

**VOLUME CONTROLS** 

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Fig. 7 and adding compensator  $R_4C_9$ . This is equivalent to combining (B) and (C). Proper choice of values and tap can yield a closer approximation to the theoretical curves of Fig. 5.

## Apparent Loudness and Room Noise

The compensated control has the advantage of making listening easier in the presence of room noise, as indicated by Fig. 12. A good deal of the power in music and speech is concentrated in the frequency region below 500 cps. Com-pensating a 50-db-level program so that it approaches the over-all frequency response of an uncompensated 80 db average level can make the program sound much louder without increase in annoyance factor, because proper balance of bass and treble prevents the shrillness which often characterizes the uncompensated low-level reproduction of voice or music. This makes background music to meals or conversation much more soothing and pleasant.

Both the noise and the signal curves in Fig. 12 have loudness sensation as it appears to the mind as the ordinate. The usual method of presenting room noise over the audio-frequency range in terms of sound pressure or intensity level tends to give a misleading impression of the annoyance effect of the low-frequency noise components. Fortunately, the ear responds so poorly to low frequencies at the usual room-noise intensity levels that noise such as the hum of 60-cps home machinery remains tolerable.

Listening at lower than concert-hall levels also pays another dividend besides



Fig. 13. Harmonic distortion of the human hearing system at 1000 cps. Includes harmonics from second to fifth, inclusive.

toleration by family and neighbors. As Fig. 13 shows, the harmonic distortion of the human hearing system is quite low, less than 3 per cent, at a low sound pressure level such as 50 db.<sup>3</sup> At 80 db, however, the harmonic distortion is high, about 22 per cent, and intermodulation distortion components will be present in

<sup>8</sup> Derived from data on subjective tone measurements; Moe, J. Acous. Soc. Am., 1942

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