



Radio Shack Realistic Micro Sonic Speaker-Amplifier

Contents

hide

Beginning

Sources

Page

Discussion

Read

View source

View history

Tools



Appearance

hide

Text

☒ Small

☐ Standard

☐ Large

Width

☒ Standard

☐ Wide

The **Radio Shack Realistic Micro Sonic Speaker-Amplifier** (model 277-1008) is a small compact 200mW speaker and amplifier unit manufactured by Radio Shack during the 1960s and 1970s, specifically the Realistic company. It was transistor-based and powered by 9-volt batteries.

This device became an integral part of Peter's sound during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Larry Fast owned one Radio Shack Micro-Sonic speaker, referred to as the "\$9.95" as he bought it for that exact price (listed as such in the 1977 catalog). He used it as a personal monitor for tweaking the effects on his synthesizers.

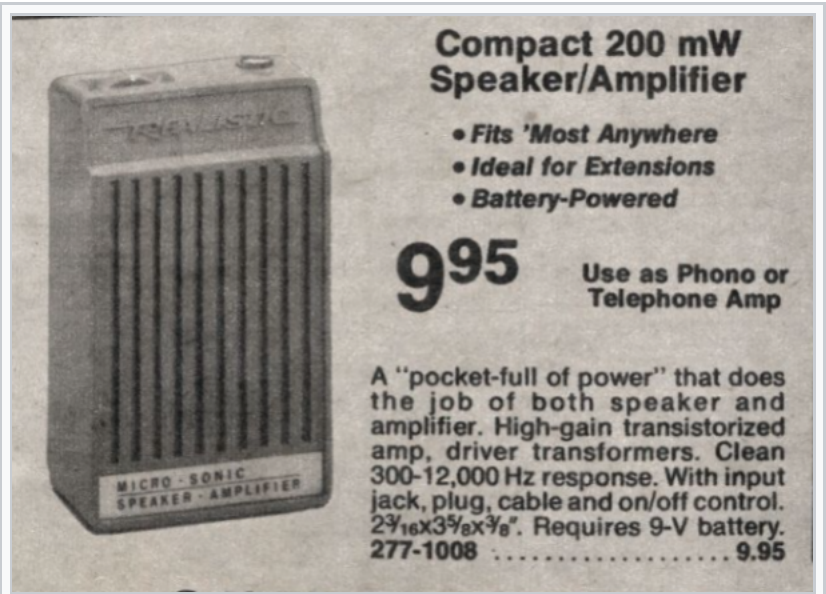
The Radio Shack amp was used for distorted sound treatments all over Peter Gabriel's third and fourth albums (a.k.a. *Melt* and *Security*, respectively). It was mainly used on vocals, synthesizers and occasionally a drum machine. Examples of the Radio Shack distortion are "Lead A Normal Life" and "No Self Control" (the intro and drum machine enD). Larry Fast later replaced his original Radio Shack Micro Sonic Speaker as it became a bit battered and was held together by gaffer tape.

The effects were achieved by feeding a sound into a Moog filter and then the Radio Shack with its "plastic distortion" sound. Peter latched onto this sound when he first hearing it, suggested having it miked (which engineer Hugh Padgham did with a [Shure SM57](#)). When plugged directly into the console, it didn't sound the same so they stuck with using a microphone on it.

To shape the sound coming from the Radio Shack amplifier, Peter sometimes held it to his mouth along with a microphone, moving his mouth for a wah-wah effect like a talk box or vocoder (he once called it the "world's cheapest vocoder" in one interview). He was filmed doing this for an unused overdub on "I Have The Touch", as featured on the *South Bank Show* TV special in 1982 documenting the recording of the fourth album. This effect was also used for "No Self Control".

Sources

- Melody Maker*, 5 July 1980 [↗](#) (page 27)
- Oral History of Peter Gabriel III* [↗](#)
- South Bank Show* 31 October 1982 episode
- Hugh Padgham Produce Like A Pro interview (2021)
- Larry Fast photos



From 1977 Radio Shack catalog



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