

## Add some Interactive Sound to your Rolling Stock or Buildings

by Del Tapparo

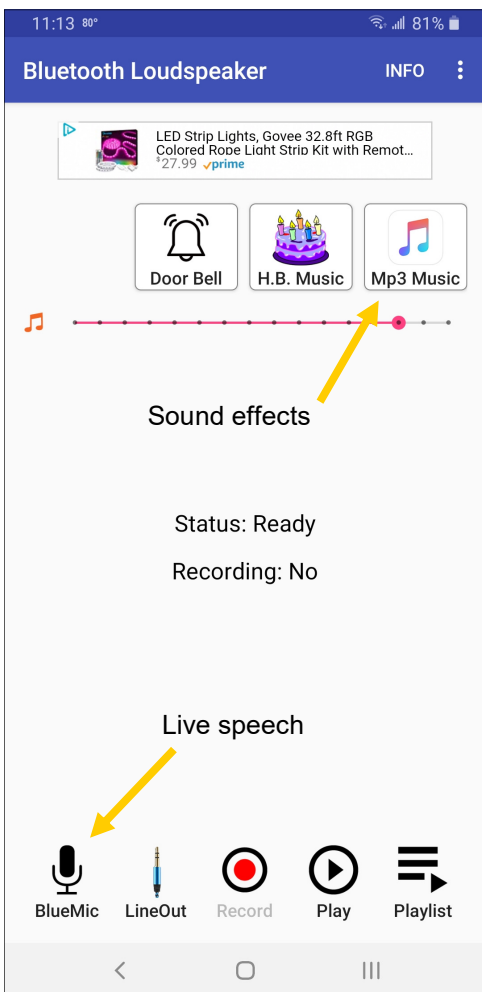
Always looking for ways to have more fun at an open house or train show, I thought it would be neat to have a train that “speaks” to the kids as it goes by; “Hi kids! Do you like trains?” Or maybe have a haunted house with a pre-recorded playlist of spooky sounds or maybe voices that know the names of the visitors; “Do not go to sleep tonight Jimmy. I will be in your room.”, and then play a spooky sound effect.

This can be accomplished using a free app on your phone and a Bluetooth speaker. (I have an Android phone, but I am sure the same thing can be done with Apple products.) I found an app called *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* that lets you either talk directly into the microphone on your phone, or play one or more .mp3 files from a playlist. Low cost Bluetooth speakers are completely self contained. They have an internal USB rechargeable battery, speaker, and Bluetooth receiver. The mini versions are only 2-3” in diameter, cost around \$20, some are even waterproof, and will easily fit in most rolling stock or buildings. You just need to be able to access the speaker for recharging.

The *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app lets you easily just talk into your phone and hear it on the Bluetooth speaker. Playing pre-recorded sound effects of voice tracks is a bit more complicated, but not bad.

The *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app has a feature to play *MP3 Music*, which is a playlist of .mp3 files. This can be used to play all of our .mp3 sound effects; haunted house, cattle mowing, thunder, pigs, whatever. The app also lets you record speech via the microphone and create a *Playlist* within the app. However, this is of little value because I was unable to find anyway to rename the files to something meaningful; i.e. “Hey Kids”, instead of some long number combination.raw filename. So we need to create our speech files as .mp3 files to use along with the other sound effects via the *MP3 Music* icon. Another app, named *MP3 Recorder*, will do that for us. Then we just need to transfer all of our .mp3 files from our PC to the phone, which can be done easily. (See Bluetooth MP3 Sidebar for the procedures).

Free .mp3 sound effects can be found on-line at [FreeSound.org](http://FreeSound.org) and [SoundBible.com](http://SoundBible.com), among others. So, get creative, and have some fun at your next open house.



IP67 Waterproof Bluetooth speaker  
available from Amazon for \$16.  
1.89" Dia. X 1.57"H

## Bluetooth MP3

*Note: These procedures are for use with a Windows computers and Android phones. You may be able to use similar procedures with Apple products.*

### **Transferring existing .mp3 files from your PC to your Phone using *Windows File Explorer***

- Connect your phone to a PC USB port. Using Windows File Explorer you should be able to see your phone under *This PC*. Mine shows up as *Galaxy S9+*. The *Galaxy S9+/Phone* directory will reveal all the folders in your phone. You can save your .mp3 files anywhere you like, but mine already has a folder called *Sounds*, which seems appropriate.
- Copy the .mp3 files of your choice to your phone's *Sounds* folder.

### **Creating a .mp3 file from a speech recording using the *MP3 Recorder* phone app**

- Open the *MP3 Recorder* app on your phone. Tap the microphone icon to start recording.
- Tap the square record button to stop and save the recording.
- Share the recording to *Dropbox* or some other cloud file space that you can access via your PC.
- Now, on your PC access the .mp3 file and rename it with something meaningful. Then copy it to your phone's *Sound* folder per the procedure above.

### **Playing a .mp3 file using the *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app on your phone**

- Turn on Bluetooth in your phone and make sure the speaker is on and paired with your phone.
- Open the *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app on your phone.
- Tap the *MP3 Music* icon. A list of all the .mp3 files on your phone will appear.
- Select one or more files to play. Tap *Play Music*.

### **Using the *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app on your phone as a loudspeaker**

- Turn on Bluetooth in your phone and make sure the speaker is on and paired with your phone.
- Open the *Bluetooth Loudspeaker* app on your phone.
- Tap the *BlueMic* icon and start speaking. Stay away from the speaker to avoid feedback.
- Tap the icon again to mute.