

# The MobiAria Wireless Bluetooth Speaker

By William Lumpkins

This month I'll review the MobiAria (Figure 1) from iLuv, a wireless Bluetooth speaker with near-field communication (NFC) and a Universal Serial Bus (USB) charging port, listed at US\$149 on [www.iluv.com](http://www.iluv.com). The MobiAria is a sleek-looking speaker with a few touch-screen buttons on the top of the speaker. The setup of the Bluetooth-enabled speaker was surprisingly easy. I plugged in the wall wart (ac-dc power converter), placed my Apple iPhone near the speaker, pushed the blue lit pairing light, and voilà, there was an instant connection. I started the application Pandora (a music streaming service) on my phone. Then, the testing began.

For testing, I considered two major aspects: Bluetooth connection strength and reconnection or re-pairing; a minor aspect of testing was the ability to charge an external device via the external USB port. For the first aspect, Bluetooth connection strength, not to be confused with the power out in dBm, I took the streaming Apple iPhone paired to the MobiAria speaker and walked 100 ft, behind five closed doors, and placed the iPhone under a stack of blankets. I went back to the room with the MobiAria speaker and Gwen Stefani was blaring out "Harajuku Girls." I have performed a similar test on other Bluetooth speaker systems in the past, and I must say this was the most robust. I repeated the test ten times with a Samsung Galaxy III, an Apple iPad, an

Amazon Kindle HD, an Apple iPhone 5, and six various Intel Core i7-based laptops. For the re-pairing section or reconnection test, after 12 h of continuous streaming, I ended the test and had the MobiAria speaker re-pair to another one of the test devices, with a 2-min, 1-min, and 30-s pause between re-pairings. I found no re-pairing issue; although the Amazon Kindle did lock up during its third trial, it returned after a reboot of its operating system. In my opinion, the MobiAria passed this test as well—this is a very durable system.

The MobiAria claims that while playing content, its external USB port can be used to charge devices that can recharge over a USB interface. To test this, I used three Apple devices: an iPhone, an iPad, and an iPod. (No, I do not own Apple stock, though I wish I did.) All three devices charged normally, and I was able to recharge them while streaming audio content from the



**FIGURE 1.** The MobiAria. (Photo Courtesy of iLuv Inc.)



**FIGURE 2.** The Yellow Jacket iPhone protection with a sting. (Photo courtesy of Yellow Jacket, LLC.)



**FIGURE 3.** Yellow Jacket features. (Photos courtesy of Yellow Jacket, LLC.)

USB-connected devices. When not streaming content, the USB port serves as a nice extra port to recharge USB-compatible devices. The last aspect of the MobiAria that I was able to effectively test was iLuv's claims of NFC with the Samsung III; it connected well, although I found that if I brought it too far out of range, it

disconnected. (This is quite normal for NFC, thus the name.)

Overall, the MobiAria Bluetooth and NFC-connectable speaker from iLuv has a sleek industrial design, seems to be robust in its electrical connection, and is a good value for young people who want to blast out their favorite music from their mobile devices.

Next month, I will be reviewing the Yellow Jacket from Yellow Jacket, LLC, an Apple iPhone 4 case with a 1,695-V stun gun built in (Figures 2 and 3).

Feel free to submit your products for to Will Lumpkins at [xillia@ieee.org](mailto:xillia@ieee.org).

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## Bits Versus Electrons *(continued from page 58)*

If you look at the ads from companies selling us smart cities and smart devices, you will wonder why we would want to bother our pretty little heads with programming our world when Jeeves will take care of it for us. But Jeeves mines the past. Tools that give us control, such as spreadsheets, give us the ability to discover new possibilities.

Looking at the excitement on Kickstarter when people offer devices that start to give us the ability to control other devices, even those as simple as light bulbs, there is indeed a real demand for such capabilities. However, before we can realize this future, we first need to understand the challenges we face both technically and in terms of business.

For now, I will continue to program around these limits as we develop the techniques that can indeed give us the ability to share control of the world around us and add little dabs of intelligence without relying on Jeeves' omniscience.

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