Whereas electronic is typically taught with *visual* reinforcement—staring at an oscilloscope, meters, or a computer screen—we will work by *ear*, as befits the development of sonic circuitry. A *monitor amplifier* thus becomes your tool. Whereas it would be nice to listen to our boops and beeps through a 250 watt Bryston amplifier and a pair of Altec 604E loudspeakers, I the use of a small, battery-powered amplifier (see figure 1.1). It is cheaper, but more importantly it is *safer*: many of our experiments entail touching circuitry with damp fingers, and those fingers should be kept far, far away from the 120 (or 240) volts streaming into any device with a power cord.

We need a fair amount of gain at the input to our amplifier, especially at the beginning of this book, where we start out making a variety of with pretty low output levels. Therefore a typical pair of battery-power speakers intended for amplifying CD player, MP3 player, computer or other line level device . Better to a use one of those wee bitty guitar amps by Fender, Marshall, Dan Electro, etc.-they look like little lunchboxes, or the guitarist's equivalent of a shrunken head. The cheapest one I've found is from Radio Shack (#277-1008, \$12.99). It also has a very useful jack for an , which comes in handy in chapter 8. The more expensive ones pitched external the advantages of a bigger speaker, a tone control, at guitarists, on the other hand, overdrive/distortion, and a more robust and useful 1/4 inch input jack (the Radio Shack amp uses 1/8 inch inputs).

If you are feeling slightly adventurous, the cheapest (and most flexible) solution is to buy a low power (< 1 watt) amplifier kit from any of a number of online retailers (see figure 1.2). These kits all components, a tidy little printed circuit board, and instructions

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