

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE NOISE - A DEFINITION OF MUSIC

What is music????

Our developed culture & western education would instinctively lead us to say that music is the sound we hear on an album or CD. The sound of a pop song, orchestra or our favourite band or singer.

But what actually IS music??

To find a way to answer that I think we need to break the question down and get back to basics. I'd like to suggest that really music is just organised sound. A collage of accepted noise that our brains have been trained to recognise as popular music or whatever. But in reality, sound (noise) is all around us all the time so how do you truly decide what sounds are music and which one aren't and where music starts or stops? Very often the natural, organic ambient sounds that surround us are used by musicians to record improvised compositions with the same results that compositions are recorded using conventional instruments and structures. When you actually listen hard there are any number of complex rhythms and melodies circulating around us all the time.

So maybe then we can reasonably conclude that all sound is music or at least has the potential to be interpreted as such by our brains?

Once we become receptive to the 'musical' possibilities that this definition creates it has the potential to open up to us all a whole new world of sonic experience.

I have a deaf daughter and am beginning to go deaf myself in my left ear so sound in all its forms is really important and vital to me and my family. I appreciate the sounds of my kid's voices or the howling wind outside the house with the same amount of joy and wonder that I experience from my favourite album or song because one day I may lose the ability to hear them both.

Sometimes I resist putting a CD on in the car and listen instead to the sound of the wheels on the road or the wonderfully intricate rhythm of the windscreen wipers in the rain. No two vehicles have the same sounds. Nature has a brilliant palate of sounds, all for free.

Generally though we end up taking sound (noise) for granted - of course we do!! If we were to consciously tune in to every last sound around us life would be exhausting! It makes sense that our brains filter out the sounds we don't need to hear in favour of the ones that we do need to hear to help us get through our day.

Sometimes though I think that it is important to take a little time to tune back into all of the many beautiful vibrations and frequencies that enter our ears on a daily basis and really consider how they make us feel.

Maybe for a moment today we should all stop to appreciate our ears! Turn off the radio/CD/TV and list in our minds all of the domestic sounds that we can hear, then consider them one by one.

Draw yourself some conclusions about the experience.

Give your ears the credit they deserve.

Hopefully when you sit down and really think about it you may find that the gentle rhythm of your dishwasher or the purr of the central heating system is something that you could actually enjoy listening to on a regular basis in the same way that you listen to a CD. Who knows, you may even conclude that the experience is infinitely more pleasing and emotive than subjecting yourself to new Coldplay single? Dunno, it's just a thought: 0)

Anyway, look after your ears folks and don't fear the noise.