**Noise**

**Good week for: Your ears, after Congress passed the Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation Act, forbidding TV advertisers from abruptly raising the volume to startling levels during commercial breaks. *(The Week magazine, December 17, 2010)***

**The rustle of leaves in a gentle breeze is 10 decibels, whispers four foot away 20, and normal conversation 60. Noise becomes annoying in the range of 50 to 70 decibels. Louder sounds are rare in nature but common in human settings. Trucks can generate 90 decibels, jet aircraft 120. Vacuum cleaners can hit 80 decibels, kitchen blenders 90. *(Peter Steinhart, in Reader’s Digest)***

**A newspaper item informs us that a four-month-old baby in Sheffield, England, was feared by his mother to be dead. Showing no signs of life, the baby was bundled into a police car for a dash to the hospital. First aid failed to start tiny Nathan Oat’s breathing. But on hearing the emergency siren, Nathan jumped, coughed, and struggled back to life. *(Paul Lee Tan, in Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, p. 1143)***

**Noise is an imposition on sanity, and we live in very noisy times. *(Joan Baez)***

**Scientists have discovered that the main reason beavers build dams is that they can't stand the sound of running water. By building a dam, the beavers make a still pond out of what was once a gurgling stream. Beavers hate the sound of water so much they have been tricked into trying to dam up a loudspeaker playing the sound of running water. (Clark/Long, in Weird Facts , p. 11)**

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**Sound moves in waves, which is why two church bells, one farther away than the other, struck simultaneously, are heard separately. *(Leonardo da Vinci)***

**We chuckle to recall that a group of Philadelphians once campaigned to stop the ringing of the bells of a neighborhood church or that, in 1906, Mrs. Isaac L. Rice sought to ban nighttime tugboat whistles from New York harbor. *(Peter Steinhart, in Reader’s Digest)***

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**A proposed law in Maryland that would promote the use of eco-friendly “hybrid” cars is being opposed by advocates for the blind – because hybrid cars are harder to hear. “We use the sound of the traffic not only to determine when to cross the street but to navigate,” said Chris Danielsen of the National Federation of the Blind. The NFB is asking that the law be amended to require hybrids to make noise. *(The Week magazine, February 23, 2007)***

**A Michigan woman is serving a 30-day jail sentence for allowing a houseguest to use a cell phone on her front porch after 4 a.m. Carmen Granata, 23, was charged with violating a city noise ordinance when police called to investigate a noisy party saw a guest step out onto the porch to make a call. After her jail term, Granata will be on probation for two years, and have to take daily Breathalyzer tests at a police station. “If my daughter had done something to deserve to be in jail, I wouldn’t have a problem with it,” said Granata’s father, Joe. “But this is insane.” *(The Week magazine, December 22, 2006)***

**The town of Hopewell, New Jersey, wants to ban chickens from mating on all but 10 days of the year. Backyard chicken-rearing is increasingly popular there, but officials have proposed limNo noise is so emphatic iting roosters to brief conjugal visits, to cut down on noisy crowing. “You never can tell exactly when a rooster will crow,” explained Hopewell Mayor James Burd. *(The Week magazine, April 1, 2011)***

**On New Year's Eve 1951, the PVA and the North Korean People's Army (KPA) launched their Third Phase Offensive, also known as the "Chinese New Year's Offensive." Using night attacks, they encircled UN troops and bombarded them with noise from loud trumpets and gongs, in order to disorient them. Being unused to this sort of tactic, some soldiers "bugged out" and fled to the south, leaving their weapons behind. *(Charlotte Lowe, in Useless History Fact-O-Pedia, p. 161)***

**Their clicking noises are the loudest sounds made by any animal. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 152)***

**The "e" in Concorde may be silent, but that's the only thing about it that is. (*Robert Orben)***

**Say your dog barks every time your phone rings. Why? Does the ringing hurt those canine ears? Researchers checked this out to learn that it only happened -- in their group sampling, at least -- where somebody jumped up and ran to answer. It wasn’t the ringing but the running. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**People with loud, hacking coughs never seem to go to doctors. They go to the movies instead. (Sam Ewing, in The Saturday Evening Post)**

**Extended exposure to loud noises can permanently damage one’s hearing, scientists say, but a surprisingly large number of Americans aren’t listening to the warnings. A recent study of more than 5,000 people found that nearly 700, or 13 percent, had some degree of hearing loss caused by noise. Men were three times more likely than women to suffer hearing problems, probably because they spend more time around what study author Hamid Djalilian calls “powered instrumentation,” including chain saws, leaf blowers, gunshots, and motorcycles. One unexpected hazard is the convertible automobile: A separate study found that driving in a convertible generates a noise level slightly about 85 decibels, the federal safety limit. “If you’re spending the whole summer driving around with your top down on the highway,” researcher Philip Michael says, “you’re asking for long-term hearing loss.” *(The Week magazine, October 30, 2009)***

**Can noise generate energy? Not much. Fifteen million screaming voices might work up one horsepower. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**I frequently hear music in the heart of noise. *(George Gershwin)***

**A growing number of young people are developing a type of hearing loss previously associated with the elderly. Experts blame the tiny “ear bud” headphones of iPods and other music players, which users tend to crank up to maximum volume because the headphones do not block outside sounds as effectively as cushioned headsets. *(The Week magazine, January 13, 2006)***

**Lab scientists say they can produce certain high-pitched sounds that suddenly make you sweat and ache all over. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Good week for: Keeping your sanity, after the company that provides the feed for World Cup broadcasts announced that it would filter out the constant, irritating drone of the vuvuzelas, the South African plastic horns that sound like a swarm of angry bees. *(The Week magazine, June 25, 2010)***

**Noisiest hospital rooms are in cardiac intensive care, according to research from the UCLA School of Nursing. Clatter therein runs around 65 decibels. Your bedroom, if typical, only gets about 35 decibels. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**No noise is so emphatic as one you are trying not to listen to. *(Quoted by C. S. Lewis, in Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer)***

**No animal can make a louder noise than the lion, it’s said. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**One for the Record Books: The longest drum solo was 10 hours and 26 minutes and was performed by the child sitting behind me on Delta Flight 963 from Los Angeles to Tokyo. *(@FAKEMUSICFACT, as it appeared in the March/April 2022 issue of Reader’s Digest, on page 106)***

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**My wife's uncle, a Kansas farmer, drove an old pickup that had seen better days. Once, as he and my brother-in-law were rattling along, a loud noise suddenly came from the rear of the truck. “What was that?” my brother-in-law asked. Uncle just looked straight ahead and replied, “Don't know. Couldn't have been too bad -- we're still going.” *(Al Maneth, in Reader's Digest)***

**The Psychology Department of Dayton University reports that loud talk can be ten times more distracting than the sound of a jackhammer. Loud, incessant chatter can make a listener nervous and irritable, say the findings, and even start him on the road to insanity. *(David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 141)***

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**The United Kingdom’s Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society launched a campaign to tackle increasing noise pollution, which it says may be harming marine life. The group warns that undersea noise from oil and gas exploration, and the use of low-frequency military sonars, is causing hearing loss in marine mammals. It also believes the manmade din is interfering with the creatures’ ability to communicate with each other. The International Whaling Commission warned in July that low-frequency marine noise levels had increased in the Northern Hemisphere by two orders of magnitude over the last 60 years. *(Steve Newman, Universal Press Syndicate, 2004)***

**Richard Branson has announced plans to develop a new type of plane that can fly from New York to Tokyo in one hour. Apparently, the engines are powered by human screams. *(Seth Meyers)***

**Loud and Clear: After the mime died we mourned his passing with a moment of noise. *(Edward Morris, in The Saturday Evening Post)***

**A University of Miami team exposed monkeys to the kind of noise we face every day – radios, traffic, noise in the office and factory – and measured its effects on their health. Their blood pressure went up 25% and their heart rate changed. Monkeys exposed to rock music at first jumped around, became annoyed and then tried to follow the beat and finally wound up staring sullenly into space. *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 180)***

**Why is noise so often so much more enjoyable to make than to be forced to hear? *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**The murder rate is higher than the national average among people who live directly under the flight paths near major airports. UCLA researchers turned up that oddity. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The next time you find yourself shouting at the top of your lungs, remember this: The noisy thunder does nothing; the silent lightning strikes. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Unnecessary noise is the most cruel absence of care that can be inflicted on sick or well. *(Florence Nightingale)***

**Owls have serrations on the leading edge of their feathers that reduce noise and make the flapping of their wings almost silent. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 158)***

**You can knock the feathers off a parakeet with a loud noise. Or some feathers, anyway. So says a veterinarian. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Say your dog barks every time your phone rings. Why? Does the ringing hurt those canine ears? Researchers checked this out to learn that it only happened -- in their group sampling, at least -- where somebody jumped up and ran to answer. It wasn't the ringing but the running. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Former Israeli air force pilot Michael Amir found that the most dangerous threat to airplanes is not terrorism or snowstorms, but gulls that can clog up a plane’s engines. To solve the problem without shooting the offending creatures, Amir developed noisy, radio-controlled model planes to chase away the birds. Used on gulls that gathered at a garbage dump near Ben-Gurion Airport outside of Tel Aviv, Amir’s bird-traffic controller helped cut a population estimated as high as 25,000 down to 1500 over several years. *(Ingrid Abramovitch, in Success)***

**It is with narrow-souled people as with narrow-necked bottles: the less they have in it, the more noise they make in pouring it out. *(Alexander Pope)***

**One day while meditating upon the problem of harmony, Pythagoras chanced to pass a brazier’s shop where workmen were pounding out a piece of metal upon an anvil. By noting the variances in pitch between sounds made by large hammers and those made by smaller implements, and carefully estimating the harmonics and discords resulting from combinations of these sounds, he gained his first clue to the musical intervals of the diatonic scale. *(Manly P. Hall)***

**A British film studio recently placed a sign with letters about eight feet high, saying “Quiet Please,” on the roof of a sound studio to warn noisy airplanes away. But the letters of the words were not quite large enough. Now the airplanes fly lower in order to read the sign. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**The sound of tasteless food: A loud restaurant can do more than spoil your own conversation. Excessive background noise, a new study says, can drown out the taste of the food itself, making it seem bland. Researchers in England blindfolded college students and gave them different foods to eat – including pancakes, cookies, and chips – as they listened through headphones to loud white noise, soft static, or silence. The subjects reported that cookies tasted less sweet and chips weren’t as salty when accompanied by loud noise; crunchy foods, however, seemed crunchier. Whether the noise simply diverts attention from the flavor or actually interferes with how the brain processes it is unclear. The roar of jet engines, lead researcher Andy Woods tells the London Daily Telegraph, may explain the “general opinion that airplane foods aren’t fantastic.” *(The Week magazine, November 5, 2010)***

**Screech of a fingernail scraping across a blackboard bothers some people, not others. Depends on their genes. Or so some scientists now believe. They say they’re still not sure why certain sounds are torturous to those susceptible. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**What has foiled the most bank robberies is the screaming of women. Nothing else so often turns thieves in frantic retreat, according to research for the American Bankers’ Association. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**When you sneeze, all your bodily functions stop – including the heart. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 71)***

**Must you be so noisy? I can hear your eyes moving. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

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**British songbirds are going tone deaf because of the roar of traffic and their discordant notes are affecting their breeding patterns, the British Ecological Society said Sunday. *(Rocky Mountain News, July 17, 1995)***

**More evidence that life in the big city can change a creature’s tune: researchers from Leiden University in the Netherlands analyzed the songs of great tits, birds related to chickadees, in ten European cities, including London, Berlin and Paris. Compared with great tits in nearby forest sites, the urban birds sang faster and at a higher pitch – presumably to make their voices heard over the low-frequency din. The study suggests not only that these songbirds are surprisingly adaptable but also that there’s a good reason city dwellers can be shrill. *(Smithsonian magazine)***

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**Dennis the Menace: "Mrs. Wilson was right when she said that Mr. Wilson was a sound sleeper." *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis the Menace comic strip)***

**The “mockingbird of squirrels” is the Douglas squirrel. It barks, screams, chirps, makes all sorts of weird noises. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The 93 million miles that separate us from the sun also insulate us from harm. If this expanse were not a vacuum, the explosive sounds of the hot sun would deafen us. *(Donald B. DeYoung, in Astronomy and the Bible, p. 56)***

**A traveler was lost in the backwoods. It was night and a violent thunderstorm raged around him. The fellow floundered through the mud and rain, desperately peering into the darkness for some hint as to where he was. As a sudden crash of thunder brought him to his knees, he turned to the sky and said, “O, Lord, if it’s all the same to you, I could use a little more light and a little less noise.” When the people working for you are lost and confused, they, too, would appreciate direction and illumination, not just noise. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**The Trouble with Traffic: People who live near busy roads deal with a daily barrage of horns, sirens and engine noise. Turns out, it’s not just a nuisance – it’s a health risk. According to a large study from researchers at the University of Leicester and Oxford University in England and Peking University in China, this soundscape increases the risk of hypertension. The study compared homes with differing levels of air pollution and noise. The people who were regularly exposed to high levels of both had the highest hypertension risk of all. This means that there is a public health case for adopting measures such as quieter vehicles, noise barriers and buffer zones around highways. (Samantha Rideout, in Reader’s Digest)**

**Noise proves nothing. Often a hen who has merely laid an egg cackles as if she had laid an asteroid. *(Mark Twain)***

**Snoopy: “Woodstock is never going to get me untied. This is so depressing. I may be forced to howl in despair.” Linus: “Good grief! What was that?” Charlie Brown: “It sounded like someone howling in despair.” *(Charles Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)***

**There’s an Ozark story about a hound sitting in a country store and howling as hounds do. In comes a stranger who says to the storekeeper, “What’s the matter with the dog?” “He’s sitting on a cocklebur.” “Why doesn’t he get off?” “He’d rather holler.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Daughter: “Are too!” Son: “Am not!” As the children keep arguing, Mom asks Dad: “Why are you opening the window?” Dad: “I’m trying to let some of the noise out!” *(Kevin Fagan, in Drabble comic strip)***

**In the womb, a baby lives in a sea of sound. Researchers have eavesdropped on him, by inserting a tiny microphone vaginally into the uterus. Daphne and Charles Maurer, authors of The World of the Newborn, describe the racket the baby hears from his mother’s heart, intestines and lungs: “In engineering terms, these are a pulsating water pump with flap valves, a 25-foot-long sludge pump and a double bellows.” Dr. Jeffrey Phelan, director of Maternal-Fetal Medicine at Queen of the Valley Hospital in West Covina, California, played tapes to a pregnant woman of everything from bird songs to a passing train. A microphone in her uterus picked up almost every sound. “It’s unbelievable!” Phelan said upon hearing the playback. “The sanctity and peace of the womb do not exist.” Sound intensity is a matter of concern to Phelan. When he played back a tape of how an argument sounded in the womb, he found it uncomfortably loud. He wonders about the possible injurious effects of working amid excessive noise. “A woman guiding jets up to the gate at an airport wears ear protectors. Is her baby’s hearing protected?” *(Henci Goer, in Reader’s Digest)***

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