

## Talking Caboose

By Del Tapparo

My garden railroad club, the Northern Colorado Garden Railroaders, display trains a couple times a year at the local county fair and train shows. I am always looking for ways to increase the fun factor, especially for the kids. And especially, if “this kid” can incorporate some electronic gadgets in the process.

I thought it would be fun to have the train “talk” to the kids. So I rigged up a caboose with a sound module that can be controlled via radio. The four button transmitter can activate four different pre-recorded .mp3 sound clips. At present they are recordings of my voice saying: “Hey kids! Are you having fun yet?”, “No touching please!”, “Don’t forget to tell Santa Clause you want a train for Christmas.”, and “Hi kids! Do you like trains?”. They could also be animal noises, train noises, or whatever you want.

An array of holes was drilled into the floor of a Bachmann caboose to accommodate a 2.5” speaker with baffle. A G-Scale Graphics “Sound Clip Plus” was used to record and play back the sounds. I designed a circuit board to interface a cheap Chinese 4 channel radio receiver with the Sound Clip Plus to trigger the sounds. Power is provided by a 7.4V Li-Ion battery, on/off switch, and charging jack.

I look forward to trying it out at the next event.

