

Topic for today: The Ditto Box
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Definition: A special device for eavesdropping / recording phone conversations

Most people at one time or another want to listen in on phone conversations... but, they often get caught if they pick up an extension phone, or if they tap into a line with a beige box and a phone without a mute button (God forbid!) Anyway, there are a few tricks you can pull so as not to be detected while eavesdropping. The big thing is, you need a phone which will NOT send ANY noise out through the line. Most modern phones have mute buttons, but they are a pain, cause you have to hold them in the whole time you're listening, and, they often cause "line noise" to be passed over the phone. Also, the way a lot of "1 piece" phones are designed, it's impossible to hold in the mute button as you pick up or hang up the phone, which ALWAYS makes some kind of noise. So, here's a quick and dirty way to "adjust" a phone, so it has a mute SWITCH, not button. A switch is much nicer, because you can flip it off, and not have to hold it the whole time you're listening. Also, a switch doesn't put out the line noise like a push-and-hold mute button does, because there is no friction which causes the contacts to rub.

Any phone can be modified in a matter of minutes, to have a mute switch. All it takes is an SPST (single pole single throw) switch, and a bit of wire. A soldering iron also comes in handy. Here's what to do:

1) Open the phone, and find the microphone (mouthpiece). On newer phones this might be tough, since they are often 1 piece of molded plastic. On older phones, the mouthpiece cover can usually be unscrewed, allowing easy modification. It all depends on the phone, however. Anyway, open it up, and find the wires leading to the mic.

2) Cut ONE of the microphone wires, and strip back the insulation a bit. If there isn't a lot of extra wire running to the mic, you might want to solder an additional 3" on to the wire you cut, to give yourself some working room.

3) Find a convenient place on the phone to mount the SPST switch, and then solder the wire you cut to the switch. This way, you'll be able to switch the mic on and off whenever you want. Put the phone back together (TEST your work first, though!) and you have a muteable phone. So, what do you do with it?

Well, eavesdrop from an extension in your home, a beige box, or wherever. The phone is silent, so you're pretty safe. Of course, you MAY

want to take it just a bit farther...

Since you have a special phone for eavesdropping, it would really be nice to spice it up a bit. After all, it's hardly worth modifying a phone just to add a mute switch. And it would seem pretty lame if that was all I was gonna tell you in this file. Any moron with 3 brain cells could figure out how to make a muteable phone. So, on to the INTERESTING stuff...

This is something I rigged up at home, and don't know if it's got an official "box" color, or name, or whatever. I'm sure somebody somewhere has done it, but since I never saw a file on it, I thought I'd write one. Egotistical person I am, I'll call it a "DiTTo Box" - but for good reason. See, it allows you to tape record any phone conversation, and also to listen in at the same time, over a stereo or boom box. And, it uses the muteable phone, above. Here's how it works:

All phones have a speaker in them, through which you hear the person talking to you. What the DiTTo Box does is allow you to run the signals through a stereo, and out the stereo speakers, instead of through the phone speaker. To do this, you are going to need a phone dedicated to DiTTo Boxing. Any phone will do, and you can modify it in 2 different ways - you can make it a true DiTTo box, and it won't serve it's purpose as a phone that you can converse on any longer, or you can make a "lower quality" DiTTo Box, which you will still be able to use as a phone, but the boxing quality will be slightly weakened.

The difference lies in whether or not you keep the speaker in the phone. You can keep the speaker in the phone, and run wires from the speaker terminals to the input lines of your stereo, and it WILL work, but the sound quality over the stereo won't be as good. OR, you can remove the phone speaker entirely, and in it's place connect 2 alligator clips, one to each speaker output wire. This is a dedicated DiTTo Box. I chose to go with the lower quality box, simply because I don't do a whole lot of eavesdropping, and I only had 1 phone I could modify, which I also use for beige boxing. Still, it serves my purpose both ways.

To get the box working, solder leads from the 2 speaker terminals to alligator clips. Give yourself about 6-8 inches of wire at least! The best length would be about 18 inches, if you plan on connecting to a home stereo. Once the leads are soldered, you can connect them to the INPUT jacks on your home stereo, or boom box. You can even hook them up in your car, if your car has LINE IN or CD INPUT capability. Anyway, most stereos use the RCA plug for connections. So, get an RCA plug off an old speaker or something, and clip the alligator clips to it. Plug it into the stereo, and set the selector on the reciever to accept input from the phone. Take the phone off the hook, and you will hear a dialtone over your stereo

speakers. (yes, you MUST plug the phone into the phoneline for this to work) Now, try dialing... you will hear the tones over the stereo. If you have a tape deck on the stereo, you can record your phone conversations. If you have a phone rigged up like this, and call someone, you can tape the entire conversation, and they'll never know! Incoming calls are a bit trickier, but they can be recorded too. The toughest part is trying to get the stereo turned on and everything quiet before answering the phone, to waylay any suspicion. Also, keep the stereo on LOW volume, to avoid squealing from feedback.

There are lots of uses for a DiTTo box, and I've told only one or two. You can use the box to record dialing tones on cassette, then carry them with you, to be used in a cassette player at a payphone, whatever. Plenty of possibilities exist, that's for sure. Just remember, phone tapping and eavesdropping are classified as a FEDERAL OFFENSE, so it's best not to get caught. Have phun, and party on!

---DoctoR DiTTo

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