better leakage characteristics than the ordinary electrolytic the Tantalum bead capacitor is a good choice, but is more expensive. The 'bead' type will be the most familiar, and comes in values from 0.1uF up to 100uF or so. Working voltages vary from a few volts up to 50 or more, and the size is very dependant on this voltage rating. Indentification is not normally a problem, the value being stamped on the case, although only the figure is often marked. Polarity is important, as with aluminium electrolytics, and is normally marked, with the positive lead longer than the negative (similarly with some radial electrolytics). Although not an infallible guide, the right hand lead with the marking facing you is normally +ve.

There are many other types of capacitor we have not touched on, each with a particular application. The ones covered are the most likely types encountered by a constructor, and with the help of the above and the various photos and tables, you should be able to identify most contenders.

Other Components

Inductors are often marked in such a way that their value may not be

immediately obvious, especially those made by TOKO, which figure prominently in many of our constructional articles.

The markings are in fact similar to some ceramic capacitors, and take the form of figures such as 101J, 4R7K, or 751K. The basic unit is the microhenry. Taking the first example, 101 would indicate 10 × 10 or 10 plus one zero i.e. 100uH - the suffix letter5 is the tolerance, in this case +/-5% (K = +/-10%,M = +/-20%). 4R7K is one of the decimal replacement figures i.e. 4.7uH + / - 10%, and the last one 750uH +/- 10%. Similarly 1mH would be 102.

Axial chokes from other sources (which look like resistors) are usually coded by bands, so that brown, black, black would be 10uH (10 with no multiplier). 220uH would be red, red, brown.

Variable Resistors

Taking one specific example, again the TOKO range, once more the coding that appears on these may not be immediately obvious. The value is always given in standard form such as 500R for 500 ohms, and 100K for

100,000 ohms. The taper for resistance law) of the potentiometer is however given by a letter. The two normal ones are "A" for log law, and "B" for linear law. There are others such as anti-log but you are unlikely to meet them in the normal course of events.

Presets are always linear in taper (except specials) with the marking either stamped on one side, or possibly colour coded with a three dot code. This is similar to resistor coding but without a tolerance band — i.e. yellow, violet, orange would be 47K.

Most presets are of carbon track composition for general use. If a better quality (and more expensive) preset is needed with low noise, coupled with good temperature stability, then Cermet (mixture of CERamic and METal) types are the choice. They can usually be identified by a ceramic former (rather than phenolic) and more elaborate wiper.

There are of course many other components, and types within the above discussion not covered, but I hope to have explained the great majority of common devices and their markings.

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