

BANG: Noise in the 20th Century

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This Presentation

- What am I going to cover?
 - What is Noise?
 - What is the motivation behind Noise?
 - What is the History of Noise?
 - How is noise performed?

What is Noise

- "Noise is the Opposite of Music"
- There are 3 basic classifications of Noise
 - Noise In Music
 - Noise As Music
 - Noise for Noise's sake

Why Noise?

- Noise was the product of experimentation. A product of the avant guard.
 - [The Avant Guard] is an advance guard; these are shock troops who are meant to advance and meant to destroy, in a preliminary fashion. The notion of violence, I think, is central. It isn't necessarily physical violence. It isn't necessarily material violence. But it is the shock of the new. It is the attempt to shock with novelty, invention, experimentation. And there is a violence to this kind of preoccupation with newness. - Modris Eksteins [Smi99]

Motivations

- Why would people make or consume noise?
 - – To Create
 - To Rebel
 - To Experiment
 - To Explore
 - To Discomfort
 - To Shock

History

- A Quick Summary of the history of noise:
 - Noise started 1910s with Italian futurists
 - Moved on to academic avant guard compositions
 - Eventually in the 1960s and 1970s noise started emerging in mainstream contemporary music.

History

- A Quick Summary of the history of noise (cont):
 - In the 1980s industrial music emerged from noise and came into being.
 - In the 1990s noise is an established genre, a subset of industrial music.
 - By 2000 noise more noise is now being produced by independent artists and non-musicians.
 - The best noise is now found for free on the Internet or from tiny labels run out of people's computer rooms.

Artist Timeline

- **1910:** Luigi Russolo, Filippo Marinetti
- **1930:** John Cage
- **1940:** Pierre Schaffer
- **1950:** Karlheinz Stockhausen
- **1960:** Nihilist Spasm Band
- **1970:** Lou Reed, The Haters, Hijokaidan
- **1975:** Throbbing Gristle
- **1980:** Whitehouse , Merzbow , Incapacitants , Emil Beaulieu , Masonna
- **1990:** Aube, K.K. Null
- **2000:** Unter Null, skruntskrunt
- [Vic02]

The Futurists

- 1911-1913 The Italian Futurists, who worshiped the industrial machine aesthetic came up with manifestos and other documents predicting the future of music to include sounds of man's new environment, the machines.
- 1911 - Balilla Pratella wrote the Technical Manifesto of Futurist Music (1911):

”[Music] must represent the spirit of crowds, of great industrial complexes, of trains, of ocean liners, of battle fleets, of automobiles and airplanes. It must add to the great central themes of the musical poem the domain of the machine and the victorious realm of electricity” [art95].
- Music should emulate the environment

The Futurists (cont)

- Luigi Russolo - A painter and composer of noise. Wrote the manifesto "The Art Of Noise" in 1913.
- "In the 19th century, with the invention of machines, Noise was born. Today, Noise is triumphant and reigns sovereign over the sensibility of men ... Musical sound is too limited in its variety of timbres ... We must break out of this limited circle of sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds ... Noise, arriving confused and irregular from the irregular confusion of life, is never revealed to us entirely and always holds innumerable surprises." - Paraphrased from the "Art Of Noise". [San02]
- Russolo made instruments for his compositions called "intonarumori" (noise intonators). These instruments were generally very simple having a single lever or crank.

The Futurists (cont)

- Edgar Varèse used drums and sirens to produce the composition "Ionization" in 1927. Varèse wanted to "expand the possibilities of music within the tradition of an autonomous artwork" [San02].
- Varèse viewed music as an interaction of layers , organized sound instead of simply melody, harmony and rhythm. This concept of layering is extremely important to current noisicians.

Rite Of Spring *

- The Rite of Spring (Le Sacre du printemps)
- Performed May 29, 1913
- Composed By Stravinsky
- Incited a riot.
- Procession Of Wise Elder stop

Erik Satie

- 1866 - 1925
- Developed the idea of ambient music, or background music. He called it furniture music.
- Purpose was to provide a mood and backdrop. This was never done before.
- Ambient or mood music is very pervasive now.
- "Furniture music creates a vibration; it has no other goal; it fills the same role as light and heat – as comfort in every form." - Satie [Smi99]

John Cage *

- 1912 - 1992
- Began composing in the 30s, one of the most important American composers.
- Cage was a conceptualist, the concept of his music was more important than the product itself.
- Cage enjoyed randomness, scoring a piece with dice or some other random algorithm or letting a natural system decide on notes or sound.
- Known for "4'33" or "Silence" a piece where the pianist plays nothing, the concept being that the audience is to listen to the sound of their environment and themselves.
- Works For Prepared Piano: Primitive stop

Karlheinz Stockhausen *

- 1928 -
- Experimented In Musique Concrete
- Influential German composer - especially in the field of electronic music
- One of the first users of prerecording music in compositions and the combining of live instruments with taped instruments.
- Recently caused some controversy over comments regarding 9/11.
- Struktur I stop

Nihilist Spasm Band *

- 1960s -
- A group of members who have been playing custom instruments.
- Canadian - play weekly in London, Ontario.
- Not quite political
- Were sent by the govt to France in the 70s to represent Canada at a avant guard competition.
- No Canada stop

Velvet Underground *

- During the late 60s and 70s Velvet Underground played music that at time would integrate noise elements into the music.
- Velvet Underground helped introduce Dissonance into rock in the forms of feedback and distortion (much like the Who or the Kinks).
- Velvet Underground laid the ground work for noise-pop and noise-rock bands to follow and eventually stagnate due to reliance on the guitar.
- European Son stop

Throbbing Gristle *

- 1975 - 1981
- Influential British Band. Produced the industrial celebrity Genesis. P. Orridge (generally strange guy).
- Attributed with inventing Industrial Music.
- Produced ear splitting walls of white noise combined with obscene performance art.
- Genesis P-Orridge, being weird stop

Merzbow *

- Born 1956, started performing shortly before 1979.
- Masami Akita - The King of Noise, the only member of Merzbow.
- "Merzbow, is a direct reference to the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, who coined the word "Merzbau" to describe his assemblages of found objects."
[Smi99]
- Seminal and Prolific, for contemporary noise Merzbow is the most important artist in noise.
- Elephant Song stop

Whitehouse *

- 1982 - , based in London, England
- Application of noise to punk music. Produced power electronics.
- Loud screeching and awful vocals combined with exceptionally offensive lyrics.
- Concerts referred to as live actions, actions are usually shut down quickly by authorities. Would play illegally in public spaces.
- Force The Truth stop

Japanese Noise

- Popular late 1980s and early 1990s, is still around.
- Often performed in Japanese clubs accompanied by live Sado Masochistic "Sex" shows or disturbing sexual performances.
- For some reason noise is much more popular in Japan than anywhere else.
- Popular Artists: Aube, Masonna, K.K. Null (Zeni Geva lead).
- K.K. Null - 1 46 stop

Recent Artists

- Unter Null - Power Noise (w/ Beats) - originally distributed w/ mp3.com
- Local Noise Bands:
 - SkruntSkrunt - Started in 1999, local band, uses custom software to produce noise (<http://skruntskrunt.abez.ca/>)
 - Narc / Griefer - Started in mid 90s, local band, uses synthesizers and distorted vocals. (<http://industrial.org/narc/>)
 - Burning Bush - Naniamo
 - RGB - Victoria
 - Mr. Seedy - Vancouver
 - Nagasaki Fondue - Vancouver

Noise Now and the Future

- Noise is created with custom electronics, samples, guitar pedals, software or simply breaking things. More noise is being created on the computer.
- Noise is now more of contemporary "art" movement, than academic.
- Noise now is distributed over the Internet and through small labels on CD, tape and LP.
- It is very common for a noise artist to have their own mini label publishing exclusively their work.

And now for..

- your first (probably) noise performance

In Summary

- The roots of noise started in 1911 with the advent of Italian Futurists.
- Noise was spawned from the avant guard and become part of contemporary music.
- Emerged from the aesthetic of industry and technology. Past music focused on nature, the new music focuses on the present and future.
- Noise is music, Noise is used in music, Noise is Noise.

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