

INVESTIGATING ELECTRONIC VOICE PHENOMENA

October 1995

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## Ghost Voices

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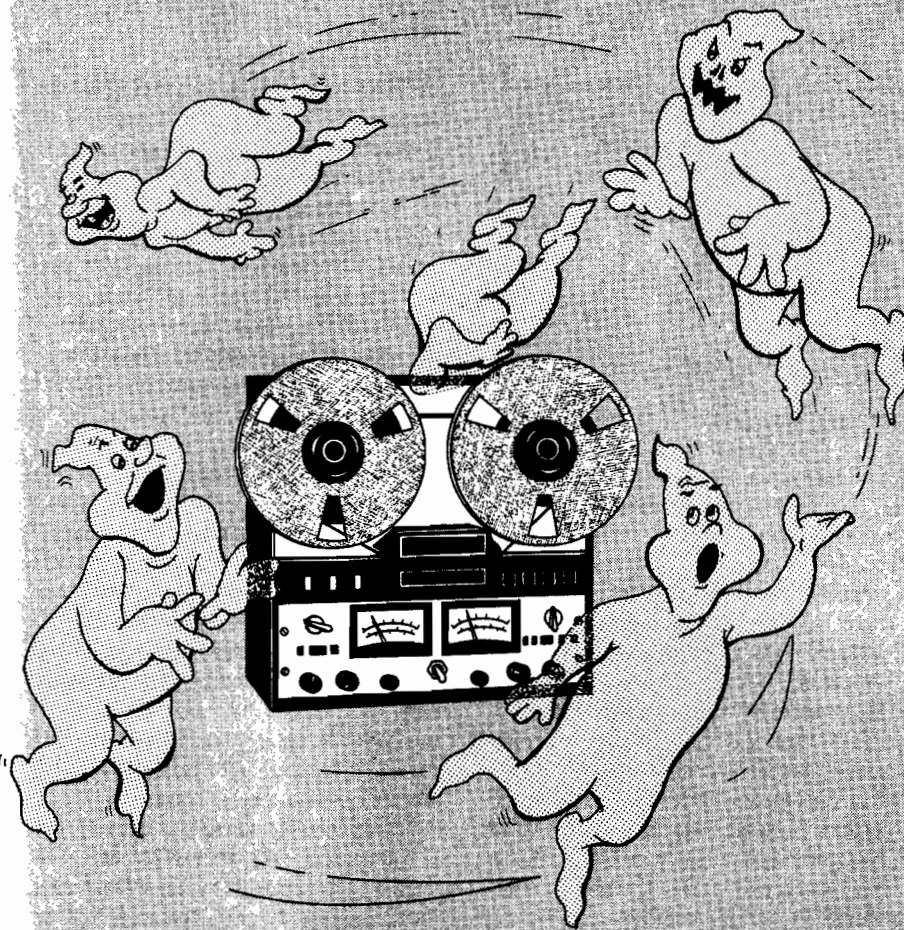
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out by EVP researchers right in your own home. So, this Halloween, break out the old tape recorder; you just might be able to solve the mystery.

**The Beginning.** It's not possible to know for certain when the first "ghost voices" were recorded, because the first individuals to accidentally record the voices might not have recognized the bizarre speech patterns that EVPs can assume. As a result, the first people to record the phenomena probably discarded their recordings as "being filled with noise." We do know, however, of two separate instances of *documented* first recordings of EVPs. We'll look at the most famous of those first.

On a summer day in 1959, a producer of documentaries by the name of Friedrich Jurgenson took his tape recorder out to the Swedish countryside to record some birds singing. When he played his tape back later, however, Jurgenson found that the chirping birds on his tape were accompanied by a mysterious commentator (speaking in Norwegian) who had much to say on the subject of bird song. Jurgenson was instantly fascinated, and checked to see what radio programs were broadcast in his vicinity at that time, just in case his recorder was somehow picking up radio signals. His search came up empty—he could find no program having to do with bird song that was broadcast at the appropriate time.

Faced with a mystery, Jurgenson started holding open-air taping sessions in hopes of catching more phantom voices on tape. He was successful on many occasions, and published his results in Sweden, claiming that not only was he getting messages from voices that called him by name, but from those that claimed to be deceased individuals that he knew or was related to! With those claims, an absolute obsession filled many in Europe, who immediately started holding their own taping sessions.

In 1965, Jurgenson's research attracted the attention of a psychologist by the name of Dr. Konstantin Raudive, and the two began to work together. Using some of the methods described in this article, those two EVP researchers began to gather hundreds of ghost voices on tape. Many

# GHOST VOICES:

## Exploring the Mysteries of Electronic Voice Phenomena

*Are the dead communicating with us through electronic means?*

BY KONSTANTINOS

**S**ince the invention of the tape recorder, people all around the world have taped various sounds for various reasons. But occasionally, what's heard on the resulting tapes is not exactly what was expected. Sometimes, phantom voices appear.

What do the voices say? Well, those who research Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) claim that the paranormal voices are relaying information about the "afterlife." That's right, many believe that through such recordings, we can receive messages from the

dead. However, there are those investigating the voices on the tapes who think that psychokinesis, or the ability to affect physical matter with the mind, might explain the phenomena. Some feel that the voices were simply auditory hallucinations caused by a noisy tape recorder. And of course, there are those who consider EVP tapes to be pure hoaxes.

What's really going on here? Are the dead trying to break through the veil between the worlds? We'd like to let you be the judge. You see, it's possible to recreate the experiments carried

tuned to a particular frequency for use as white noise (more on that later). The voice on the tape agreed, saying: "Hold the wavelength, brother! Marvelous!" Another time, when there was only a little tape left during a session, the researchers felt they should go on using it after they played back their latest take. The voice apparently disagreed, saying, "Good Morning! Take a new tape, dear Konstantin."

Finally, before we move on, let's look at some mixed views on the afterlife, which the voices had to share:

"The dead live, Konstantin."  
 "God, Konstantin, we are happy."  
 "It's terribly good here."  
 "Kosti, it is really strict here."  
 "...we are all forgotten."  
 "City of the dead."  
 "There are many moments here."

Those who have heard the voices for themselves, and who have examined the preceding facts that Raudive's research uncovered, often draw the conclusion that the voices can be nothing other than what they claim to be.

There's no need to take our word for that, however. It is not that difficult to recreate the experiments and see for yourself. So read on with an open mind, because we're about to explore the techniques you can use to record and hear the voices.

**Microphone Method.** The "microphone method" is by far the easiest of the techniques that you can use. In its most basic form, that technique of recording the voices consists of simply plugging a good-quality microphone into the mic input of a tape recorder, moving the microphone far away from the recorder (to cut down on machine noise), inserting a tape into the machine, and hitting the record button. Then ask the voices to speak, and try to keep the room as quiet as possible during the rest of the recording process.

The first EVPs were recorded using that method, and clear voices can be caught on tape with it. However, you will have to go through a lot of tape before you find the real loud ones. For the most part, you will be left with many whispery voices that are difficult to understand, with only an occasional clear one popping up.

A way of improving the results of the

microphone method is to use an electret condenser microphone connected to a low-noise, high-gain pre-amplifier. However, before looking into acquiring such equipment, keep in mind that most researchers only use the microphone method as an introduction to EVP recording. There are much better ways to get those elusive voices.

**Radio Method.** The "radio method" is another simple way of obtaining paranormal voices, and like the microphone method, you most likely have all the equipment you need. In Raudive's day, that technique required connecting the output of a radio to a reel-to-reel tape recorder. Now, you can find in almost every home some kind of radio with a tape recorder built in, whether it's part of a large stereo system or a portable.

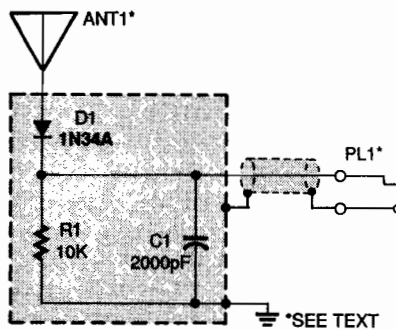


Fig. 3. Some researchers prefer this diode circuit to the one shown in Fig. 2. They claim that voices of "higher frequencies" can be received with it.

Place a fresh cassette into the recorder and turn on the radio. Tune on either the AM or FM bands and try to find a part of the band with nothing but "white noise" (the familiar rushing sound you hear when you tune to an unused frequency). When you're sure that no stations are broadcasting there, press the record button. For reasons we'll get into later, keep your sessions to about five minutes.

The quality of the voices received using this method are certainly much better than that of the ones recorded by microphone. Some of the weaker EVPs sound as if they are created by a "bending" of the white noise, but they are often still understandable. The louder voices received this way sound as if they are speaking over the noise itself.

As we saw earlier, critics of the radio

method of recording argue that the voices could be stray broadcasts. Of course the nature of the messages received makes an argument against that assumption. But still, it might be easier to prove to others that what you're getting are truly paranormal voices if you don't use a radio. For that reason, you might want to use a different source of white noise.

**White-Noise Method.** Figure 1 shows the schematic for a simple white-noise generator. The circuit is powered by a 9-volt battery, B1. An LF351 op-amp, U1, is configured as a high-gain amplifier. Unstable noise generated by the OC81 germanium transistor, Q1, is amplified by U1, filtered by C2, and output at jack J1.

The circuit can be built on either perforated board or on a PC board, if you can design your own. All the parts, except for the germanium transistor, should be simple to find. If you can't locate the OC81, any other PNP germanium transistor can be used; or, you could substitute a 1N34A germanium diode, which is available from Radio Shack (catalog no. 276-1123) as well as some other sources. Install the resistors and capacitors, and then the transistor and IC. Double-check the orientation of the components before attaching a cable to J1 and connecting it to the line input of your tape recorder. Then, turn on power switch, S1.

The unit should now be producing white noise. Press the record button on your tape recorder, record a few seconds, and play it back to make sure. You should hear an irregular noise "stream" on the tape. If not, check your circuitry again. When you have it working, try a five minute session to see what voices you get.

**Diode Method.** According to Raudive and the researchers who would come after, the "diode method" is the best way to record EVPs without using advanced filtering (definitely a topic for another article). Several different circuit designs were used for that method, but we will only look at two of them here.

The first of those is shown in Fig. 2. A paranormal signal is believed to be picked up by ANT1, which is made of a three-inch piece of stiff wire (a straightened paper clip is ideal). What

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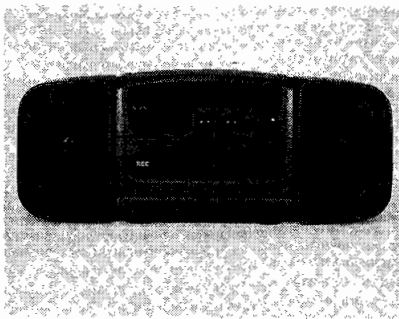
Raudive considered a slightly tuned coil, L1, is a 0.5-mH choke coil. How those components work with the resistor and germanium diode is pretty unclear. The whole circuit resembles an early "cat-whisker" radio design, but you will most likely find that the messages received on the miniature antenna are not being broadcast by a radio station. If for some reason you do pick up something that sounds like radio interference, try either shortening the antenna or moving to another room.

The whole circuit should be enclosed in an aluminum project case, to provide shielding. You could still get results without shielding, but there will be a lot of hum heard on the tape. Wire the components as shown, and drill a hole in the case for the antenna to stick out. Wrap some insulating material around the base of the antenna so that it does not come into electrical contact with the enclosure. Connect the shielded cable to the circuit and case as shown in the figure; use a plug for PL1 that matches your tape recorder's input.

A good earth ground is required for the circuit to work properly. Solder an alligator clip to one end of an insulated wire, wrap the other end around a screw on the enclosure and solder it (that will ensure a good mechanical and electrical connection). Before you use the unit, attach the alligator clip to something that will provide a ground connection (*i.e.* a cold-water pipe). Then, all you have to do is plug the unit in, and hit record.

Another diode schematic is shown in Fig. 3. That unit does not use a coil at all, but includes a capacitor. The antenna insulation and grounding tips given for the other diode circuit still apply here. Once again, the entire circuit is mounted in an aluminum project enclosure, and is connected to a tape recorder in the same fashion as the last one. According to Raudive's colleagues, the second unit helps you pick up "higher-frequency voices," although what was meant by that statement is unclear.

**How to Hear the Voices.** Once you've done your recording, using one of the previously mentioned methods, you will have to have some idea of what you will be listening for on the resulting tapes. Most EVPs are



*Combination radio/tape recorders like this one make the radio method of recording voices simple to experiment with. Just insert a tape, tune in an unused frequency, and press record.*

faint and difficult to make out, and you won't want to accidentally pass over them.

First of all, no matter which of the methods described in the preceding sections are used, keep your recording sessions short. You will need to play back each minute of tape several times in order to "catch" the sometimes elusive voices. The ideal time for each recording period after each question you ask is approximately five minutes. And you might go over that section of tape for an hour before you make out any of the voices for the first time!

Of course, not every "take" will result in your "catching" any EVPs. In an experiment carried out by New York City's CBS affiliate, WCBS, and aired as part of their late news, it took a couple of hours before a really clear voice could be heard. But as that demonstration showed, with perseverance, experimenters can get results. So, don't get discouraged if you can't make out the voices right away.

#### SUGGESTED READING

- Bander, Peter. *Voices from the Tapes: Recordings from the Other World*. Drake Publishers, New York, 1973.
- Raudive, Konstantin. *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead*. Taplinger Publishing Company, New York, 1971.
- Rogo, D. Scott. *In Search of the Unknown*. Taplinger Publishing Company, New York, 1976.
- Sherman, Harold. *The Dead are Alive: They can and do Communicate with You*. Fawcett, New York, 1993.
- Welch, William. *Talks with the Dead*. Pinnacle Books, New York, 1975.

The voices are difficult to recognize at first, for a couple of reasons. One of the biggest ones is that they often seem to be talking at twice the speed that we normally do. That is only made worse by the fact that the syllables of each word are pronounced in a monotonous, metered fashion, with almost no accent or emphasis on any particular syllable.

You'd have the best chance of hearing the voices during playback if you put on headphones—preferably the type that cover the ear completely, as you don't want any outside noise distracting you. Turn up the volume to the loudest comfortable level. However, make sure that the volume isn't too loud, because that would tire your ears, resulting in a temporary loss of some of your ability to discern between subtle differences in sound. And you'll need all the sensitivity of hearing you can get for your first attempt at trying to make out those elusive EVPs on tape.

If you used the microphone method, listen for any faint rhythms against the silence. When you find one, play it back repeatedly. That is known as "developing" a voice. Unlike normal taped signals, an EVP will become stronger in volume and clarity if it is played several times or copied onto another cassette. The same holds true for voices recorded with the other methods.

For tapes made with either the radio or white-noise methods, just listen for anything in the background that sounds different than whatever noise you are using. As mentioned earlier, some voices will sound as if they are made from a manipulation of the noise, and some will sound louder. Again, develop any different-sounding noises through repeated playback, and maybe by copying them to another tape. That should make the messages somewhat easier to understand.

Finally, for tapes made with the diode method, prepare to be surprised. You should have the easiest time picking out the EVPs caught on tape with that method. However, you will still have to develop them somewhat for maximum clarity.

And that's all there is to it. If you still are skeptical, why not give it a try and see for yourself if those voices have anything to say to you! ■