

Please PIPEDOWN

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

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Hello Pipedown Supporters

Program audio, of any kind, interferes with human connections on several levels. Loud music affects communication. It is that signal to noise ratio that gets too low when speech is obscured by the love songs piped from above. You can't hear your dinner companion, so you sit and eat in silence, or worse, shout at each other across the table.

Softer music is not always better, because if it is soft enough it gets tuned out by the ones lucky enough to be able to ignore it. I've always felt that those who are good at tuning out the human singing voice also get very good at tuning out their customers voices as well.

Changing the music is also not the solution as the music choice in Western culture is tied very closely with culture. Daniel J. Levitan points out the reasons why people like the music their social group likes in his book "This is Your Brain on Music" (Chapter 8). Because of this, no one type of music can be universal. Changing the selection to classical music is not the answer because classical music is also used as anti-loitering music with the intent to drive away specific demographic segments of the population. To really be all-inclusive requires that no music be selected. Once the music becomes more important than the people in a particular space, then the people are not fully served.

Many of us seek to quiet the commons when it comes to our shopping, dining, and business lives. When doing so please keep in mind that the absence of music is the quietest way we can share a space to be all-inclusive regardless of cultural preferences by individuals. To support the greatest diversity in our human connections it helps that no music (foreground or background) is present to interfere.

Comments on Society

"I just tune it out"

Don't you love it when you talk to the staff of a business and they tell you they can't adjust the volume of the music in the store? They then proceed to inform you that they just tune it out. The implied unstated comment is that you should just be able to do that too and stop complaining.

Comment Cards

I still have a generous supply of comment cards available. Anyone needing more of these, please send a SASE.

News from readers

I wish to compile a list of humorous replies when the reactions to our requests to turn off or turn down the music is met with stares or disbelief. One comment I received recently was from Nigel Rodgers of Pipedown (UK)

"I am not asking for all the oxygen to be removed from the air, just the music"

Please send me any clever phrases you have thought up or used in encounters with businesses. I may use them as is or try to paraphrase in a humorous tone. As always, please feel free to use any words provided in this newsletter.

Advice: The Generic Complaint letter

To make letters of complaint that your recipient will read and then possibly act upon, several key elements are required. There is lots of advice available in books or on-line on how to write effective letters of complaint. I personally have found I get the best results if I stick to the facts and make a request that can be considered measurable.

Advice includes:

- Make your complaint in a single page formal business letter and address the recipient by name whenever possible
- Be polite and avoid name-calling, exaggeration, or unsupported facts, maintain a business focus
- Include:
 - o A paragraph description of why you like the business and would prefer to do business there
 - o A paragraph that states that the reason you do not shop, dine, or spend money there is because of the music
 - o A paragraph with the request to do something about the music: turn it off, provide a quiet area, or at a minimum to turn it down
- As an attention getter, use good quality paper and envelope plus use a commemorative stamp to make the letter appear sharp and professional.

If any readers need help getting started writing a complaint letter, I have several examples and a very generic complaint letter version I can forward to you.

Bibliography

"Solitude: A Return to the Self", by Anthony Storr, 1988, The Free Press (A Division of Macmillan, Inc.) 202 p, Paperback Bibliography, and Index included.

In the works

The future direction of the Pipedown-USA organization is still fluid. I hope to continue to write the newsletter quarterly, but would really appreciate suggestions from readers.

One topic that could use further analysis is "What is the aggravation worth?" In other words, how much would any of our readers pay in order to not have to listen to program audio? For me, it is worth several pennies per gallon to stop at a fuel center and not have to listen to music. I would actually pay more in order to have that quiet when refueling my car, although the regional gas company I prefer is pretty much in line with market prices. Do any other of you feel the same way? Another example is the farmer's market (in season), where the produce is sometimes more expensive than the grocery store. The advantages are that the produce is usually better and the local farmer's market does not include program audio.

Quote

Page 319 regarding hold music in particular and background music in general:.

"Miss Manners has spent a lifetime trying to escape the musical drivel of which you complain - hanging up telephones, refusing to patronize stores and restaurants, making herself unpopular with taxi drivers. It doesn't seem to have done much good, but she is cheered by your words, which bring hope that perhaps others will join us. What amazes Miss Manners most is the idea that businesses pay good money to install devices that offend some customers. As far as she knows peace and quiet never drove anyone away angry."

Miss Manners' Guide for the Turn-Of-The-Millennium by Judith Martin, Pharos Books (a Scripps Howard company), 1989, ISBN 0-88687-551-X