

LEGAL MANAGEMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ADMINISTRATORS

Bluetooth Grab Bag

Three cord-free audio options to enhance your day.



BILL & PHIL

The Bill and Phil Show
Tech News & Reviews

By now, we're all familiar with Bluetooth. This wireless technology is used to exchange data over short distances. (For those of you who care, it uses short-wavelength radio waves to transmit and receive information.)

Bluetooth technology can be irritating, or it can be a godsend that enables you to talk hands-free in your car. But it's a technology that continues to evolve.

Its mesh technology will be a key component of the "Internet of Things" movement, which will enable almost every consumer device in your home to be interconnected and then connected to the Internet.

This article, however, deals with more mundane things.

Bill collects Bluetooth speakers. He has the Jawbone Jambox, the Supertooth Disco, the JBL Charge, the Boom Boom Bluetooth "learning" speaker, the Philips Shoqbox and many others too numerous to mention. But he has found a new favorite — the Creative Labs Sound Blaster Roar.

We like our Bluetooth speakers loud — not just for jammin' at pool-side parties, but also to use in a courtroom to replace or supplement poor or nonexistent courtroom audio systems.

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HEAR ME ROAR

As its name suggests, the [Sound Blaster Roar](#) is very loud. It has a bass boost and the roar button, which instantly boosts the loudness of your music (or any other audio going through the speaker). In addition, Sound Blaster Roar is the Swiss Army Knife of Bluetooth speakers.

It has the usual items: a hands-free microphone, direct audio input, volume buttons, the ability to charge other devices, fast-forward buttons, play and pause buttons, etc. However, it has additional features seldom found on Bluetooth audio speakers.

A microSD slot allows playback using music or audio recorded on a microSD drive. You can also

record audio on the Sound Blaster Roar and save the recording on a microSD card.

You are not stuck with just Bluetooth pairing; you can use one-touch pairing using near field communications (NFC) as well. You can pair two devices to the Sound Blaster Roar at the same time, or you can put the Roar into free-for-all access, which will allow anyone who grabs the Roar's attention to attach via Bluetooth.

According to the literature provided with the Roar, this is great for parties where you share music with a group of friends. They can just take over control of the Sound Blaster Roar and play their own music selections in the music free-for-all.

You can also connect the Sound Blaster Roar to a PC or a Mac computer with a USB cable and download the Sound Blaster Control Panel, which will allow you to shape the audio using tools like a graphic equalizer.

Finally, the most unusual feature of the Sound Blaster Roar is its ability to grab attention.

The Sound Blaster Roar has a built-in siren. If people are not paying attention to you, you can arm the siren, press and hold the alarm, and the siren will go off. It will either scare them or make them shut up. Look for a demo of this feature in the upcoming 2015 edition of the Bill and Phil Show (just kidding).

Bill has a new favorite Bluetooth speaker, and it is clearly the Creative Lab Sound Blaster Roar (\$149.99).

TECH GETS STYLISH

Another Bluetooth device we love is the *[Blu-Toque Dual-Layered Bluetooth Hat](#)* by Caseco.

This hat looks like a regular stocking cap, but it contains a speaker for each ear and a microphone beside the left-side speaker. It connects to your phone or other devices via Bluetooth, and you can listen to music while you are carefree and warm. You can also make and receive phone calls and talk through the built-in microphone.

(Naturally, this hat is made by folks in Canada, where they are used to the cold weather and know how to make the best of it.)

The speakers are amazingly clear and responsive. The built-in microphone also provides a very clear signal for your phone calls. The hat has a range of about 10 meters, so you can leave your phone charging in your car and listen to music or talk on the phone while you are shoveling snow in your driveway.

You can wash the Blu-Toque by unzipping its inner pouch, removing the speakers and then throwing it in the washing machine. It also includes an extra pair of speakers — just in case you forget and throw it in the washer.

AUDIO QUALITY WITHOUT THE CORD

Finally, if you're not ready to sport the stylish Blu-Toque Hat but still want to hear audio from your tablet or smartphone while on the go, *[Bose's SoundLink Bluetooth On-Ear wireless headphone](#)* would be a great solution for you.

Bose has been in the business of making superior audio speakers for a long time, but the SoundLink is their first entry in the completely wireless headphone genre.

These comfortable headphones are lightweight and feel great on your ears. The sound quality is excellent; however, it stops short of offering the noise-canceling feature of Bose's popular wired headphones.

We like the fact that you can pair the headphones with two devices simultaneously, so you can listen to audio on your iPad while staying connected to your smartphone for incoming voice calls. Additionally, you can interact with your connected devices for certain actions like changing tracks or answering a call via buttons on the headset itself.

The battery life is impressive, with up to 15 hours of play time.

These headphones are not cheap. But if you don't want to sacrifice audio quality while cutting the cord to your headphones, we think the Bose SoundLink is one of the best options right now.

We've given you three new options for enjoying audio from your gadgets cord-free. So go ahead, kick up your heels, enjoy some music and live a little while you embrace new technologies that will enhance your day.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

William Ramsey, Partner at Neal & Harwell, and LogicForce Consulting President **Phil Hampton** are best known for The Bill and Phil Show. The duo tours often and provides technology news and reviews on their website www.thebillandphilshow.com.

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