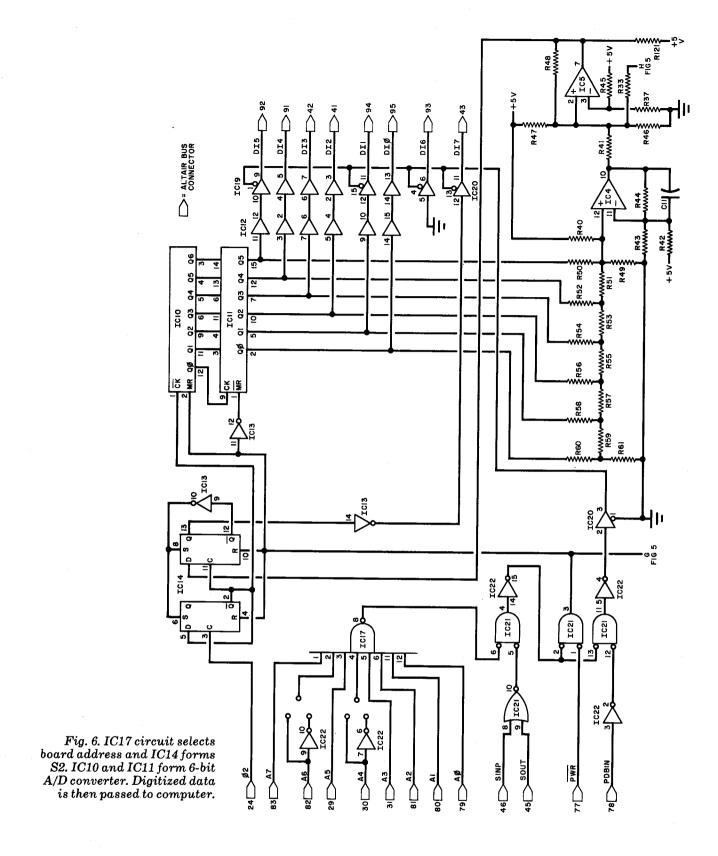


Fig. 5. Command latch (IC18) can activate tone generator and switch S1 (IC2). Op amp (¼IC4) is logarithmic amplifier.



sible inputs to the A/D converter. The first of the four bands is specified by the Test Command word, which also specifies beeper on/off and linear or logarithmic scaling. The next three bands are 1, 2, and 3 greater than specified by the Test Command word. Each band is sampled every five milliseconds until 256 samples have been collected from

each of the four bands. Data from the first band is stored in 200 to 2FF, the second band from 300 to 3FF, the third from 400 to 4FF, and the fourth from 500 to 5FF.

For example, if the Test Command word is set to 00, after the test program is run, the four data areas will contain numbers representing the outputs of

band-0 (low frequency), band-1 (mid frequency), band-2 (high frequency), and band-3 (zero-crossing detector). Anything that was spoken into the microphone while the program was running, is filtered, converted into a binary number, and stored in the data areas.

If the Test Command word is set to 05, the first three data areas will contain

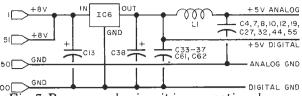


Fig. 7. Power supply circuit is conventional.

Note bypass capacitors that are actually mounted between IC power supply pins and ground.

constant numbers corresponding to the three reference voltage levels to the A/D converter on band 5, 6, and 7. This is useful for checking the A/D converter operation and isolating problem areas to one side or the other of the 8-to-1 analog switch S1.

If the Test Command word is set to 10, signal generator *G1* is enabled which begins to "beep" the microphone and connects the signal-generator output into the microphone preamplifier *A1*. The four data areas contain data from bands 0, 1, 2, and 3 as when the Test Command word was 00, but the input signal comes from the signal generator rather than from the microphone. This allows calibration of the microphone preamplifier and isolates problems in one of the filter-averager chains.

Adding bit-3 to the command word will cause logarithmic rather than linear data scaling and will isolate problems to the log amplifier or either of the two analog switches comprising *S2*, the 2-to-1 analog switch.

Various combinations of bits in the Test Command word will allow quick calibration and fault isolation, and also provide a quick way to look at raw data from any input through the microphone.

Software. A simple technique for speech recognition of the digits zero through nine with a recognition rate of 90% or better, is shown in the flowchart of Fig. 10. An 8080 program for this algorithm is shown in Table II. The program starts at memory location 0100 and requires less than 4K bytes of storage including table space.

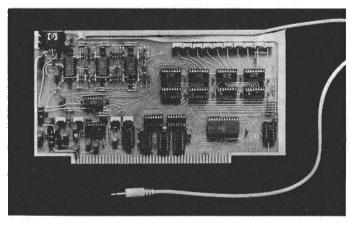
There are two modes of operation—training and performance. During training, speech examples of the digits are read into the microphone and the parameters of the speech input are extracted and placed in the tables. In the performance mode, an unknown utterance is presented and recognized.

To use the program, enter it into the computer starting at location 0100, and then run the program. The Teletype will respond with "T" (train) or "P" (perform). Type a "T" and the Teletype will respond with "NUMBER?" which can be between 0 and F. Type the digit you desire, and the microphone will emit a "beep" indicating that the speech window is open. When this beep occurs, vocalize the same digit you just typed in. The microphone will beep again to indicate that the speech window is now closed. The machine will then type T or

TABLE 1

0100			ORG 100H
0100	=		START EQU 100H
0100	210002		LXI H,START+100H
	228D01		SHLD TEMP1
0106	210003		LXI H,START+200H
0109	228F01		SHLD TEHP2
010C	210004		LXI H,START+300H
010F 0112	229101		SHLD TEMP3 LXI H,START+400H
0115	229301		SHLD TEMP4
0118	3A9501	GO	LDA COMAND
	CD6601	40	CALL INPUT
011E	2A8D01		LHLD TEMP1
0121	77		MOV M-A INR L
0122	2C		INR L
	228001		SHLD TEMP1
0126	3A9501 C601		LDA COMAND
	CD6601		ADI 1
012E	2ABF01		CALL INPUT LHLD TEHP2
0131	77		HOV HA
0132	2C		INR L
0133	228F01		SHLD TEMP2
0136	3A9501		LDA COMAND
0139	C602		ADI 2
	CD6601		CALL INPUT LHLD TEMP3
013E	2A9101		LHLD TEMP3
0141	77 20		HOV MAA
0143	229101		INR L SHLD TEMP3
0146	3A9501		LDA COHAND
0149	£603		ADI 3
014B	CD6601		CALL INPUT LHLD TEMP4
	2A9301		LHLD TEMP4
0151	77		HOV M;A INR L
	2C		INR L
	229301		SHLD TEMP4
0156	CA5F01 CD7701		JZ SYOP CALL DELAY
	C31801		JHP GO
015F	3E00	STOP	MUI A.O
0161	D3AF		OUT OAFH
	C3XXXX		JMP SYSTEM
0166	F620 D3AF	INPUT	ORI 20H OUT OAFH
	E6DF		ANI ODFH
016C	DJAF		OUT OAFH
016E	DBAF	LOOP	IN OAFH
0170	17		RAL
0171	DA6E01		JC LOOP
0174			IN OAFH RET
0176	C5	DELAY	PUSH B
0178	3E05	DECHI	HUI A.5
	FE00	DELO	HVI A,5 CPI 0
017C	CA8B01		JZ RETDEL
017F	0469		MVI B,69H
	00	DEL1	NOP
0182 0183	00 05		NOP DER B
0184	C28101		JNZ DEL1
0187			DER A
	C37A01		JMP DELO
0188		RETDEL	POP B
0180	C9		RET
0000	=	SYSTEM E	EQU 06000H
018D		TEMP1 DS	5 2
0191		TEMP2 DS	5 2 5 2
0193		TEMP3 DS	3 2
0195	YY	COMAND 8	
0100	21 00 0	2 22 8D 01	21 00 03 22 8F 01 21 00 04 22
0110	91 01 2	21 00 05 22	93 01 3A 95 01 CD 66 01 2A 8D
0120	01 77 2	2C 22 8D 01	JA 95 01 C6 01 CD 66 01 2A 8F
0130		2C 22 8F 01	3A 95 01 C6 02 CD 66 01 2A 91
0140		2C 22 91 01 2C 22 93 01	3A 95 01 C6 03 CD 66 01 2A 93 CA 5F 01 CD 77 01 C3 18 01 3E
0150	00 D3 A	2C 22 93 01 AF C3 53 00	CA 5F 01 CD 77 01 C3 18 01 3E F6 20 D3 AF E6 DF D3 AF D8 AF
0170 0180	17 DA 6	SE O1 DB AF	C9 CS 3E 05 FE 00 CA 8B 01 06
0180	69 00 0	00 05 C2 81	01 3D C3 7A 01 C1 C9 9B F7 F0
0190	FE 57 [C 49 E2 A6	

"HANDS ON" EXPERIENCE WITH A TALKING COMPUTER



BY LESLIE SOLOMON, Technical Editor

While testing the Speechlab, we borrowed an Al Cybernetic Systems (Box 4691, University Park, NM 88003) Model-1000 Speech Synthesizer (\$325, assembled) to see if our microcomputer could "talk" as well as "hear." The Model 1000 is designed to fit into one slot of an Altair bus and delivers its output via an audio cable that can be plugged into any audio amplifier system. The output level is 0.6 volt p-p; impedance is 1000 ohms; and frequency range is 150 to 4500 Hz.

This synthesizer is phoneme-oriented. Accordingly, you can program it to say anything, as opposed to speech synthesizers that have only several words fixed in ROM. Essentially, the Model 1000 is a hardwired analog of the human vocal tract and various portions of the circuit emulate the vocal cords, the lungs, and the variable-frequency resonant acoustic cavity of the mouth, tongue, lips and teeth.

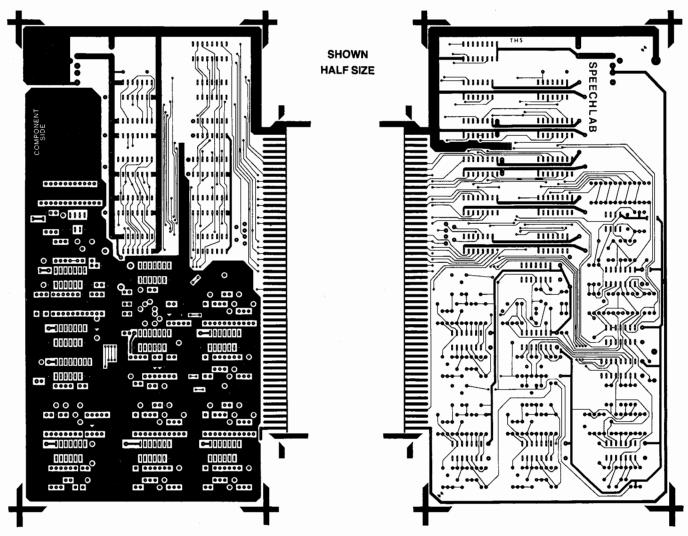


Fig. 8. Etching and drilling guides for pc board are shown half size. Guide at left is the component side. Component layout is in Fig. 9.

P again. You answer with a T, and the process is continued as long as you want. Do not exceed 16 entries with this sample program.

Once you have some vocalized digits in memory, run the program again. This time, when the Teletype asks T or P, answer with a P (for perform). Now, as you speak the digits into the microphone, the Teletype will respond by typing that digit. When used in a quiet room, with the same vocalization, this algorithm can be

All the information necessary to perform the synthesis functions are located within a ROM that is accessed by the program. Words and sentences are formed by supplying a string of ASCII characters as would be done when outputting to any port, except that these strings also use some non-alphanumeric characters (i.e., the "+" is used to form "th" as in "thaw" or "earth"). Each ASCII character represents a particular phonetic sound or phoneme. If desired, you can create a program that produces simultaneous printout and "voiceout" of the same string.

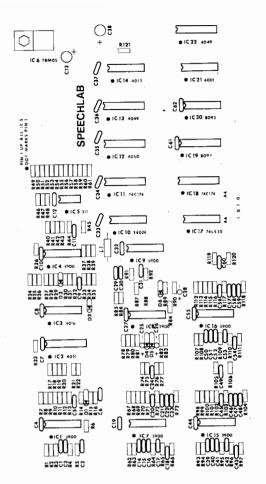
The device requires very little software to implement: less than 50 bytes of assembly language or a handful of BASIC statements. The manual accompanying the synthesizer covers speech generation in detail, how it is created, and what is involved. It also illustrates how to "mechanize" speech, with several examples shown.

After working with the synthesizer for a couple of weeks, we

found that we have a lot to learn about how humans create speech. After many hours of studying, experimenting, and redoing programs, we made the Model-1000 utter some recognizable sentences. It is not easy, our experience showed, even when one uses the wealth of instructions provided.

Working with a phoneme-oriented speech synthesizer is a little like learning to use a microprocessor. All the logic is there, but programming it properly is another story. Like working with a processor for the first time, one must crawl frustratingly before walking. Slowly, however, the ideas start to percolate. Our computer still talks with a rather heavy "robotic" accent, but we have hopes that someday it will "humanize."

To paraphrase Sam Johnson: "Sir, a computer talking is like a dog walking on its hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." We have a long road ahead to the "HAL-9000," but the first step has been taken.



for the Speechlab. See etching and drilling guide on previous page.

Fig. 9. Component layout

expected to have a recognition rate greater than 90%.

The program works as follows: the sampling subroutine is entered to obtain a sample of the amplitude every 10 milliseconds in each of the three frequency bands and to estimate the number of zero crossings during each time period. One hundred and fifty samples are collected, allowing up to 1.5 seconds of speech (between microphone "beeps"). A preset threshold is used to find the beginning and end of the word. The duration of the word can now be computed by a simple subtraction. Typically, this duration will be about 400-milliseconds for the digits. The duration time is divided by 16 to select 16 evenly spaced parameters from the three bands and zerocrossing information.

The 64 bytes obtained (16 parameters from each of the four bands) are compared with similar parameters which were collected during the training mode. A summation (running total) of the difference between the 64 parameters of the sample and the parameters of the training "templates" is computed. The totals represent a measure of the difference between the sample and each of the previously stored templates. The tem-

TABLE II

98038ACB39196DBAA88B33332144F511DEDF25272721BFD38769E76398BD07744D20841D21BFD387669E76398BD07744D20841D2584 03 50 3E 3D 83 83 69 EC 91 FE 92 23 21 04 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 01 77 FE C0195232170202C28E91226E92F2EE36543E29333D766ABA91111D0332B9286680C31FC62E849333D766ABA91111D0332B92868910FC6CE84942EC9CCE84CFCE86948484 50015621142228207460E86433C39F982F8C4C87D3889F5FD2F28282C428 033D54D31DD101711A3A44E2D572D6230C1236BAE31FE3BB85DA7C2F0F0F4F7 21115C971D197169FDE9308458B30EFA9973F39E3AB2CA564A6967A4F7008 3030710121E7EEE34124F275742AA65533971D301A1BAD36011E89971F3F D183D7351E293A21FBCA3AE151B443366FF6931G13F5329EF6615FDD285F7887FF88CPFA815321C4CEDC014F6931G13F53229EF6615FDD2845F7887F88CPFA81D554C245F 03 PE 01 CD 70 PS 02 CD 70 PS 03 PS 04 PS 04 PS 05 PS C04164F1E66DB0E3A2E55D00703A5FAA6B6F00B144F38

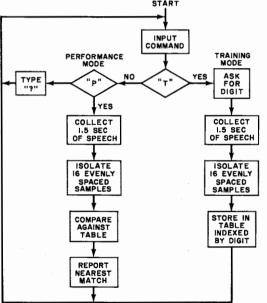


Fig. 10. Flow chart of a simple program that is used to "T" (train) and "P" (perform) a vocal operation. The program is shown in Table II.

plate with the smallest difference from the sample is then selected as the answer (output).

The above algorithm, while relatively simple, illustrates many of the basic concepts of speech recognition. A manual supplied with the Speechlab kit contains descriptions of other approaches to speech recognition, along with sample programs to demonstrate the techniques of speech recognition.