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Worthwhile modification to those of you that use a Sencore PA81 dummy load

Rothwell Audio Products

**Bill Ferris**

Super Member

Messages: 4,210

Location: NE. FL.

These audio dummy loads are quite handy.. I have 2, one for each bench.. They were not designed with using with [vacuum tube amps](#) because of their DC protection circuits which disconnect the load if the sensing circuit "thinks" it's amp input has DC or very low frequency pulse(wiggling a small signal tube in it's socket while driving the amp at any level of wattage !! A most disturbing situation when it happens, as one should not wish to remove the load of any tube amp whilst driving it !! 😞 = 🤯 So-- some [time back I thought](#) to look into modifying this disturbing trait of the unit but retaining that safe guard for when I am asked to repair one of my friend's or my SS DC coupled power amps.. It turned to be simple and non invasive to the unit.. There is a chassis grounding post on the front panel at the bottom that I have never needed to use since I bought my first one in 1990.. Anyway I removed the ground post and installed a mini switch in the horizontal position to break the disconnect the dummy load's relay's coil and labeled it SS for the relay being normalized(switch engaged/closed) and tube in the other position(with the relay's coil disabled/open... The Sencore [PA 81](#) will still scold me when I encounter crusty connections on a tube amp that I'm futzing with on the bench and will indicate that it has detected DC, and or a low frequency pulse but will not engage the [protection circuit](#) and remove the load to the amp.. Which if fine with me, as I dislike soiling myself when an event likes that happens, especially a Mac, Dynaco, ARS, ect.. Anyway, free advice/suggestions is only worth what you pay for it.. Regards, OKB

Bill Ferris, Sep 28, 2016

#1

[fill35u](#), [Richard_AZ](#) and [avionic](#) like this.

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scottonob

Scott Palmer

Messages: 122

Location: San Francisco

Hey Bill — I know this an old post, but I picked up a [PA81](#), probably never used, for \$100. They guy who owned it was a local electronics technician that thought he was going to start an amplifier service business, to go along with fixing TVs and other stuff. Unfortunately, he was ill for years and died before he got things up and running. His widow just wanted everything out of the shop, hence the price. So I never got to talk to him about the unit, obviously. This tip about the [tube/SS](#) modification is great for me. However, I haven't had a chance to use the thing yet. I haven't even had time to go over it's various functions. Do you have any general suggestions, regarding general use of this machine? It came with all the cords, probes, power supply, everything, still in the opened box. And I will definitely employ your modification. I have SS and tube, but it's only my stuff I work on. Thanks, Scott

scottonob, Jul 25, 2019

#2

[avionic](#) likes this.



Bill Ferris

Super Member

Messages: 4,210

Location: NE. FL.

scottonob said: ↑

Hey Bill — I know this an old post, but I picked up a [PA81](#), probably never used, for \$100. They guy who owned it was a local electronics technician that thought he was going to start an amplifier service business, to go along with fixing TVs and other stuff. Unfortunately, he was ill for years and died before he got things up and running. His widow just wanted everything out of the shop, hence the price. So I never got to talk to him about the unit, obviously. This tip about the [tube/SS](#) modification is great for me. However, I haven't had a chance to use the thing yet. I haven't even had time to go over it's various functions. Do you have any general suggestions, regarding general use of this machine? It came with all the cords, probes, power supply, everything, still in the opened box. And I will definitely employ your modification. I have SS and tube, but it's only my stuff I work on. Thanks, Scott

I don't have much more to say about the PA81, Scott, other than the needing the switch modification, both of mine serve me well.

I recommend become familiar with it using Sencore's well written owner's manual.

I think it's a very versatile piece of audio servicing test equipment, but I mostly used it's straight dummy load function in the nineties, and only within the past 10 years started using it's line level meter [monitor](#) functions for preamp 24 hr. burn in.

You lucked out on the purchase price of your unit, and unused with all the [cables & box](#) for a fraction of buying it well used.

I think it's a good idea to make sure that a [battery](#) is not been installed in the back hatch, if it is you should remove it, and power it up for couple of days(don't worry, it uses very, very little electricity) then start checking out all it's functions, to make sure all is properly working.

Remember, that is a sort of active dummy load, and power blips will turn it off, though the load resistors should still be connected even with the unit unpowered, as the active portion is only for the metering(line, & load) & to power the DC detect sensing circuit to power the relay to disengage the load, fan, & other low level internal circuits.

Enjoy it Scott.

Bill Ferris, Jul 26, 2019

#3

avionic likes this.



scottonnob

Scott Palmer

Messages: 122

Location: San Francisco

OKB,

Thanks for getting back to me so quickly. I'm going to follow your lead. The unit has all the manuals and everything else that came with it. So I'm going to get reading this weekend and determine how I might work this into my bench. Thanks again, Scott

scottonnob, Jul 26, 2019

#4

avionic likes this.



dbxdx5

AK Subscriber

Subscriber

Messages: 2,286

Nice find Scott. Some pics of all the goodies would be cool.

dbxdx5, Jul 26, 2019

#5

avionic likes this.



Bill Ferris

Super Member

Messages: 4,210

Location: NE. FL.

scottonnob said: ↑

OKB,

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You're most welcome, Scott.

Bill Ferris, Jul 26, 2019

#6

avionic likes this.

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scottonnob
Scott Palmer

Messages: 122
Location: San Francisco

Will do. Probably tomorrow, maybe tonight.

scottonnob, Jul 26, 2019

#7

avionic likes this.



Bill Ferris
Super Member

Messages: 4,210
Location: NE. FL.

dbxdx5 said: ↑

Nice find Scott. Some pics of all the goodies would be cool.

Would pics of my two bench`s 2 PA81`s suffice, dbxdx5, until Scott, can post his ?



Bill Ferris, Jul 26, 2019

#8

avionic likes this.



dbxdx5
AK Subscriber

Subscriber

Messages: 2,286

Ha. More than "suffice"!

dbxdx5, Jul 26, 2019

#9

avionic and Bill Ferris like this.

Hi, Has any seen a PDF of the service manual for a [PA 81](#)? Hard to find and I don't trust the for sale versions, been burned in the past. I did find a Sencore Tech Tip #179 which is



Walpurgis
New Member

Messages: 5

helpful for operation but mine needs a cal.. Thanks John

Walpurgis, Sep 20, 2019

#10



scottonnob
Scott Palmer

Messages: 122
Location: San Francisco

Walpurgis said: ↑

Hi, Has any seen a PDF of the service manual for a PA 81? Hard to find and I don't trust the for sale versions, been burned in the past. I did find a Sencore Tech Tip #179 which is helpful for operation but mine needs a cal.. Thanks John

I have all the materials that came new with my unit. I can look through them and see what I have. However, I'm out of the country for another 10 days, so if you haven't found something by the first of next month, post again and I'll remember to take a look.

scottonnob, Sep 21, 2019

#11

Bill Ferris likes this.

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Walpurgis
New Member

Messages: 5

scottonnob said: ↑

I have all the materials that came new with my unit. I can look through them and see what I have. However, I'm out of the country for another 10 days, so if you haven't found something by the first of next month, post again and I'll remember to take a look.

Scott, thank you much. I'll gladly pay for a quality copy or anything you have available. Tech Tip #179 is a pretty good overview but not much more, I can send you a copy if you don't have it. John

Walpurgis, Sep 22, 2019

#12

Bill Ferris likes this.

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