Modern music really does sound the same

For fans of the golden oldies it is confirmation of something they have already known: modern music really is louder and has less variety than 50 years ago.

“The diversity of transitions between note combinations – roughly speaking chords plus melodies – has consistently diminished in the past 50 years.”

The “timbre” of songs – the number of different tones they include, for example from different instruments – has also become narrower, he added.
The study was the first to conduct a large-scale measurement of "intrinsic loudness", or the volume a song is recorded at, which determines how loud it will sound compared with other songs at a particular setting on an amplifier.

It appeared to support long-standing claims that the music industry is engaged in a "loudness war" in which volumes are gradually being increased.

Although older songs may be more varied and rich, the researchers advised that they could be made to sound more "fashionable and groundbreaking" if they were re-recorded and made blander and louder.

They wrote: "An old tune could perfectly sound novel and fashionable, provided that it consisted of common harmonic progressions, changed the instrumentation, and increased the average loudness."

No wonder I love "new wave" and alternative music; it really does sound different.

For would be ectophiles out there, start with Kate Bush; an amazing singer, songwriter and performer. Postpunk band Joy Division is another place to start exploring but there are infinite horizons beyond.

It all sounds like a drumbeat to me. It's all crap. You are what you listen to.
To get modern "music" (especially the sort heard here in the US), you start with real music, then take out any semblance of melody, take out harmony and counterpoint, take out modulation (key changes), and with what's left over, reduce the rhythm to something as simple as possible - perhaps as complex as a three-bar structure - and play it over and over again.

And never ever send any of your singers to a voice lesson.

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**Fat_Man**  
Today 02:29 AM

You can't really increase the loudness of recorded music. Loudness is determined by the user end amplifier and transducer. All you can do is compress the dynamic range so that there is no gap between the loudest and softest notes.

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**zen**  
Today 02:27 AM

New music is just elevator music at 78 rpm. Actually it's not even that good.

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**David Govett**  
Yesterday 10:57 PM

The convergent evolution of rock parallels the convergent evolutions of automobile, cities, houses, books, movies, cultures, etc., as well as individual genomes. They all continue to adapt to a globally homogenizing environment.

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**monsoonmag**  
07/30/2012 08:06 PM

The bullying and tyrannical nature of Hitler's mass rallies has long since been exposed for what they were. The bullying and domineering nature of modern pop concerts held in public open places proceeds from the same place in human psychology: coercion. The desire of some individuals to force their will on everyone else. You will submit to my music whether you like it or not. It is a new kind of fascism, music fascism. Can you imagine the reaction there would be if opera or classical music was belted out at these volumes into everyone's space around the country? The vilification of 'the middle classes' and of so-called reactionaries would know no bounds.

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**mysterytrain**  
07/30/2012 06:46 PM

Music today depends a lot less on musicianship and talent. It's all marketing. I bet that one of these music producers could take the person with least amount of talent in the country, and make them an overnight sensation. The three most important words in a producers life: marketing, marketing, marketing!

The music isn't necessarily important to a producer.

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**flakstopper**  
07/30/2012 09:26 AM

Modern 'music' - Mostly rubbishy noise, which children might hammer out from innocence, but rarely ever music. It has two functions: it produces loot, and it degrades the mentality of its hearers, making them passive to accept anything thrown at them. But then that is the intention.

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**alice550**  
07/29/2012 07:52 PM

Yes i agree. the typical modern song has suggestive lyrics; is deafening; and is 4 chords or 5 over and over.

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**Boots rocker**  
07/29/2012 05:54 PM

A lot of modern musics ills can be blamed, fairly and squarely at Simon Cowells door.as for the music becoming louder: The music that i mostly listen too (Punk) has always been loud try going to see Stiff Little Fingers and you will know what i am talking about for the record they have been around since 1977 and still creating new music. But as for loudness i wouldn't have it any other way. music that is supposed to be listened to loudly is designed that way for a reason. I don't really
follow the music charts, and as for radio most commercial radio stations cater for a young audience. And repeat the same tunes endlessly. So if modern music is louder, so what as long as it’s not boring.

mysterytrain
07/30/2012 08:31 PM

Never wonder why you are hard of hearing?

John Gabriel
07/29/2012 08:32 AM

OH dear... another load of money wasted on research, yes the older music is still being produced but the research forgets that one of the reasons for loudness is the increased headroom that new recording equipment enables therefore resulting in louder recordings, they're not pushing the loudness up, they are just exploiting the limits of new technology, if they had it then they would have done it then, also playlists on the radio are linked directly to advertising revenues (not a theory, I advertised on commercial radio) so the market has been crafted this way... people are told what to like, not to want too much... but then again, they buy the records so its their own fault lol... oh and I am a musician and a sound engineer so there lol

Chris Quin
07/29/2012 07:33 AM

Thankfully none of this matters because if you care to take an interest you will find that artists from the 60's and 70's are still out there performing and producing new music. The following have all produced and album in the last 18 mths or so :- Joe Walsh, Bonnie Raitt, Greg Allman, Tom Petty, Eric Clapton, Robert Plant, Lynyrd Skynyrd. There are also exceptionally talented guitarists like Joe Bonamassa who write and play music that is based on the Blues and Rock of decades ago.

peockland
07/28/2012 06:57 AM

1995-they year music died and loud folk who couldn't sing took over. If I hear one more dippy pseudo English accented girl talk her way through a song I shall scream (prob get to N1 if I record that)

GW74
07/28/2012 06:44 PM

how about this?
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...
or this?
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...
this?
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...
this?
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...

jaque_sparrow
07/28/2012 02:24 AM

What is wrong with moderen music is the talent has gone i.e. The recording quality has gone up as the music worth recording has gone down. Just imagine the stuff Sir George Martin could have produced with 24 track machines.
The sound engineers today are so lucky and mainly talentless. The artists in the "charts" today are just mainly talentless. There is no songwriting at all, it is about the way the "performer" looks!

GW74
07/28/2012 09:39 PM

please stop talking

rtbc
07/27/2012 08:24 PM

Two bands I follow.
The first Tenacious D wrote an entire song, strumming one cord and bending it. Well it was a comedy track suggesting how easy it is to write a song or piece of
the second is Me first and the Gimme Gimmes. On there live album they talk about playing the wrong cord. They say the audience get more than what they paid for in more notes. They are the worlds greatest cover band, making average songs sound great, as they would say. They used a bit of bit Black Flag on the introduction to Crazy and The Clash's London Calling on Elenor. Then some X Los angeles on the song I still miss someone. I don't think the selection of music is becoming bland, but the variety on the radio can be rather limited. I don't listen tend buy or listen chart music, but it has been going this way for the last 20 years. Some might argue that if modern music was any good, they why some of the older acts still going. Fat Mike from the punk band NoFX has created his own ragtime album as a soundtrack to his girlfriends movie and The Bronx a hardcore punk band from LA, has produced 2 credible Mariachi albums as the El Bronx.

motorwaydrifter
07/28/2012 09:44 PM

"Chord" not "Cord"

holdup
07/27/2012 08:13 PM

its simple. its just the gradual transition from analog music to digital music. you may notice that at most festivals and concerts where modern musicians perform, they actually employ analog musicians to play their songs on guitars etc. this of course changes the quality of the song, but can be excused by the discerning audience for being 'live'. kids nowadays haven't even seen a guitar, let alone know what one sounds like. and personally i think this has happened only in the last 10 years or so. the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s were dominated by rock music. the 2000's has seen the acceleration of bland electronic music being brought into the mainstream entirely because of the sudden and widespread access to computer technology which has become extremely cheap and easy to use. there's simply no point learning the guitar. no one is interested in them anymore, except for those who will become known as connoisseurs of music compared to the majority who use up their packaged music and throw it away once its done. notice how songs from only 3-4 years ago already feel dated and tiresome. the society we live in today uses music like any other consumer product. chews it up and spits it out and if it doesn't sound good when you're tanked up on booze, pills and powder then forget it. that's the main thing. drugs. ALL modern music is focused around it whether you realize or not. the latest smash hit it must sound good when you're rolling on mdma in a packed club. its simple as that. if it doesn't, then it won't be a hit. a DJ seeks to create a tune that creates the longest moment of tension before a euphoric drop and the more times the better. popstars have now clocked onto this and you can hear everyone from rihanna to Nicki Minaj using the latest dance music template to tap into the latest market of mainstream rave culture. notice also how most songs are about sex, getting drunk or some sort of a dysfunctional relationship. sums up my generation entirely.

aetiusflavius
07/28/2012 01:03 AM

You sound like one of these reporters - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=... oh hang on that was 25 years ago!

skydolphin
07/27/2012 07:55 PM

Of course music is far worse than ever before. Everyone of any sense or discernment knows this. And you can't argue with Science, as they say. One main reason is that music is now written by and composed on computers. Music by numbers and software programmes. Hackneyed, prosaic junk. Music made without talent, craft, art or ability. Yet more proof that computers rarely make anything better.

Euphobia1
07/27/2012 08:28 PM

Computers can make things better! I am a singer. I used to have to rely on pianists. I have suffered from wrong notes and unhappy keys. For many years my husband was my accompanist. He was a good but not brilliant pianist. He could not transpose and some accompaniments were beyond him. When he died I lost a beloved husband and my accompanist. I thought I should never sing again and indeed I didn't for 6 years as I could not afford to pay an accompanist. Once a week is not enough for a singer.
The I discovered that on Garageband I could wrote out accompaniments by hand. I started out with 'Die Schone Mullerin' by Schubert. It took me hours to transcribe them at first but now I can write out a Schubert song in an hour.

It was a revelation. I could choose the tempo, the key and there were no wrong notes. I can sing songs that were too hard for the average pianist to play like the 'Songs of the Auvergne' which I orchestrated and recorded. It is up on iTunes. One critic said they were 'delicious!' I could never have achieved this without a computer.

Recently as I said in these comments, I orchestrated 'September' from 'The Four Last Songs' by Richard Strauss. I could never have dreamed of singing this with a wonderful orchestra in real life. Not only that because I wrote out every instrument I can see and understand the brilliance of the composition. I think this work sounds better on a computer. Orchestras can never achieve the accuracy that is demanded of this work.

Unfortunately copyright prevent me from letting you have the experience.

I cannot play an instrument. I have only basic music theory but the computer via Garageband has revolutionized my musical life in a way that would have astounded me when I was young.

Would I go back to a pianist. I don't think so even for recording. I like to have control of my performance and computers give me this opportunity.

The sad part is that not many people learn to do this or realize what can be done.

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Social Media Reactions

rinem2 on twitter
Today 06:48 PM

Music has become homogenized since the 1950s. In other words, there is less variety than before. http://t.co/QMKZFOQQ

_RobRob on twitter
Today 04:42 PM

Pretty sure this vindicates me http://t.co/KABDln6v

jamesmcclatchey on twitter
Today 06:50 AM

Today's music hits really do all sound the same. http://t.co/XWzZQZsm

vsalus on twitter
Today 05:17 AM

Scientists: Modern music really does sound the same. Also, you kids get off my lawn.... http://t.co/4Q3ekV51

Editor_Orbat on twitter
Today 04:57 AM

Science confirms us oldtimers' long suspected: modern music sounds the same because it is the same http://t.co/VHRjcvwV Thnx Readr Luxemburg

hoppingstance on twitter
Today 03:14 AM

Prefer rag, American catalog, jazz, western swing/doc watson country? http://t.co/2YSQAicQ Congrats, science says your music more nutritious.

HowlinDibsHawk on twitter
Yesterday 02:40 PM

RT @dgwbirch: It's scientifically true - modern music does all sound the same http://t.co/qph3sc7E -- Who can save the world? The mighty HAWKWIND!

Rubie_Lamour on twitter
07/31/2012 01:48 PM

RT @vintagemusic: For fans of golden oldies confirmation that we knew: modern music really is louder & has less variety than 50 yrs ago http://t.co/XHzzzNPn

vintagemusic on twitter
07/31/2012 01:43 PM
For fans of golden oldies confirmation that we knew: modern music really is louder & has less variety than 50 yrs ago http://t.co/xH9zzNPn

Some evidence to suggest progressive homogenisation of popular music: http://t.co/rMAKgO75