



# ***Exploding The Phone***

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Bibliographic Cover Sheet

**Title**            **Appraisal of "Secrets of the Little Blue Box" Article in the October 1971 Esquire Magazine**

**Date**            1971-09-17

**Author(s)**     Schulz, C.J.

**Abstract**        Technical assessment of the Esquire article by Bell Labs. Includes an analysis of names of phone phreaks used in article.

**Keywords**      C.J. Schulz; Ken Hopper; J.F. Doherty

**Notes**            Quote on p. 2 shows that the Bell Labs engineers do not yet understand tandem stacking. Copies also in AT&T Archives files.

**Source**            Anonymous

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Bell Laboratories

subject: Appraisal of "Secrets of the  
Little Blue Box" Article in the  
October 1971 Esquire Magazine

date: September 17, 1971

from: C. J. Schulz

ENGINEER'S NOTES

The article entitled "Secrets of the Little Blue Box" by Ron Rosenbaum in the October 1971 issue of Esquire Magazine is essentially factual. Rosenbaum does have an active imagination, however, and some of the article is misleading and other parts just not true. I have discussed the article with R. J. Keevers and J. S. Ryan of Center 511, as well as with D. M. Harlow and K. D. Hopper of Center 333.

Throughout the article he uses standard telephone jargon, for the most part. What he refers to as a "tandem" we would generally call a toll machine. Some of his material is very recent and indicates an active inside source (e.g., page 125, where he talks about calling the island of Bahrein, which is only recently dialable).

On page 118, where he indicates that he can select a satellite connection with a zero prefix and a cable connection with a one prefix is not exactly true. During earlier test periods to some specific locations it was possible to select satellite versus cable connections. Now there is a choice to most destinations of any available circuit, cable or satellite, by dialing 0xx or cable only by dialing 1xx. His gateway code for White Plains and his country codes are correct.

On page 121, where he talks about loop-around test codes, his facts are essentially correct but his example, 309 956 0041, is bad. It is a Delaware area code and an unused Central Office code which the Pennsylvania people tell us never has been connected. He could have, however, used a great many factual loop-around examples. We have been fighting the loop-around battle for a number of years and have been at it quite actively in the past few months.

Again on page 121 he talks about "stacking up tandems" as if he had the ability to deliberately select multilink routes and to keep adding on links in a fashion similar to the old step tandem buildups which were under control of subscribers

or operators on private line networks. It is the consensus of the group I discussed this with that the routes are set up automatically, and a multilink route is the product of our alternate routing feature. Where he says "We have now stacked up four tandems" and says that he has gone "back and forth, back and forth twice across the country before coming to you" and "I've been known to stack up 20 tandems at a time" is typically an exaggeration and not under his control. It is possible, with a blue box, to dial three successive area codes, say 213 914 206, and go back and forth across the country. This is possible because of the "skip three" feature on incoming calls, and "E" digit blocking stops it on regular calls. However, the call could not be completed to a number since there would not be enough digits left. This would be good to harass the telephone company, but not to complete calls.

On the same page he says, "I am going to shoot up to Moscow. It is a new, longer series of beeper pulses over the line, a brief silence, then the ring." He goes on to suggest that he reached Moscow by dialing, which is currently possible only through the Montreal gateway. Later on, on the same page, he talks of going around the world but does it by talking to inward operators.

On page 122 he discussed seizing a verification trunk because "My M-F-er is powerful enough when patched directly into the mouthpiece to trigger a verification trunk." We think this is no longer possible. About a year ago, Keevers caught this in Miami when they cut over their TSPS. They made a vacant area code available to TSPS operators for verification. He pointed out at that time that anything available via unused area code was available to blue box users and would comprise verification. The "power" of his blue box would have nothing to do with seizing a dial selected verification trunk. They should not exist and if they do, any working blue box could seize one.

On page 123 he talks about "stacking tandems with 17 and 2600." He could be talking about a 17B, C, D, or E test desk. However, it is the consensus that he is talking about the now MD 1600 cycle signaling or 1600-2000 cycle signaling, both of which are said to exist in small numbers.

Where he discusses "stacking and unstacking tandems", he is probably referring to the ability he has to call himself on a second line. If he were the calling party and the called party disconnected first, the connection would time-out and

he would hear one disconnect sound on time-out. However, if he hung up as the calling party, he would hear nothing; but if he had called himself, the second line (called party) would hear the cascading disconnect. As mentioned before, he would have no control over how many "dominos" would fall.

On page 224 he apparently does not like TASI. As far as is known, there is no TASI on continental domestic circuits, but he is not clear on just where he finds it. Later on, on the same page, he talks about a called party disconnecting with a 2600 cycle whistle. This takes a lot of power, since it must operate on trans-hybrid loss - but we know it works.

In this article, as in many underground newspaper articles on credit card fraud, coin telephones are recommended as an anonymous haven for fraudulent operators. If a 2600 Hz filter were placed on high risk coin lines, the blue box fraud could be reduced. We have used such filters in the past on the lines of subscribers who frequently talked themselves off - like the "short sleeve sport shirt" salesman. The data people aren't happy about such a fix, however.

Attached is an interesting analysis by Hopper of the names used in the article.

HO-3333-CJS-njg

*C. J. Schulz*  
C. J. SCHULZ

Att.  
Table

Copy (with att.) to  
Messrs. J. F. Doherty - AT&T  
H. T. Shippen - AT&T

H. E. Brown  
W. B. Cagle  
C. A. Dahlbom  
J. W. Fitzwilliam  
R. J. Keevers  
A. E. Ritchie  
J. S. Ryan  
W. B. Smith

<u>NAME IN ARTICLE</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>BLIND</u>	<u>KNOWS ENGRES- SIA</u>	<u>STATED INFORMATION</u>	<u>CUR. COMMENTS</u>
1. Al Gilbertson				"Creator of Blue Box" Abandoned career in physical chemistry Engineer Blue Box mass producer Coin telephone larcenist	Doubtful
2. Capt. Crunch			X	Real name G----- T----- Older, engineer, computer oriented Once worked for semiconductor company Formerly in USAF in England Been in trouble for telephone toll fraud, has VW van with equipment	
3. Mark Bernay	≈ 30			Experimenting for 15 years Computer programmer, chemistry and philosophy majors West coast Fired from programmer job for unauthorized activities	
4. "Alexander Graham Bell"				East coast engineer Claims to be Black Box inventor Sells Black and Blue Boxes to gamblers & radical heavies Disgruntled looking	possibly Walter Shaw (aka J 1962, approved with 1964 by ... England Rep (Bell)
5. Joe Engressia	22	X	-	Florida blind whistler Now located in Millington, Tennessee Fat, has been on LSD Experimenting with 2600 since age 8 (1957)	Well known

NAME IN ARTICLE	AGE	BLIND	KNOWS ENGRES- SIA	STATED INFORMATION	OUR COMMENTS
6. Fraser Lucey			X	Lives in P.T.& T.Co area near where arrests have been recently made for toll fraud. Girl friend in Paris Plays stock market	
7. Syndicate front man				From Las Vegas	
8. Dr. NO					
9. Frank Carson					
10. Marty Freeman					
11. "Peter Perpendicular Pimple"				Blue Box Users, some blind	
12. Alefnull					
13. The Cheshire Cat					
14. Ralph		X			
15. Randy	16	X		"Pear Shaped"	
16. Ed	19			Engineering student, active for 2 years	
17. Carl			X	East coast	
18. The Red King					
19. The Snark					
20. "14 yr. old blind kid from Conn."	14	X	X		
21. Disgruntled Switchman				Re-established loop-around	