

Please PIPEDOWN

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



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Hello Pipedown Supporters

There is a new wrinkle in the problem of piped-in music everywhere. This is due to the increased use of technology and it makes the old volume control knob a more dated method of controlling the volume.

The knob is slowly going the way of the dinosaur and being replaced with raise/lower buttons. More importantly, as technology evolves, reaching those buttons may be more difficult. This is especially true if a computer is used to control satellite radio as the means of forcing program audio on retail patrons. The raise/lower buttons may now actually be virtual control buttons – icons to select on a computer screen.

Recently when asking for the accommodation of lower volume in a health food store I was told it would be possible and as I waited I watched as the store employee logged onto the store's main computer and searched for the satellite radio controls. This took considerable time, a number of steps, and was nothing like turning the knob on a control panel.

Then it dawned on me why one business manager refused to change the volume in a store where I like to shop. It is too difficult to change the volume, either up or down. It may also be possible this manager isn't the person most familiar with the store's PC that controls the satellite radio.

When asking for a volume change in a business, it may be useful to ask what type of system is being used because some of the more modern systems may be less accessible than the older systems found in business. Discussions of the program audio may need to include suggestions from us to make it easier on the staff to control the volume.

Comments on Society

The siren in song

Recently a "Veggie Tales" program on Saturday morning contained 3 anthropomorphic vegetables singing to "Madam Blueberry" about the new "Stuff Mart" being built in her neighborhood. I could not help but notice the sirens in the song. Those pseudo alarm sounds that sounded vaguely like aaauuuggghhhaaa, ramping up then ramping down. I've noticed the alarm tones in many songs done in recent times and find it interesting they are used. I assume the musical artist is trying to gain our attention or perhaps raise awareness by increasing heart rate or stress levels. Perhaps they are statements about the dangerous nature of the modern world. I would be very interested in any psycho-acoustic analysis done on this musical contrivance. Surely this type of music will eventually make its way into the program audio arena, if it hasn't already, to add to the general stress of modern life.

Comment Cards

I still have comment cards that can be handed to restaurant managers or owners of businesses. These are useful with or without a discussion of the problem. Please send a SASE and I will return a few of these to anyone using this method of spreading the word.

News from readers

I have received information about the City of Linz, the Province of Upper Austria, actively seeking to make this center of culture an acoustically acceptable area.

Of note, November 29, 2009 has been targeted as “No Music Day” for that city.

We wish the leaders of the “Acoustic City” much success in their campaign to provide a common area open to the public that is devoid of the ubiquitous piped-in music. The area described is open daily Tuesday through Sunday.

For more information, please see: <http://www.hoerstadt.at/?lang=en>

Advice: Exact Change

This issue’s advice is outdated, but still a potential source of satisfaction when dealing with those businesses open to the public and still very loud when it comes to the program audio.

Today cash is less likely to be used and electronic funds transfers are more frequent. Very few of us use paper and coin money, unless we have switched to a strictly cash method of payment for economic reasons. When we do pay with cash, it might be more satisfying to make those noisy businesses make change for larger bills. This works for those of us who want to protest the piped-in music, but are unable to for any number of reasons. When doing this you don’t even have to tell the clerk why you always make the store give you change, This can provide some small satisfaction in forcing the business to keep stocking change.

Carrying large sums of money just to make businesses break larger bills is not the best advice in any times. However, some of the larger stores are perfectly capable of providing change for larger bills. I personally have derived limited satisfaction from making a large grocery store make change from a 20 dollar bill for a single small purchase. This is especially true for those businesses where I have had repeated discussions about the level of noise and management still plays their program audio loudly.

Those businesses providing quieter services can be rewarded by paying with exact change. This can be one more way to show your support of the business. I especially like to do this for the quieter smaller businesses where I am a frequent customer.

Bibliography and Quote

“Total Swimming: How the Perfect Exercise Can Offer Rewards Both to the Body and to the Inner Self”, by Harvey S. Wiener, A Fireside Book published by Simon and Shuster, 1980

In particular, Chapter 2 *Swimming to the Inner Self*, The possibility for relaxation through swimming is described in detail and the first requirement for relaxation is a quiet environment, which swimming should be able to provide.

“...In the water you are free of distractions, so you’ll overcome the problems you may have had at home searching for a comfortable, silent spot. Your sensory responses altered, the liquid medium muffling sound, communication absent – these guarantee a quiet environment when you swim.”

Too often indoor swimming pools have piped-in music blaring and it becomes necessary to ask the staff to please turn down the music in the pool area. For anyone seeking to swim to his/her internal rhythms, referencing this book when asking for the music to be turned off may be helpful.

In the works

Remember, the 14th Annual International Noise Awareness Day is scheduled to take place April 29, 2009. All those participating in this event are asked to observe one minute of silence at 2:15 PM, local time. For more information and suggestions on what communities, schools, and individuals can do, please visit the site for The League for the Hard of Hearing. <http://www.lhh.org/noise/>