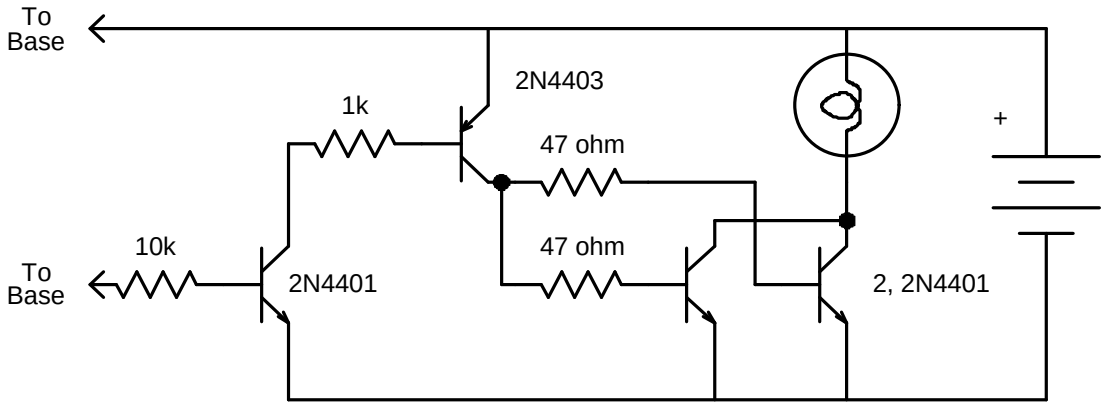
Magic Lamp

No, its not Aladdin's lamp with a genie inside. This magic lamp appears to be an ordinary frosted light bulb with a rather unusual characteristic. Whenever your finger is touched across the base threads and center contact the lamp magically lights! Without wires! It is a most effective illusion if you don't make a big production, "Hey! Check out this magic lamp!", but instead casually remove the bulb from a package of new bulbs and pretend to not notice when it lights. When your victim gasps and grabs the bulb for further investigation just explain away the flash as some sort of static electricity effect and act indifferent.

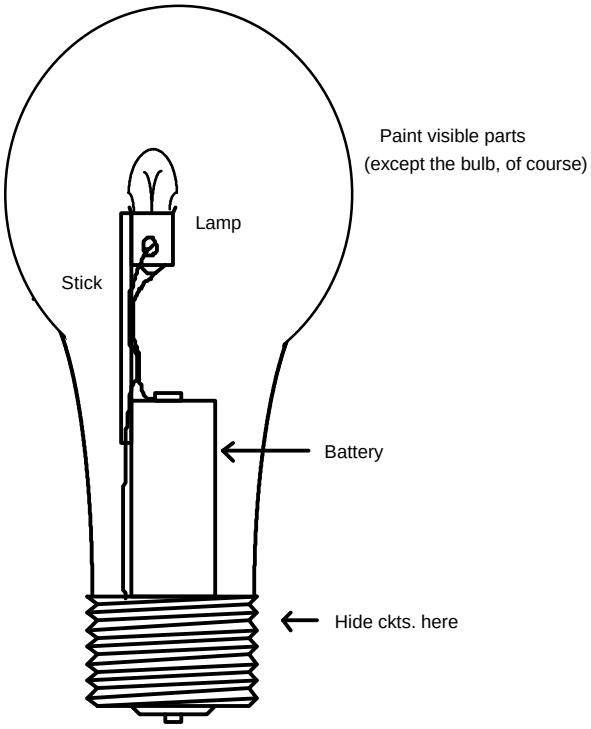


MAGIC LAMP: A single 2N4401 driving the lamp will work with a slight reduction in brightness.

Construction will probably involve several attempts unless you are familiar with glass working. Collect several old burned-out light bulbs and learn to remove the base without breaking the glass. The bases are glued on fairly well but with gentle prying and twisting they will break loose.

CAUTION: The broken glass is quite sharp and can easily cause a serious cut.

Try not to scar the metal base too much if you want to reinstall it or alternately just peel it off and get a pristine base by breaking away the glass on another bulb. Now the really tricky part is to break off the bottom of the bulb without shattering the whole thing. A glass cutter may be used to score a ring around the base to encourage the desired break. This break should be near the bottom so that when the bulb is remounted on the base the break will not show. Keep your fingers out of the inside of the bulb so that the frosting doesn't get a greasy fingerprint.

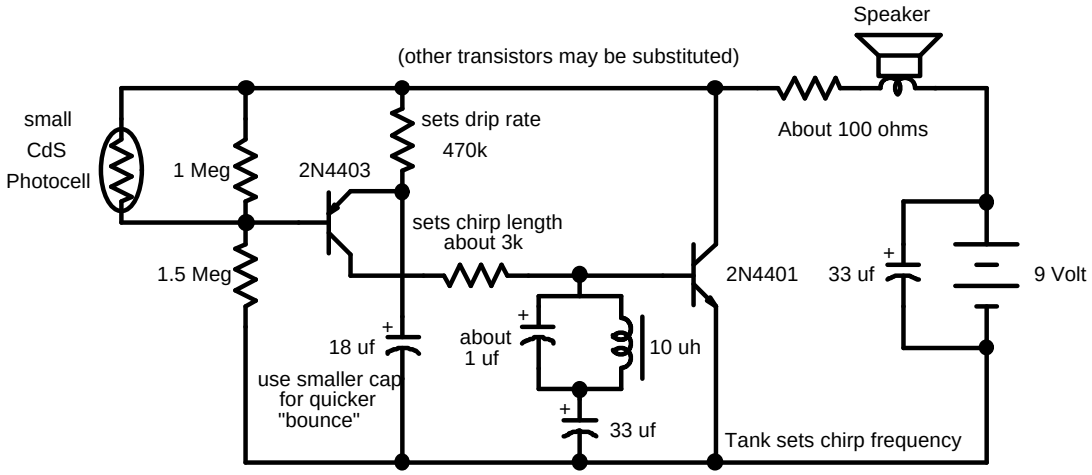


Several factors should be considered when selecting a battery and lamp combination. First, the weight should be kept low if the victim will hold the bulb. Second, the lamp should be as bright as practical and should emit light in an omnidirectional pattern. Try those "super Krypton" flashlight replacement bulbs and two AAA cells or one AA cell.

A simple version may be constructed by connecting the battery, bulb and base in series such that the circuit is completed when a penny is connected across the base. The more sophisticated version shown in the diagram will respond to the resistance of moist skin and therefore requires less manual dexterity. Mount the circuitry as deep in the base as possible so that it doesn't show through the glass and mount the battery vertically out of the base by securing it with a good quality epoxy. Paint the battery, wires, and components white so they don't show then fasten the bulb back into position with hot-melt glue. Hot-melt glue will allow easy disassembly when the battery needs changing.

The Dripper!

Just when you get all comfy in bed you hear it.... Drip....Drip....Drip. But when you stumble into the bathroom to give the faucet a twist, the dripping sound stops. After a few trips back and forth you venture out without turning on the lights- to "sneak up" on the drip. The only problem is that you can't see anything! Well, this fate can befall a friend (hereafter referred to as "victim") with a little help from you and the Dripper. The Dripper produces a slow dripping sound but only when the lights are off. The circuit is based on a low power version of the two-transistor flasher and should run on a 9 volt battery for weeks.

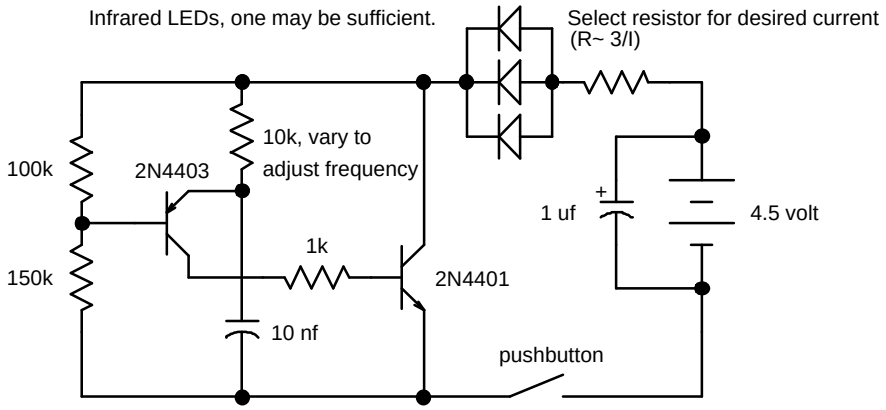


THE DRIPPER: Don't hesitate to vary any values. A little experimenting will yeild a superior drip sound.

The flasher has an audio frequency tuned circuit in the base circuit of the switching transistor which causes the circuit to chirp when it turns on and off. The off time is long so that the drips don't come too fast and the on-time is short so that the double chirp sounds like a typical drip bouncing when it falls into water (“pit-tink?”). The Q of the 10 mHy inductor will effect to quality of the chirp as will the resistor and resonating capacitor so don't hesitate to experiment with these values to get the most pleasing sound. Try other value and type chokes too if a good 10 mHy choke is hard to find. The speaker enclosure will also affect the quality of the drip. Try dropping the circuit into a glass jar with a mouth just big enough to support the speaker. The jar's resonance will give the drip a nice enhancement if the drip's frequency is just right.

Remote Control Jammer

Go ahead. Let the spouse or kid have the remote. With this gadget hidden at your side the TV will magically end up on your channel of choice! Simply wait until your victim or victims reach the channel you prefer then switch on the Jammer. The resulting flood of infrared energy will lock up the TV until you switch the jammer off again. Even if you don't particularly care which channel is on it is still fun to lock the TV onto some especially annoying program.



REMOTE CONTROL JAMMER: Increase the resistor in series with the LEDs to prolong life. A fairly weak signal will usually do the trick.

The jammer transmits a bright infrared squarewave capable of triggering the logic in the receiver causing the data stream from the remote control to become corrupted. A frequency adjust is included so that the most effective frequency can be found but this adjustment usually isn't necessary unless the jammer causes the TV to "go nuts". In order to conserve battery power a momentary power switch is recommended. Simply hold down the button until the victim gives up. The resistor in series with the diodes sets the current and the value may be determined experimentally. Start with about 50 ohms and increase until the unit no longer works then choose a somewhat lower value. If your remote is “powerful” then you may need a lower resistor value. Any package is fine but remember that infrared will not penetrate all clear plastics. Poke the infrared emitters through holes in the box.

UH-OH! BOX

Fig. 1 shows the basic mechanical design of the Uh-Oh Box, a sound-maker designed to scare the wits out of the new car owner. The device consists of a battery powered motor mounted solidly inside a metal case with two nuts hanging from the shaft by a piece of steel wire. The wire is just long enough that the nuts will strike the sides of the case when the motor spins quickly. The resulting racket is a perfect rendition of the last sound a new car owner wishes to hear.

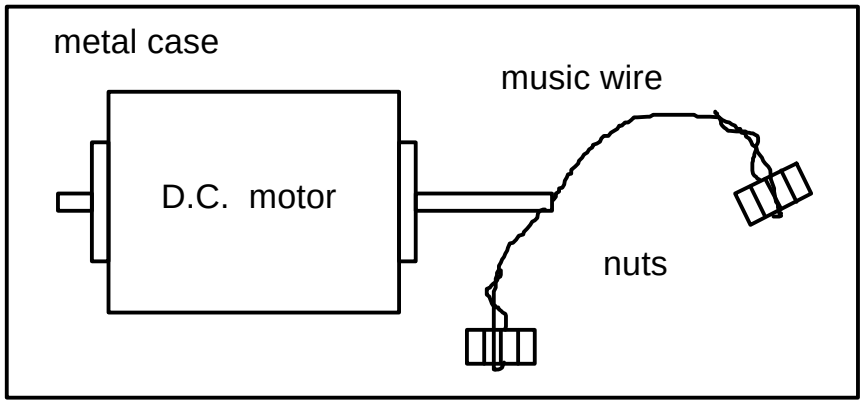


Figure 1: Motorized "really bad sound" generator.

Construction details will vary with the hardware on hand. An old guitar string is a good choice but use one of the heavier gauge wires for stiffness. The tricky part is fastening the music wire to the motor shaft. If the shaft is fairly long the wire can be soldered to it after wrapping it around. (Shorter shafts may allow too much heat to reach the motor.) Use stainless steel flux (rosin flux will not work) and wash the parts with detergent and water afterwards. Another possibility is to lash the music wire to the shaft at a right angle with thin string. Coat the string with epoxy for added strength. Use large nuts for plenty of sound - the kind you might find rattling around inside your oil pan. The electrical circuit is simple: just connect the motor in series with a battery and pushbutton switch. The battery may be mounted on or in the case and the switch can be connected to a several foot cable.

The next time you get to ride in the back seat of that shiney new auto, slip the box under the driver's seat with a remote pushbutton switch in your hand. Don't overdo it: only push the button during left turns or perhaps sudden stops. It is especially effective if you paitently wait until the driver hits a pothole or runs over a curb before beginning the torture.

A more sophisticated trigger may be constructed using a mercury switch aligned so that turns or stops slosh the mercury switch closed. Install this version when the victim is not in the car since it will probably sound off as you move it into position. If your box is quite loud it can be hidden in the engine compartment or under the car with magnets or string. Leave a "gotcha" note on it so that you get full credit. Use this joke only on the mechanically inclined or else the victim may drive directly to the repair shop which could cloud the humor somewhat.

The really sick mind may wish to add additional trigger devices to make the symptom more confounding. For example, a photocell circuit could prevent operation during the daytime. A humidity sensor could restrict operation to rainy days. How about a serious rattle that only occurs on rainy nights? Fig. 2 shows some appropriate circuitry.

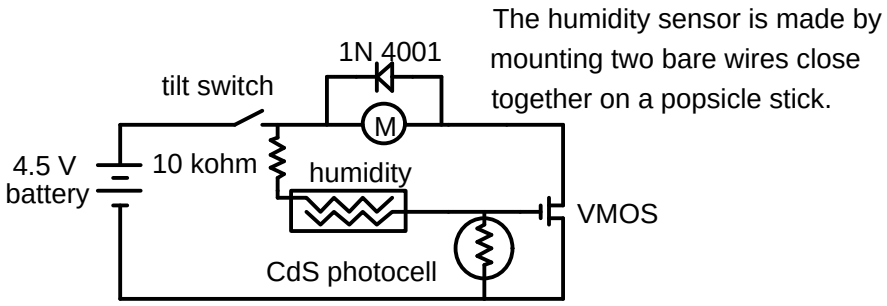


Figure 2: Dark and rainy night rattler.

The power transistor may be most any VMOS power transistor which will turn on with about 3 to 4 volts on the gate. The photocell should be protected from the rain and should exhibit a very high resistance in the dark. The humidity sensor is mounted on the outside of the box and will absorb plenty of water when facing the ground under the car. The motor and battery voltage are chosen for compatability but a lower battery voltage may have trouble turning on the VMOS transistor. A darlington NPN power transistor may be substituted for the VMOS. If desired, the mercury switch may be placed in series with the 10 kohm resistor instead of in series with the battery to reduce the current that it carries. If the photocell is not used then replace it with a 10 megohm resistor. If only the photocell is desired then short the humidity sensor and increase the 10 kohm to 1 megohm.

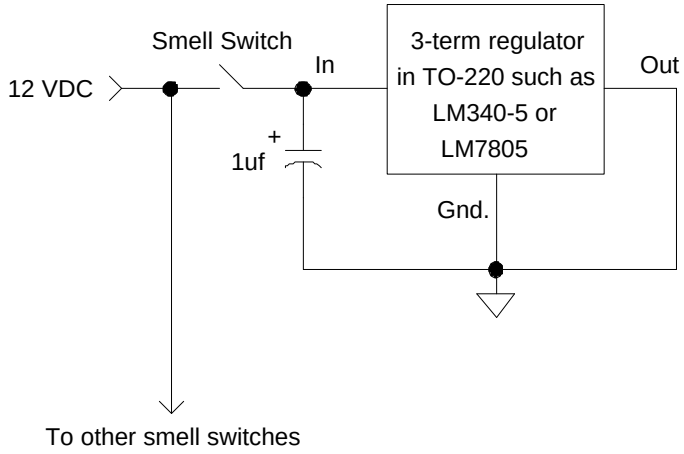
If your friend/victim has a good sense of humor the results will make you laugh 'till it hurts. If he doesn't have a good sense of humor then you will just hurt.

Smell-A-Vision

This gag is one of the more entertaining practical jokes because the results are truly confounding. Imagine that you are watching one of those intolerable soap-opera style coffee commercials when you suddenly smell a faint aroma of coffee. Then when a perfume commercial starts the odor changes to a sweet scent. Bacon, popcorn, barbecue, bakery goods, chocolate, and other food items appearing on the tube seem to have a smell! Even non-food smells come forth at appropriate times. Should you say anything? It must be all in your mind. You need more rest. What other explanation can there be?

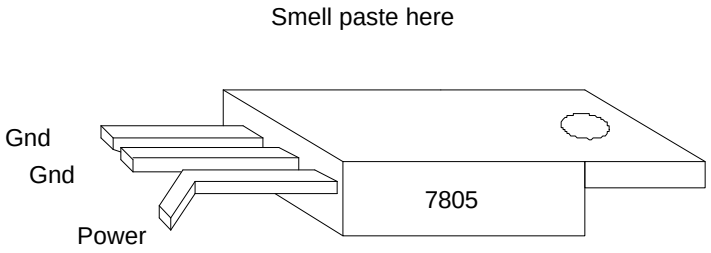
Its Smell-A-Vision!!

Little will your victim suspect that you are secretly activating little heaters covered with a slurry of smelly stuff and hot-melt glue. When the glue softens, a small fan carries the aroma from the hidden compartment, say beneath the coffee table, straight to the victim's nose.



Smell Generator Schematic: The capacitor is optional since the regulators aren't likely to oscillate in current mode and even less likely in thermal limit mode. Add them if radio interference is encountered.

Construction can be simple or complicated depending on your dedication to practical jokes. The simplest version consists of a few 5-volt regulators in the TO-220 package mounted face-down in a tube with a quiet, slow fan on the end. Control wires run off to the hidden control panel. The schematic shows the regulator's output shorted to ground which may appear to be an error but this unusual connection forces the device into current-limit. It heats rapidly-cutting back when the chip detects an over-temperature condition and switches into thermal-limit mode. This method of heating the smell stew is better than using a resistor because the warm-up power can be far higher than the final temperature power. A resistor with as much warm-up power would get too hot and the only smell would be that nasty burning electronics odor.



A 12 volt power supply which can supply an amp or two is fine. Obviously, no regulation is necessary.

The smell paste is easily made by touching a hot glue stick to a heated regulator forming a little puddle on the back. Then mix in the smell component and remove the power so that the regulator cools. When the glue cools the aroma will be "locked in". The most difficult task is to select good smell components. Perfume and cinnamon are easy but many smells require experimentation. Try anything that is concentrated like extracts or flavorings. One chocolate coffee flavoring that was tried gave off a great chocolate smell that was much better than chocolate itself. Actually, the experimentation can be quite entertaining but the nose is easily overloaded so give it frequent rest periods. These smell generators work quite well with bad odors too!

Remember, the smell generator is somewhat slow so some timing practice is recommended. Commercials tend to be too quick so it is best to wait for a scene in a show. When they start eating a pizza on your favorite situation comedy simply flip the correct switch and comment on how good the pizza looks. (Try pepperoni squeezings mixed with pizza seasonings.) Flip the switch off as soon as you smell the odor since it takes a little time for the odor generator to stop and you don't want to overdo it.

This is a great gag for certain personalities because it's just *so* inexplicable. After the second or third odor some victims will have a most peculiar expression on their face. You will have trouble holding back.