

Please PIPEDOWN

The source for news about the campaign for freedom from piped music.

Pipedown-USA
P O Box 421065
Indianapolis, IN 46242-1065
pipedownusa@hotmail.com

Newsletter Number 3
July, 2008
Ruth Schiedermayer, editor

Hello Pipedown Supporters

When asking for a volume reduction, I have sometimes been told that the music could be turned down a “notch or two”. In these cases, I usually try to make my request more specific and state that a notch or two may not be enough. Sometimes the person I am speaking to does not even know where the volume control is or how much control that person actually has in changing the volume. In both of those cases I try to quantify the request.

My suggestions to anyone speaking to staff about reducing the volume, is use the phrase “turn the music down by half”. Quantifying the request may be the best way to make the listener understand just how much of a reduction you are asking.

If the staff member you are speaking to appears to be unwilling to turn down the volume that much, you could then suggest turning it down by a third or a quarter at least.

It also helps sometimes if you can quantify the period of time the music needs to be turned down. If your request is perceived as you asking the music be turned down permanently there is more reluctance to make the change. Asking that the music be turned down for a specific period of time, such as 10 or 15 minutes, just while you are shopping, seems to bring more willingness to make this temporary change. If needed you can remind the person that they could simply turn the music back up once you have finished your shopping or dining.

Comments on Society

Popular media often makes comments on the excessive noise in society. Even music that people expect to listen to can be played at volumes that are detrimental to individuals.

There was an example in a recent re-run of the sitcom “Two and a Half Men” on CBS. Unfortunately, the audience laughs when Alan Harper (played by Jon Cryer) complains about the ringing in his ears after a night of clubbing. He describes the ringing as cells in his inner ear dying and quantifies the ringing as a C-sharp.

This show is a situation comedy after all. The laughing is to be expected, but hearing loss due to exposure to too-loud music is no laughing matter.

News from Readers

One reader makes the suggestion of using a portable radio player and earphones when entering stores with piped-in music. He turns the radio to static and listens to this while shopping.

I have used this technique in the past. In fact, I have recorded the noise from multiple fans onto a small digital recorder. It closely approximates white noise, which is often used to mask unwanted sounds.

One note of CAUTION is needed here: If you do play white noise to try to mask the noise from piped-in music, you should be aware of the volume level you are playing. It is too easy to turn up the volume on personal stereo equipment to the point where it can cause permanent hearing loss.

Advice: To Insure Proper Service (TIPS).

In this newsletter my advice is to anyone who wants to use tips as a way of persuading a restaurant to turn down the music. When asking for this accommodation, you are actually asking for some special service – out of the ordinary in this day and age. If this accommodation is provided, the staff is deserving of a tip.

Using this approach sometimes works, especially if you go to eat at a slow time. It also works better at smaller restaurants where the staff relies more on tips or is used to providing personal service.

My husband and I had an interesting experience recently when visiting a small restaurant in the downtown of a large city. We were looking for a small place to eat breakfast one morning and came across this place that was not too busy. As soon as we walked into the place, we noticed the loud radio playing. Before we even sat down we asked the waitress if we could possibly have the music turned down or off. We even spoke briefly to one of the restaurant patrons and asked if they would mind if the radio was off. The other patron said she would not mind, so the waitress turned off the radio.

When the waitress brought us the menus, my husband handed her a small tip and thanked her very much for turning the music off. We then had a lovely relaxing breakfast and left a 20% tip. We also thanked the waitress again when we left.

The service had been so good and the response to our request was so welcome that we went back to the same restaurant the next morning. As soon as we walked in the door the same waitress saw us and went over to the radio to turn it off. We again thanked her for that service and gave her a tip at that time as well as tipping at the end.

While we were eating, an amazing thing happened. We watched as three young men noisily approached the café. They were boisterous as they came out of their hotel across the street and made their way to the restaurant. They continued to be loud and obnoxious once they walked in and as they settled into their seats in a booth. But because the restaurant was now quiet, their volume quickly diminished and they began to behave in a less noisy manner.

Comment Cards

Comments cards are always available to help when asking businesses to please turn down the music. I also have cards that can be used to invite others to join the campaign against piped-music. Please send a SASE.

Bibliography

Tune Your Brain™: Using Music to Manage Your Mind, Body, and Mood, Elizabeth Miles, 1997 (paperback), Berkley Books, 291 pages, ISBN 0-425-16017-3

NOTE: emphasis on personal control over the selection of music, not simply accepting music forced on oneself.

In the works

A graphic representation of the noise of piped-in music still needs some work. I have had several excellent suggestions from readers, but will continue looking for a way to best depict the pain many readers feel from this excessive blight on the soundscape. Program audio in the soundscape is like too many billboards blocking the view of a scenic landscape.

Quote

From "The Music-Grinders", by Oliver Wendell Holmes, (1836); stanza 10

But hark! the air again is still,
The music all is ground,
And silence, like a poultice, comes
To heal the blows of sound;