

Please PIPEDOWN

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



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Ruth Schiedermayer, editor

Hello Pipedown Supporters

Long before recorded program audio was for sale to subscribers, the inventor Thaddeus Cahill developed the telharmonium or as he liked to call it: an Electric Music Plant. This large contraption, invented before the advantages of modern electronics, was designed to use the telephone system to broadcast music. The music was performed by trained musicians playing "proper" music on complicated keyboards. The sound was sent to horn speakers attached to the telephones. Each speaker drew more electrical current than a typical phone receiver but this meant that the subscriber did not need to pick up the receiver to hear the music.

The invention was designed to be able to play music in hotels, restaurants, private residences, or any place that ordinarily might provide musical entertainment. The thought was that a few well-trained musicians could provide music to much wider audiences in daily performances. Some famous people, Mark Twain included, found the new electronic synthetic music quite enjoyable.

Not everyone liked this particular program audio. Rumor had it that J P Morgan complained to the phone company because the broadcast sound would bleed over onto phone conversations. There were several observers who also complained the quality of the sound generated was inconsistent. Although much advanced for its day, the music still suffered from artifacts of the technology that began to grate on several listeners. This early electronic music was created with scientific ideas that would later be incorporated in the Hammond electric organ.

No recordings from the original devices had been made. It is interesting to see this concept of broadcasting music to large numbers of people at the turn of the last century, well before program audio became so widespread.

Comments on Society:

The popular media continues to be a source of examples of how program audio is used. Not only do entertaining media such as TV, movies, magazines, books, and the internet provide examples but more serious or informative sources also tell us about program audio.

A Reader's Digest article entitled "13 Things Your Car Dealer Won't Tell You" has several interesting points. The ninth item in the list points out this:

"Notice how many times we go back and forth to our manager? The loud music, the gongs, and the blaring flat-screen TVs? All are distractions designed to help you lose track of what we're doing with the deal."

I read this article while waiting at my hairdresser's salon. I later found the article on-line at:
<http://www.rd.com/your-america-inspiring-people-and-stories/13-things-your-car-dealer-wont-tell-you/article185317.html>

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.

I also keep all previous newsletter in .pdf format and can forward those copies if interested. Just send me an email requesting past issues.

News from readers

Again it has been a quiet period in the area of news from readers. Hans Schmid from the Right to Quiet Society writes about 3 recently published books on noise in general:

"The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want: A Book About Noise" by Garret Keizer, 2010, Public Affairs

"In Pursuit of Silence: Listening for Meaning in a World of Noise" by George Prochnik, 2010, Doubleday

"Zero Decibels: The Quest for Absolute Silence" by George M Foy, 2010, Scribner

These books are all available in hardcover from Amazon.com for under \$20.

Advice:

As the quote below indicates, politeness is very important. Remembering to say "PLEASE" will always go a long way in discussions with people (managers, employees, those in control of the volume). We all like to be asked nicely.

Quote:

"Background music that becomes foreground music is like having your unwanted business partner suddenly greet you in the restaurant and sit down at the table between you and your loved one. Politely ask him/her to leave."

From an on-line interview with Harvey L. Rich. The WashingtonPost.com LIVE Online "Second Opinion: Solitude" Hosted by Abigail Trafford, Washington Post columnist, Tuesday, August 22, 2000; 2:00 p.m. EDT <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/liveonline/00/health/healthtalk/health082200.htm>

Although this article speaks primarily to cell phone use, the psychologist Harvey L. Rich makes many good points about our needs for silence and solitude.

Bibliography:

"Technology for a Quieter America" authored by Committee on Technology for a Quieter America; National Academy of Engineering, 2010, published by The National Academies Press, Washington D.C.

Chapter 3: Control of Hazardous Noise - includes discussions of noise from consumer products and leisure activities.

http://www.noisenewsinternational.net/tqa_info.htm