

First of all, I recall you advertised that you would have an article on robots. I would like to know when I can look for this in your magazine. I hope that you put out a lot of this type of article as I am very interested in this field.

Also I am very interested in personal computers, and would like to know if I could have some information about them. Like: what is the best personal computer on the market for the cheapest amount of money and what it costs; what would the quality of such a computer be and what would its programming capacity be, or how much information could it store or use. I really appreciate this!!

Bill Don Carlos, Jr.
Scottsdale, Az

Look on page 21 in this issue of ME, Bill Don. You'll find assistant editor Bob Margolin has thrown in just about everything there is to tell about home computers including the kitchen sink. And we had the first of many robot stories in our March 1978 issue.

Dear ME:

I have a grandson who is trying to make a levitator without much luck.

Could you please suggest a place to get this information?

Coy L. Gail
Cody, Wyoming

Well, obviously, the corner magic store.

Dear ME:

Recently, I happened across your article concerning your ideas on the philosophy of robot development, which was printed in the March 1978 issue of ME. I found this to be a very interesting and informative story. It was of particular interest to me for two reasons.

First, I am involved in electronics both as a hobby and a profession and second, because I am a Science Fiction writer.

I am now considering writing a story concerning the possible relationships between man and robot. I am writing this letter to ask one particular question of you.

You classed robots into four classes of development: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta. What I am wondering is if you are losing these words into the general vocabulary for use by the public-at-large. In other words, may I use these terms in my writings.

I would appreciate your reply as early as possible. Again, it was a very interesting article.

Larry R. Gilbert
Picayune, MS

Men can't own ideas, Larry, only the manner in which they are presented.

Dear ME:

Having recently read the first two issues of your fine magazine, I have found

it a unique and enjoyable alternative to the established electronics, ham, CB, and computer magazines. I am well aware of the difficulties in getting such a project started and wish you continued success in the future!

In particular, I liked the sections on: programming, Newscheck, Clinic, and the Puzzle. Moreover, the great graphics and uncomplicated approach are refreshing.

However, a magazine (like most other forms of media) should be a vehicle for two-way communication. Good examples of this are some of the better European hobby magazines. It is in this light that I direct my following comments to you.

In your March issue, there is a circuit which is ambiguous if not down-right dangerous, especially in view of the level of knowledge and experience which your average reader probably has. I am referring to the "Power failure detector" on page 67. The basic problem is that the circuit is directly (i.e. no isolation transformer) connected to the 120 vac power line!! This is, in general, a poor procedure, and is amplified by the fact that this circuit will be constructed by amateurs.

First, one end of one of the two Megohm input resistors is shown going to ground. Clearly, this should be labeled to indicate that this is not a ground to the circuit case, the 120 v power supply line, or any where else; but is in fact a *floating* current return line.

Second, supposing that the circuit was assembled correctly, there is still the possibility of leakage current through the input resistors. Although this current would be small, it is still in the range where it could be lethal under some circumstances.

Finally, it should have been mentioned that the circuit should be constructed in a totally insulated container. Not only to protect against the possibility of leakage, but also against faulty construction and defective parts. Imagine if one of the input resistors shorted. But, I still feel that an isolation transformer would be the best solution to this problem.

My second comment concerns the cartoon on page 58-59. My first disagreement with this article is my opinion that rationalizations and glorifications of hunting belong better in hunting magazines than in ME.

Second, I believe that technology should be used to better our environment, not to dominate it as this article suggests: "This is the life, Ralphy, man against nature. Using nothing but his hands and brains. Plus a Remington 30-30 and a Wilson vhf fm 2-meter transceiver."

In addition, a Wilson transceiver is displayed twice in this article, once verbally, and once pictorially. Besides my

view that publishers should not endorse a particular product, especially if that product's manufacturer carries advertising in the publication, unless it is tested objectively against competitive products, your other advertising clients might be disquieted (to say the least!) by this approach.

Although it is probably too much to expect that you would create a column to deal with letters of this sort. I truly hope that you will keep some of my points in mind.

James Abbott
Worcester, MA

Two-way communications is hard to achieve in a one-way mass magazine, James. Our best possibility is to print letters and critiques from readers like yourself. We're always open to criticism, whether we agree or not. For instance, what good is a magazine if it doesn't let readers know about good products on the market? Although we don't always like products which turn out to be the best on the market, the example you selected was a bad choice for your argument. The Wilson vhf fm gear is as good as any on the market. We wanted to show the excitement of ham radio today. Two-way vhf fm radio is at the core of the hobby. We knowingly selected the Wilson unit as our model for the Perry People cartoon strip.

Dear ME:

As a novice subscriber to the young "Modern Electronics", I took great interest in your article dealing with the computer revolution.

You state, "They now are small, so easily built, so simple to operate . . .," further "shop carefully for prices compared with specs." Suppose I know nothing about specs and have, nevertheless, decided I want one of those marvelous machines.

To start off, I have defined the major use I want to make of my home computer, next to all the possibilities mentioned in ME.

My machine will help me in a tedious activity linked to my professional activity as a translator. I want to enter on one line a key work in English and enter underneath the French and Spanish equivalent. Each English key word can be followed by various expressions and translations and the memories would be fed with data English to French or English to Spanish and would have to be questioned with a code for each language; for example, "keyword"? S= to obtain the Spanish equivalent to the English term "keyword."

Entries would be made through a keyboard and answers provided on video display. Further, at the time of entering the data into the memory, data would have to be reordered by the computer to be stored in alphabetical order; i.e. random access to allow feeding new keywords into the memory which would