Programming Track Powered Sound Boards

By Del Tapparo

Today, I needed to make some programming changes to my Phoenix Sound PB17 track powered sound board. While I have done this many times before, it was only today that I realized this can be quite a process for those not equipped with all the necessary tools for the job.
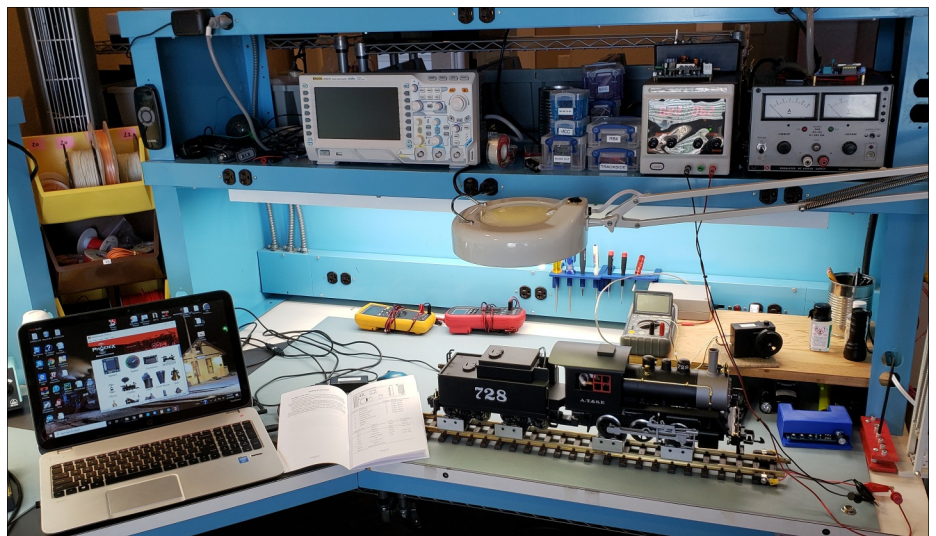
Phoenix Sound

Phoenix Sound boards require at least three things for programming: a computer (PC), a computer to Phoenix programming cable ($79), and power to the board. It is the latter that makes it kind of messy. If you bring your PC to the train, you need to run the train to get the board powered up, stop the train next to the PC, where it will continue to make sound via battery. Now you have to connect the cable, and get into the program to find the setting you want to change, before the board times out and shuts down.

So the best way to do this job, is to put the loco on the bench, sitting on rollers ($50) and track powered from a power supply, run it at low speeds, and take your time making all the desired changes. Then you may have to take the loco back to your layout to confirm the changes. This is often a time consuming back and forth process.

MyLocoSound

In contrast, when programming a MyLocoSound board, all you need is the IR Remote ($15, or free if you use your own TV remote) pointed at the IR receiver on the loco. Changes can be

Programming Phoenix Sound: PC, Phoenix Interface cable connected to loco, bench power supply, test track, loco rollers.
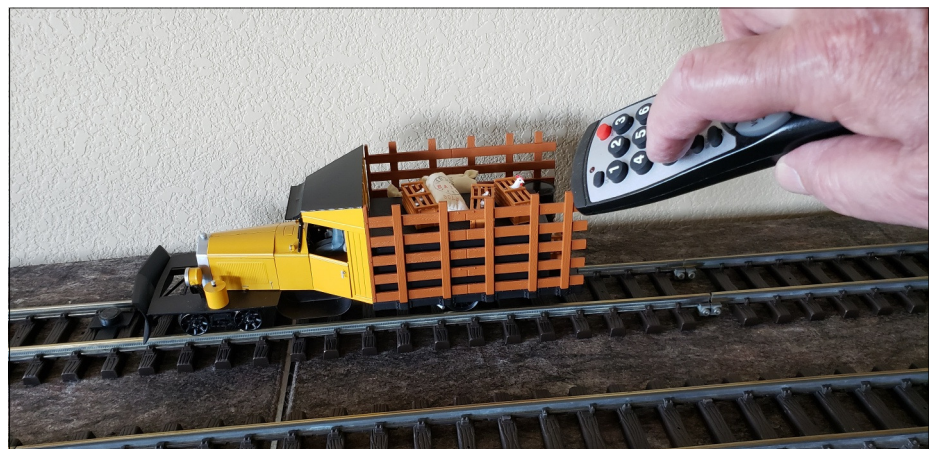
Programming MyLocoSound: IR Remote pointed at IR receiver mounted on loco.
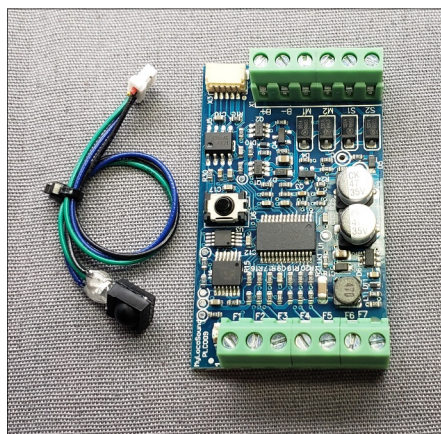
made while the loco is sitting in front of you, running on the battery. Or, if more time is needed, you can do it as the loco passes by. Much easier!

Some sound programming changes you may require

- Changing the volume of individual sounds
- Changing from voltage controlled chuff to switch triggered chuff, or vice versa
- Changing individual sounds; e.g. whistle, bell, chuff

Each system works differently, but they both have a multitude of settings you may want to experiment with to get the optimum sound for your loco.