

# PIPED MUSIC

## THE FACTS

Amid the many claims and counter-claims made about piped music (also called muzak, canned music or elevator music), objectively researched facts about piped music's effects and its real popularity can be very hard to find. This sheet presents the facts about people's real attitudes to piped music and its effects on human health.

### **MORE PEOPLE HATE PIPED MUSIC THAN LIKE IT**

Contrary to what is often believed, objectors to piped music outnumber those who like it, as the following surveys reveal:

#### **April 1994, Gatwick Airport**

In April 1994, Gatwick Airport Management carried out a survey of travellers' attitudes to the piped music then being played in the airport. Of the 68,077 who replied, 43% said they disliked the piped music, only 34% said they liked it, the remainder had no opinion. (Gatwick Airport has since discontinued its piped music). **This is the largest impartial survey ever carried out.**

**Gatwick Airport Management**  
43% said they disliked it  
34% said they liked it,  
23% had no opinion.

#### **November 1998 NOP**

In November 1998 NOP carried out an opinion poll on the general public's attitudes to piped music. This showed that 34% of people disliked piped music and only 30% liked it (36% were indifferent). Among those aged over 45, a majority hated it, as did a majority of those in the 'A-B' social groups. Even among younger people (those aged under 25), 21% said they disliked piped music.

#### **NOP Opinion Poll**

34% disliked  
30% liked  
36% had no opinion.

#### **November 2011 LBC 97.3 Radio**

On 6th November 2011 Petrie Hosken on LBC 97.3 Radio did an hour-long programme about piped music, following a survey by Immedia that had found at least 50% of people would walk out of shops with piped music. Callers-in generally supported the views of those in the survey.

#### **LBC RADIO**

50%  
Would walk out  
of a shop

#### **November 2013 Barclays Bank**

In November 2013 a survey commissioned by Barclays Bank showed that 61% of older people find piped music in shops and banks their biggest bugbear, one that makes them feel alienated.

#### **Barclays Bank**

61%  
of older people alienated

#### **The Sunday Times**

17%  
said it is the single thing they  
most detested about modern life

#### **January 1997 The Sunday Times**

In January 1997, a poll for The Sunday Times asked people what was 'the single thing they most detested about modern life'. Third in the list of hated things came **pipéd music**, with 17% citing it. (The first two most hated things were other forms of noise).

#### **February 2005 BBC & C2C Trains**

In February 2005 a BBC poll of travellers on c2c trains in Essex found that 67% objected to the piped television then being introduced on the trains, some by barricading themselves in the toilets. The piped television was speedily dropped

#### **BBC Poll**

67%  
Hated Piped tv in trains

#### **August 2010 University of Cardiff**

In August 2010 a study by researchers from the University of Cardiff found the effects of piped music in the work place to be generally negative i.e. piped music harmed rather than helped productivity. People working in shops often find the repetition of the same limited selection of music highly irritating but they may feel powerless to protest.

#### **University of Cardiff**

Piped music  
harmed rather than  
helped productivity.

***There can now be no doubt about the widespread dislike of piped music.***

# THERE ARE ALSO IMPORTANT HEALTH ASPECTS TO PIPED MUSIC

- All unwanted noise raises the blood pressure and depresses the immune system, as has long been recognised.
- A survey of 215 blood donors at Nottingham University Medical School in January 1995 found that playing piped music made donors more nervous before giving blood and more depressed afterwards than silence.
- The NOP poll of 1998 found that among people with hearing problems (16% of the population), 86% hated piped music.
- Action on Hearing Loss (formerly the RNID) now backs the campaign against piped music.
- Blind people (who rely on background sounds to help find their around) also find piped music upsetting.
- Recent research (2013) has shown that older people actually hear background music as louder than younger people because their hearing is impaired. This is known as presbycusis. Dr Anil Lalwani at Columbia University Medical Center, New York, writes: 'Any noise in the environment leads to even greater loss in clarity of hearing. Contrary to expectation, presbycusis is also associated with sensitivity to loud noise... due to a poorly understood phenomenon called recruitment.' See <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/05/science/why-at-70-is-it-harder-to-hear-conversations-yet-music-is-too-loud.html>



Musicians of all sorts hate piped music because they find 'acoustic wallpaper' a pain in the ear.



Music teachers find it increasingly difficult to get their students actually to listen to music, as it now comes at them non-stop from every wall.



Piped music does not come free, but is an extra that must be paid for with every meal, drink, ticket, piece of clothing...



Despite all the hype about piped music boosting sales, highly successful companies such as Aldi, Primark, John Lewis/Waitrose, Lidl and the Wetherspoon pub chain all thrive without it.



The facts on this sheet were collated by Pipedown, the Campaign for Freedom from Piped Music. Pipedown campaigns for the freedom not to have to listen to piped music in every public place: shops, pubs, restaurants, airports, hospitals, train and bus stations, swimming baths and doctors' surgeries.

Pipedown has helped persuade Tesco and the National Trust not to install piped music and is now pushing for legislation to ban it in those places such as hospitals, where it is often literally impossible to escape.



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