Beautiful Noise

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Abstract
This article aims to explore the nature of discordant sound, such as guitar feedback, in several respects: its status as music, its status as art and the extremely interesting aesthetic responses it evokes. I will argue for its value as an art form on the grounds that: (1) it is a neglected and overlooked area of music in terms of philosophical aesthetics; (2) it raises some interesting ontological questions about the nature of artworks; and (3) it highlights some key aspects of aesthetic responses, e.g., emotions and the body. Examining the works of such music artists as The Jesus and Mary Chain and My Bloody Valentine, both of whom employ this sound phenomenon extensively, and drawing on the philosophical ideas of a number of key thinkers in aesthetics, I aim to show how feedback is situated as an aesthetic "object/environment" and go on to make a tentative exploration into the possibility that emotional responses can be encompassed in the overall aesthetic response to music.

Key Words
aesthetic object/environment, dissonance, guitar feedback, Kant, music, music aesthetics, serialism, Frank Sibley

1. Introduction

"*[Music] is such a great and exceedingly fine art, its effect on man's innermost nature is so powerful, and it is so completely and profoundly understood by him in his innermost being as an entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses even that of the world of perception itself."*

Arthur Schopenhauer[1]

In the above passage, Schopenhauer explains the power music clearly has to move us, claiming that it can do so because it reaches out to, and connects with, whatever it is that makes us the beings we are. Schopenhauer is only one of many philosophers who have sought to explain the nature of music, how we interact with it and why it moves us emotionally in the way that it undoubtedly does. However, what is it that we are actually referring to when we use the word 'music'? What exactly is and is not music, and is there such a distinction at all?

In this account, I will be exploring these and other questions in relation to the creation and employment of discordant sound generally and, more specifically, to the phenomenon of guitar feedback in music. From my research into the aesthetics of feedback, it appears that this phenomenon has so far received no attention in academic literature. Consequently, I have concentrated on articles and works that deal with the wider topic of discordant sound and then applied them wherever possible to the phenomenon of feedback.

Feedback is one of the most dissonant forms of sound, and in its most extreme manifestation is entirely without musical

structure.[2] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)] It is noisy, loud and without any kind of melody that the casual music listener would recognize. Indeed, such a person would probably find it painful listening. A technical description of the creation of feedback can be given as follows:

> "When a tuning fork or piano string is struck, it starts to vibrate at different frequencies simultaneously, but there is a particular frequency at which it is least resistant to vibration, and thus vibrates more vigorously, actually amplifying the energy that was used to start the vibration. Likewise, it will take longer to stop vibrating at that frequency than it will at others. This phenomena is called resonance. Now, if a device is particularly resonant, so that the smallest input of energy excites it into strong resonance, then when its vibration excites other nearby resonant devices, their vibrations will excite the first device further, and a vicious cycle will ensue, the vibrations growing stronger and stronger until stopped by some external force. This phenomena is known as feedback."[3]

The type of feedback sound I will examine is that produced by the electric guitar, where the resonating devices are the strings on the guitar and the speakers within the amplifier.

Given what I have said about the nature and sound of feedback, I will first analyze whether it can be legitimately regarded as music. Once I have established that it can, I will then go on to show that feedback can be regarded as artistic. In the light of these conclusions, I will then examine feedback's various aesthetic qualities, concentrating particularly on those considered emotional in nature. Finally, I will use those emotional responses to support a tentative theory of my own that attempts to explain what happens when we respond aesthetically to the sound of feedback.

Harmony is a fundamental idea that has underpinned the creation of music throughout history and remained largely unchallenged up until the beginning of the twentieth century.[4] The importance of harmony can be found in the writings of the ancient Greek thinkers.[5] For example, Plato believed that the ideal, perfect world of the rational human, as opposed to the imperfect world we humans actually inhabit, would have no room for discord, as discord is imperfect.[6] Before him, Pythagoras considered music to be akin to mathematics, which he deemed as perfectly rational and therefore perfectly harmonious. Consequently, music was also perfect and harmonious, and so disharmony was unacceptable.[7] However, not all thinkers from antiquity shared this view. Some like Aristonexus argued that for the universe to be considered as a harmonious whole, everything within it must be included. Consequently, both harmony and discord were necessary components of a harmonious universe.[8]

Moving forward to the nineteenth century, both Georg W.F. Hegel and Arthur Schopenhauer also gave serious consideration to the issue of music and the aesthetic. Hegel believed humans to be on a path to absolute knowledge and

viewed this journey as a kind of evolutionary process. For Hegel, we are at that point in the journey where music is taking the quest onwards. Consequently, because progress in music is progress in knowledge, it could be argued that the emergence of the extensive use of discordant sound in the creation of music is a progressive step.[9] That is, it is giving us knowledge about ourselves and our world, albeit perhaps the darker side, and a knowledge that harmony cannot give us. Harmony only gives us part of the story of the Universe; discordant sound helps to complete the picture. Schopenhauer saw the world as free, indeterminate '"Will."' As Wayne Bowman puts it, the world is "wholly irrational, pure blind energy, a ceaseless striving devoid of meaning. . . Mind and reason distort everything they touch, imputing order, meaning and purpose to what is at base pointless and meaningless. . . [Music] is a copy of the Will itself, a face-to-face encounter with the innermost nature of existence."[10] In this respect, feedback seems to fit this view, for in its extreme form it is a random sound that has no pattern whatsoever. It just occurs and follows an indeterminate path, having no external force guiding it.

2. Is Discordant Sound Music?

a. The social acceptance of discordant sound

So, it is clear that the notion of what is harmonious and discordant in music has been debated for as long as there have been humans around with the faculties to hear it and then subsequently ponder about it. However, instead of beginning my detailed examination of the merits of discordant sound with purely philosophical arguments, I will instead first outline its gradual social acceptance over the last hundred years; the "de-noising of noise," as Stan Link puts it.[11] I believe this is the way the majority of us would feel most comfortable with when assessing the claim that discordant sound should be legitimately considered as music.[12]

Most of us have, to varying degrees, knowledge of the different genres that have characterized the musical landscape of the twentieth century, although few of us can claim to be able to understand or enjoy all of them. However no genre, whether it be classical, folk, rock or whatever, has escaped the influence of discordance, and the musical languages we all use have some element of it in their make-up. After outlining this history of discordance - tracing its development from early twentieth century orchestral music, through primitive electronic music, and on to its more widely known manifestations in contemporary rock music such as feedback, I will then examine the philosophical ideas of some key thinkers, both traditional and contemporary, on the subject of aesthetics that can be applied to the realm of music.

Claude Debussy is credited with ushering in the new notion of harmony, for it was he that "accomplished the sweeping aside of all previously held theories of harmonic science. His work inaugurated a period of complete harmonic freedom which has been a stumbling block for innumerable listeners ever since."[13] Debussy "played by ear," creating sounds that he found pleasing but which, when analysed, were naturally, if not radically, dissonant. So, even through the harmonic tradition, classical music was now being challenged. However,

Debussy's form of dissonance paled in comparison to the revolutionary work of two younger composers of his time: Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg.

Stravinsky created the seminal work *The Rite of Spring* between 1911 and 1913, a composition described as "a forceful, even savage, unpredictable employment of rhythmic patterns, an effectively idiosyncratic sense of instrumental color and chord spacing."[14] Unsurprisingly, it outraged contemporary critics. And if this was all too much for the conservative music lovers of the time, they had already had to digest Schoenberg's atonality, a new form of musical scale known as serialism. Serialism completely transformed orchestral music, allowing contemporary composers to break free of what they considered the constraints of the established diatonic (seven-note) tonal scale. This approach culminated in the post-war works of Olivier Messiaen and Joseph Schillinger, who transformed Schoenberg's serialism into a more radical form, that of total, or integral serialism, a mathematical method of musical composition. As one can imagine, the style of music created using serialism was completely at odds with, for example, that of the 18th and 19th centuries, and many simply denounced this "modern" music. Brindle argues this is hardly surprising, given that total serialism, by its very nature, threw up "unorthodox rhythmic designs" that "never belonged to music before."[15]

The post-war years saw the rise of a completely new type of orchestral and electronic music created by John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen, respectively. Offering an alternative to the growing constraints of total serialism, Cage and Stockhausen employed techniques such as indeterminacy and chance that inevitably led to discordance and noise. Cage epitomized the post-modernist idea of music, i.e., its deconstruction. But in terms of progress, Cage appeared to signal a natural dead-end as far as musical progress was concerned. Stockhausen and his compatriots, on the other hand, introduced ideas and effects that were later to be embraced by the rock and electronic fraternities. The electronic revolution brought with it new devices such as reverb units, delay units, oscillators, phase units, compressors, variable speed tape recorders, filters, etc, and these were allied in the early Sixties with the electric guitar. The rest, as they say, is history.

b. Discordance as a new musical language

From the mid-Sixties to the present day, the distorted guitar sound, feedback and discordant electronic noise have formed an integral part of the development of popular music.[16] Indeed, they have to a great extent been assimilated into what the composer Aaron Copland, who was himself writing in the 1950s, called comprehensible "musical languages":

> "Despite harmonic innovations, a large part of contemporary [classical] music remains basically diatonic and tonal. But it is no longer the diatonic, tonal harmony of the period before the turn of the century. With the familiarity bred of phonographic disk, radio and film track, the daring harmonies of the day before yesterday are gradually and painlessly being assimilated into the

musical language of our time." (emphasis added)[17]

Copland's comments on assimilation and language are particularly pertinent in relation to popular music and the role played by the prime deliverer of discord in the second half of the twentieth century, the electric guitar. Since the 1960s, the creative use of distortion and feedback has grown to such extent that it is no longer seen as something that should either be strongly discouraged or banned from the airwaves.[18] Consequently, contemporary bands that use distortion and feedback techniques are no longer considered subversive. These once-dangerous elements have since been subsumed into the musical language of our time. That is not to say that there are no individuals out there who continue to claim that such discordant sounds are simply noise and should be censored. However, it is simply the case that these individuals do not understand the new language. But that is neither the concern nor the fault of the creators of a language that has since been adopted, if through abstention in some cases, by the majority of music listeners.

Surveying the musical landscape of the beginning of the 21st century, we also find that dissonance has taken a firm root in electronic music and continues to be developed. In that respect, it seems to offer more of a challenge to the accepted 'language' of popular music. Twenty-first century musical artists such as Autechre[19] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)] and Squarepusher[20] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)] employ sounds and arrangements that continually challenge the listener, no doubt driving some contemporary listeners to give up and exasperatingly complain that it "isn't music," is simply "a racket," or is a "noise without rhyme or reason." Indeed, there might well come a point where I will fail to understand the musical language of the future, although I sincerely hope not. What cannot be disputed is that the language of discord has, to a sizeable degree, been learnt by the musical society and there will always be enough people who are willing to learn the language of whatever radical new music is offered, eventually ensuring that it find its way into the existing musical canon.

c. The distinction between everyday sounds and 'sounds as music'

So far, I have argued that, in terms of the history of music at least, discordant sound such as feedback has gained widespread appeal and acceptance as we have become more familiar with new musical languages. However, this does not exactly put the matter to rest, as there is clearly still disagreement over the inclusion of feedback as sound capable of being appreciated, despite the fact that a great many people, including myself, do appreciate it. It might therefore be helpful if we can find a non-prejudicial angle, one that does not rely on personal taste, from which to argue that feedback can be considered as music. Clearly it will be harder for the prejudiced listener to disregard such a position. I believe one such approach is to consider whether or not we can distinguish that a particular sound is simply an everyday sound or whether it is music.

In our everyday lives we hear a great many 'sounds' and

'noises.' These can range from industrial machinery, traffic, crowds, police sirens, conversations and so on. Some of these environmental sounds will combine to create a general hubbub, such as that which I experience when sitting in a public park in central London. Indeed, while writing this particular passage in the university library, I am aware of an array of different sounds around me, such as voices from both near and far, the hum of my computer, the squeak of a chair and the sound seeping from the headpohones of the person sitting next to me. In the case of these everyday sounds, it is clear that we do not listen to these sounds for aspects that would be considered musical. Indeed, it is often the case that some such sounds will normally perform a simple purpose and no more. For example, the sound of a fire alarm is not music but simply a way of warning people of the likelihood that there is a fire in the building. The sound of my alarm clock simply tells me that it is time for me to get up. The chugging sound of a fax machine tells me that my fax message is being sent. In these three instances, I am clearly not seeking out any musical aspects of the sounds. Instead, for me the sounds simply perform a function.

It seems from this that, amongst other things, one can determine whether or not a sound can be considered as music if one judges whether it is heard either as part of a musical composition or in a purely functional way. In the case of the fire alarm, my alarm clock, the fax machine, or the sounds of any other mechanism for that matter, if they are used in conjunction with sound that is considered music - such as having a beat, in string arrangement, with bass guitar, and so on - then these sounds will be heard as sound with contemplative qualities, i.e., as music. Consequently, the sound of the fire alarm in this context is no longer considered a din, warning of us of potential danger. Instead, the listener is treating it as a pure aesthetic object, something to be contemplated.

d. Controlled and uncontrolled discordance

However, when considering the status of discordant sound, we should perhaps make a distinction here between two types: controlled and uncontrolled discordance. Examples of the first will include using everyday sounds in musical compositions, such as those employed in *musique concrete* compositions in the Thirties, or by contemporary groups such as Stomp, who make music using everyday objects such as bins, plastic containers and cigarette lighters.[21] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)] In such cases, the creator controls the amount of 'everyday' sound employed in a work, i.e., where it is placed, how often it occurs, its volume level in the sound mix, and so on. Furthermore, a composer can score the moments where the sound is heard in the composition.

Feedback on the other hand is more often uncontrolled, and many artists will employ it without taking any heed of how it will sound once it is let loose. For example, Flying Saucer Attack's *The Drowners*[22] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)] , shows clearly the group abandoning control of the feedback completely and allowing it to find its own course throughout the song. The only control that can be attributed to the band is the length of time it is allowed to

play, i.e., the duration of the song itself. However, there is no control over the volume, scale or pitch of the sound at the moment of recording, although I concede that some manipulation would have taken place during the mixing of the various tracks to achieve the desired 'final' version. In terms of scoring music, it is clear that feedback such as this simply cannot be recorded in this way.

It is also possible for feedback to be used as an 'extra' performer in a musical piece in which an artist improvises as it plays. This idea is a little like two jazz artists or rock guitarists improvising together in a 'jamming' session, when neither player will know exactly what the other is intending to play. In the case of feedback, the artist playing alongside it will have no idea what path the sound will take as he or she plays. It is a little like two subjective beings, two minds interacting with each other to create a musical work. This idea will be further explored later when I discuss Immanuel Kant's view of the role of the imagination in the aesthetic response.

3. Is Discordant Sound Art?

a. Is feedback a human creation?

So far we have established that feedback can be used - both in a controlled and uncontrolled way - as part of a musical composition. In that respect, I argue that it should no longer be considered a din but should instead be contemplated as a musical sound alongside other sounds in a composition. However, is this enough to be able to afford feedback the status of being an art form? I will consider this question next.

Deciding whether or not something is a work of art has been and continues to be the subject of extensive debate. This debate centers around the degree and type of human involvement deemed necessary to confer the status of art on an object or event. Due to lack of space here, I cannot explore at length the issues involved, but a full and clear exposition can be found in Stephen Davies' work, *"Definitions of Art"*.

In relation to human involvement, Davies outlines two kinds of artifactuality:

> In its primary (a) sense "artifact" means that which is modified by work, by contrast with that which occurs in its natural state. Many aestheticians and a very few dictionaries recognize the following as an alternative (b) meaning: that which has significance for the members of a culture; that which invites interpretation as opposed to mere explication."[23]

I will now consider where the creation of guitar feedback fits in relation to these two definitions with a view to answering the question I posed earlier. That is, can we accord feedback the status as an art form?

We can ask whether feedback is simply a naturally occurring sound like that of waves breaking on a shore, i.e., an unpredictable sound not directly created by a human hand, that is capable of inviting interpretation by humans [meaning (b)]. Or, alternatively, we can ask whether it is a naturally

occurring form of music like that created by man-made devices, such as the Aeolian harp or wind chimes [meaning (a)].

Analyzing the two counter examples I gave earlier in this section, the waves and the Aeolian harp, it seems that feedback satisfies both criteria. In its most extreme form, the creator has no control over the way the sound will fluctuate once set in motion. In that respect, it can be likened to the random sound of the waves. It also has the potential to invite interpretation by those listening to it in the same way that the waves have the potential for interpretation by a particular group. However, it is also clear that without the initial involvement of humans, the sound of feedback would not exist at all. Consequently, the production and sound of feedback seems more akin to that of the Aeolian harp or the wind chimes.

While it seems we consider the sound of the chimes or the Aeolian harp to be music, we may not be able to go as far as to call it art. This, it could be argued, is because there is no human agent actually playing the instrument. The sound, or music, occurs naturally and unpredictably as a result of interaction between the instruments and the wind. But it nevertheless seems the case that these instruments have been designed by humans to create natural music, even if they are not actually played by humans directly. I would argue that the same applies to feedback. Humans do not "play" feedback, as such. Instead, it is a sound that naturally occurs when a guitar is played close to an amplifier. However, as in the case of the Aeolian harp and the wind chimes, there is a human hand present in the creation of the sound. That is, humans have created the amplifiers and the guitars and created devices to allow electricity to pass through both instruments. They deliberately set the controls on the amplifier to allow feedback to occur, and position the guitar in such a way that feedback is subsequently created. The sound that results may well be completely arbitrary in the same way as the sound of the Aeolian harp or the wind chimes. However, neither the sound of feedback nor the sounds of the harp or the wind chimes would exist at all without the initial involvement of the human hand.

b. Feedback as an example of installation art

Even if one is not tempted to agree with what I have so far said to support my argument that feedback is music and therefore art, there is another sense in which feedback can be considered artistic. To illustrate this sense, I will use the example of a concert I attended in 1989 at the Brixton Academy in London. The group I saw, The Jesus and Mary Chain, were renowned for their deliberate and extensive use of feedback in their songs (a musical ethos that can be traced back to artists such as The Grateful Dead and Neil Young in the 1960s and 1970s). When the band finished, the guitarists placed their instruments against the amplifiers and left the stage. As the amplifiers were still switched on, the interaction between them and the guitars created feedback that shrieked uncontrollably around the concert hall. However, rather than finding the sound alienating, we fans were enthralled by what seemed like the noise of the apocalypse, a jarring yet

completely hypnotic sonic assault. Indeed, we attended the concert with the expectation to hear it. In that respect, the feedback could be regarded as auditory installation art, exhibited or performed in a concert hall. Later in this paper, I will examine in much greater detail my reactions to such aural experiences when I explore my responses to a live performance from the group My Bloody Valentine in the late 1980s.

The same sound event could just as easily have been performed in an art gallery, and the art world would almost certainly have deemed it art, either celebrating it or denouncing it in the way the art world invariably does. The only difference is that it was not being experienced in an art gallery but in a concert hall instead. However, as far as I can see, there appears to be no difference between the art gallery and the concert hall in terms of the medium in which the feedback is played and heard. If the same set-up had been re-created in a room at the Tate Modern or put forward as an entry for the Turner Prize, people would still go to hear it and pass comment. In this situation, there does not appear to be any emphasis on feedback being music as such; it is only sound that is to be contemplated in an artistic environment. In a way, this is similar to my reaction to the feedback created at the end of the concert. An aesthetic appreciation is taking place in relation to the feedback sound, not in terms of its being music but in terms of its being art, i.e., a sound experienced within a confined space.

4. Can Discordant Sound Have Aesthetic Value?

a. Aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities

Before I deal with the issue of aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities, I must at this juncture acknowledge the considerable debate that exists between analytic and pragmatic aestheticians over whether or not the art work and the aesthetic response can, or should, be treated as separate and distinct.[24] Although some might object to this distinction being employed in this paper, and I am myself sympathetic to their concerns, I do not have the space to explore the arguments in depth here. Suffice to say that it is solely for the purposes of my analysis that I discuss the music/art aspects and aesthetic responses separately. In any event, later in this paper I will explore the ideas from both the analytic and pragmatist camps in relation to my analysis of the bodily experience of feedback.

However we consider the status of feedback, whether it be as music, as something that has a quality beyond its nature as a sound or as a piece of conceptual art, it appears that what binds the three notions together is that they each can arouse an aesthetic response. So far, I have attempted to establish that feedback can be regarded as a form of music and that it can be valued artistically. It seems that to the music- or art-lover, at least, this is a fundamental requirement for a piece having aesthetic value. However, even if I have failed up to this point to establish to the music or art critic's satisfaction that feedback is either music or art, I nevertheless believe that I can argue that feedback has aesthetic qualities regardless of whether or not it is deemed to be either music or art.

In this endeavour I will appeal to the observations of Frank Sibley outlined in his work *Aesthetic Concepts*.[25] Sibley argues that all things have aesthetic qualities, because we can use aesthetic terminology, however imaginatively or perfunctorily, to describe everything around us:

> I have gone for my examples of aesthetic expressions in the first place to critical and evaluative discourse about works of art because it is there particularly that they abound. But now I wish to widen the topic; we employ terms the use of which require an exercise of taste not only when discussing the arts but quite liberally throughout discourse in everyday life."[26]

Sibley was particularly interested in how we define aesthetic qualities. In *Aesthetic Concepts*, he sought to examine the words and phrases we use everyday to describe the world we perceive through our sensory apparatus. Up to that time, aesthetics concerned itself largely with defining the aesthetic, using descriptions such as the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque. However, Sibley did not seek to do this. Instead, he considered everyday phrases such as 'scruffily dressed'" or 'smartly turned out' and concluded that these too were aesthetic in nature, being descriptions of the person's attire.

Sibley distinguished these aesthetic phrases from non-aesthetic phrases. To illustrate this distinction, one can say that a tie is dark red with green and yellow spots and also that it is garish or loud. The first describes the tie's non-aesthetic qualities, whereas the second two refer to its aesthetic qualities. In terms of feedback, I can also use aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities to describe the sound that occurs in the finale of the song *Crystallised* by Phasespace.[27] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)] In non-aesthetic terms, I can say that it is a sound that randomly shifts in pitch, volume and scale, with no obvious pattern or structure. Similarly, I can say that it is a sound that starts loud, becomes quieter, then increases in volume again, and so on. In aesthetic terms, I can use words such as extreme, noisy, jarring, mind-blowing, overwhelming, joyous, cacophonous, malevolent, screeching and so on. I can also use phrases and sentences like "it wails like a wild beast from depths of Hades" or "it coils like a snake around the melody," or "it intertwines itself remorselessly around the vocals and guitars." All these are examples of aesthetic responses, both negative and positive.

Sibley argues that non-aesthetic qualities can be pointed out to anyone with the appropriate working senses, while aesthetic qualities require both the senses and a perceptiveness of taste. It should be noted here that Sibley does not mean that the appreciation of the aesthetic is solely the preserve of the music or art critic. He simply argues that to have this perception, it has to be acquired or learned. It cannot be ascertained by simply seeing or hearing something. And, depending on our various tastes, these capacities will be developed to different degrees. For example, my perceptive capacities are far more attuned to music than to conceptual art. Consequently, I find that I have a greater affinity to music, which will go some way to explaining why I have a

fondness for feedback. Someone who has little interest in music, but who has a great love of Cubism, will probably find feedback incomprehensible and a Picasso painting magical. However, this does not mean that I do not have the capacity to learn to appreciate a Cubist painting. This capacity may simply lie dormant and may never be exercised. And the same might be true of the art lover and his or her contact with feedback.

Sibley goes on to argue that if one accepts the distinction between non-aesthetic and aesthetic terminology in our everyday discourse, and that aesthetic terminology refers to all the objects of our perception, then we must ascribe aesthetic qualities to all things and not just art. Simply because we do not ordinarily perceive aesthetic qualities in everyday things, does not entail that they are not there. Consequently, all objects of our perception can exhibit aesthetic qualities, and clearly such an approach would allow the phenomenon of feedback to be included.[28]

b. Kant and the aesthetic response to feedback

Having now firmly established that feedback has aesthetic qualities, I will now return to a point that I mentioned earlier concerning the invention of electronics and the effect it has had on music generally. I said that in the time of pre-amplification and pre-electronic music, all music had largely been created directly by humans. However, amplification and electronics changed the way music is produced. The phenomenon of feedback is largely created through the processes of the electronic hardware housed within an amplifier.

Given this development, it might be interesting to explore how a philosopher from the age before electronics would approach the idea of feedback, a sound dependent on amplification for its existence. Although Kant might seem an unlikely candidate, I believe he offers useful ways of analyzing some aspects of our aesthetic response to feedback. As we shall see, aspects of his account are problematic, but it nevertheless provides an interesting perspective.

As I said earlier, Sibley believes that we exercise taste when apprehending aesthetic qualities. He also believes that this perception of taste is dependent on our senses and not on general concepts formed by the mind. Kant also believed this and, in his "Critique of Judgement" (1790) he referred to this exercise of taste as the judgment of taste. For Kant, the judgment of taste is something that we immediately exercise when we perceive an object, it is a "capacity for responding to beauty."[29] It is a non-cognitive judgment, i.e., one that does not involve complete understanding, objective knowledge, at the outset. This is in contrast to cognitive judgments, in which we seek to understand or comprehend something and attach a concept or generalization, grounded in the objective world of experience, to the object of understanding. For example, if I perceive something to be beautiful, Kant argues that the judgment of taste does not attach a concept of beauty to it. As we have seen, Sibley would also accept this assertion. Instead, an aesthetic quality like beauty arises from the reaction to an object, i.e., the pleasure (or, for Kant, the delight) that is aroused in us by the

object and prior to the involvement of our understanding.[30]

The question that now arises is how our minds deal with this reaction, this judgment of taste, if it arrives to us prior to cognition. Kant argues that two mental activities are at work in aesthetic appreciation: the imagination and the understanding. In our everyday perception of things, it is the understanding that has the upper hand, attaching concepts to the everyday things we see, hear, touch and so on, so we can make sense of, and impose order on, our world. To explain this idea, Colin Lyas examines what happens when I see a cat.[32] In purely cognitive judgments, the imagination handles the organization of the random stimuli coming in to my senses to form the image of the cat, and then the understanding applies the concept of '"cat" to it. The result is that I see a cat. In an aesthetic experience, however, Kant argues that the imagination and understanding enter into what is termed "free play." In such cases, the concept-forming understanding has far less control over the imagination. Lyas provides a further example:

> "consider. . .the case in which I say "Turn at the tree by the pub." Here, on Kant's view, the imagination is only active minimally in organising the stimuli that will be conceptualized as trees and pubs. Now consider the way in which a child, in play, does not merely thus label trees but imagines some tree as a spectral figure and, moreover, richly embroiders that imagining, so that the tree is personified, given a life, history and a role. . . Here the imagination plays."[31]

While this is a clear exposition of the dominant role of the imagination, where exactly does the understanding fit in? In the above example, the child may create imaginary things around the idea of a tree, but although he or she might turn it into a tree-like monster, as in the film *Poltergeist*, it is still a tree. It has not turned into something completely different, such as a spaceship. It is here that we see the understanding at work, reigning in the imagination by imposing the concept of the tree. As Lyas explains:

> . . .the play to which Kant refers occurs because in imagination we push the limits of those constraints. But the understanding lodged in the [tree] pushes back."[33]

Before I go on to examine how these concepts might be applied to my own experiences when listening to feedback, it should initially be noted, at least, that music actually occupies quite a lowly place in Kant's theory of the aesthetic. This might appear odd, given music's obvious power to move us. However, this idea is better understood when we recognize Kant's emphasis on form in aesthetic appreciation. Crucial to Kant's theory is the distinction between true aesthetic beauty (the judgment of taste) and the agreeable. Music cannot be regarded as beautiful for it has no form upon which to make a judgment of beauty. For Kant, music's transience and fleeting nature relegates its aesthetic status, as it simply contributes to a play of sensations which is solely cathartic in nature, i.e., it only has the capacity to stimulate or arouse the senses, to be agreeable. In other words, enjoying music is more a matter

of sensual pleasure rather than contemplative delight.

Herman Parret counters Kant's conclusions on the aesthetic merit of music, claiming that they are reached due to his lack of real understanding of its nature. Among Parret's arguments, the one that I find most convincing is Kant's neglect of the importance of rhythm. (I will explore this idea in more detail later.) In addition, Parret asks why Kant cannot accept any harmony of sounds to be considered as forms. One of Kant's ideas about the form is that it is based on mathematical principles. However, Parret convincingly contends that this does not sit well with his idea that harmony cannot be considered a form, for surely the whole notion of harmony is itself based on mathematical principles.[34]

So, leaving aside Kant's own perception of (or, perhaps, prejudices against) music, we can nevertheless use his theory to analyze what is happening when I hear feedback. For me, at least, it seems that the imagination/understanding process Kant describes is exactly what takes place when I listen to feedback; that is, I take delight in the sound. For Kant, this delight occurs because the imagination delights in forming patterns. While feedback can be formless in the sense that it is often not constrained by the melody that surrounds it, or by the person playing the instrument that is creating it, the imagination can nevertheless lock into it as a series of sounds of different pitches and waveforms and so create a pattern. It is for this reason that a feeling of delight is engendered within me when I hear feedback, as it is a direct manifestation of my imagination playing with the sound. The understanding then applies the concept of feedback; this allows me to comprehend the phenomenon in terms of a form of sound, and so I hear it as a wailing, screeching, exhilarating sound.

An interesting distinction can be made here as to exactly what happens within my mind when I hear feedback. As I said, Kant believed that both the imagination and the understanding are involved. However, to what extent is each element involved when I hear feedback? For example, do I experience pleasure simply because my imagination is in sole charge of affairs and is allowed the freedom to form its own patterns? That is, my understanding or cognitive powers do not intervene to allow me to make sense of it. The pattern simply occurs through my imagination alone, and is therefore beyond my cognitive control; it is from this that I experience pleasure. Or, alternatively, is it the imagination and the understanding working together that brings about the pleasure? That is, it is the cognitive element that allows me to know and make sense of the feedback sound and it is this 'making sense' that brings about the pleasure.

The best example I can use to compare these two positions is the song *Upside Down* by The Jesus and Mary Chain, as it was the first song I heard which contained unbridled guitar feedback as a fundamental component.[35] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)]From the moment the song begins, the feedback screeches uncontrollably and can be very disorientating. That said, while the feedback cannot be ignored due to its sheer intensity, it is nevertheless anchored within the song's rhythm structure. In fact, almost all the music I have heard that involves feedback is fixed to some

degree within the confines of a musical composition. In that respect, it would appear that the second interpretation is appropriate, for while I can clearly take delight in hearing the feedback sound in *Upside Down*, there is nevertheless a melody riding over it and song structure housing it. I would argue that my cognitive powers, or understanding, would clearly lock into this structure and allow me to take pleasure in interpreting the feedback as both belonging to the song and enhancing the song's overall effect.

However, in the case of the Jesus and Mary Chain concert mentioned earlier, the band had left the stage and simply allowed the feedback sound to build up into a cacophony of relentless noise. No actual songs or melodies were being played at this point. All that I was experiencing was pure feedback. In this instance, it could be argued that my imagination might have complete freedom to create its own patterns with the sound, without being hindered by the understanding, as there was no beat or melody that the understanding could grasp and so make sense of the experience. The same idea could apply if I listened to the feedback sound as an installation art exhibit.

c. Reflections on the emotional and aesthetic response to feedback

Throughout my account, I have often referred to my responses to the sound of feedback. Just as Sibley pointed out that we use various responses to objects of perception that are both aesthetic and non-aesthetic in nature, within the realm of the aesthetic itself there are also different kinds of response. For example, I can comment on the look, feel or sound of an object of perception by using terms like beautiful, elegant, graceful, garish, hideous and so on. However, I can also use terms such as moving, powerful, dynamic, tear-jerking, somber, joyous, etc. -- responses that are emotional in nature. However, simply showing that aesthetic language can encompass emotional language does not explain how those emotions are elicited. In this section, my aim is to provide a tentative explanation about the emotional experience of feedback and how that supports its aesthetic value. While I do not have space in this discussion to examine the various theories that abound on music and emotion, I would nevertheless like to explore the idea of allying the aesthetically holistic thoughts of Sibley with the mental framework outlined by Kant.

Earlier I looked at some ways in which feedback can be considered aesthetically from a Kantian perspective, whereby the feeling of pleasure is created by the imagination alone or through its interplay with the understanding. However, as Sibley rightly argues, aesthetic responses are not confined solely to pleasure, but encompass a huge range of reactions, some of which are clearly emotional in nature. It would therefore follow that we must look to see what Kant has to say about the emotions in his theory of aesthetics.

Unfortunately, we run into problems here, as Kant offers no place at all for emotional responses. They simply belong outside the aesthetic realm. Indeed, music itself actually occupies quite a lowly place in Kant's theory of the aesthetic. But why is this the case? On the face of it, it does appear odd,

given music's obvious power to move us. Kant's position is better understood when we recognize his emphasis on form in aesthetic appreciation. Crucial to Kant's theory is the distinction between true aesthetic beauty (contemplation of the form), and the agreeable (stimulation of the senses). For Kant, music can never be regarded as beautiful, for it has no form upon which to make a judgment of beauty.

So, if I am to employ the ideas of Kant to support my assertion that the emotions are fundamental to the aesthetic response and show how they arise aesthetically, I must show, at the very least, that some of Kant's ideas can be successfully challenged, particularly with regard to emotional responses. In my efforts, I appeal to an idea I introduced earlier: Herman Parret's claim that Kant crucially neglects the importance of rhythm, a concept in which the mind imposes a spatial dimension to a melody.

Kant was willing to accept that a melody comprised of isolated, pure sounds, not mediated through an instrument, can be thought of as having a form. In that respect, a melody produced by a single human voice would qualify.[36] However, Parret rightly argues that without rhythm such a melody would simply not be perceived as being a melody, and so its form would not be perceived aesthetically.[37] This sense of rhythm elicited by the melody invariably manifests itself in bodily movement, such as head-nodding, foot-tapping or dancing. Consequently, given that rhythm relates directly to movement of the body, it seems that the bodily aspect is fundamental to the aesthetic enjoyment of music. Indeed, this is especially true of the elements of rock music such as feedback. Once a bodily element like rhythm is shown to be vital for us to appreciate a melody aesthetically in the way Kant believes we do, then we move towards including mentally responsive features that are caused by bodily responses. We may then be able to bring in emotional responses, e.g., crying, laughing, joyfulness, etc.

I have argued here that music and bodily movement are inextricably linked by the idea of rhythm. However, in forging this link it appears I now find myself at odds with an important element of Kant's aesthetic theory: his distinction between the realms of the beautiful and the simply agreeable that I mentioned earlier. For Kant, this association of music with the body means it must be relegated merely to the realm of what "the senses like in sensation," i.e., the agreeable, and so is not a suitable subject for aesthetic appreciation.[38]

In her paper, "Sniffing and Savouring" (2005), Emily Brady makes a number of strong arguments against Kant's view in relation to bodily sensations, putting forward the case that they can meet his criteria of the proper objects of aesthetic judgment.[40] As the title suggests, she concentrates on the areas of smelling and tasting, but her claims clearly have positive implications for the arguments I am making here since they relate to the body.

First, she argues that, contrary to traditional aesthetic theories, sensations can be disinterested. Disinterestedness is defined as contemplation of an object's aesthetic properties for their own sake rather than for some other interest. She argues that eating and drinking can be enjoyed in this way and not

just as a means to satisfy hunger or gluttony. Second, Brady turns her attention to the traditional aesthetic belief that "tastes and smells lack a mental component considered essential to aesthetic appreciation" given their association with the body in that they lack structure.[39] However, Brady shows that smells and tastes can have both simple and complex structures, providing a detailed analysis of both wine and perfume. Third, she contends that Kant is wrong to claim that our appreciation of smells and tastes lacks a mental dimension, making a detailed analysis of an individual's mental sensations arising from tasting ice-cream such as reflecting on the taste, making comparisons, and the memories the taste and smell conjures up. Fourth, she raises an issue which has a direct bearing on the arguments I put forward later in this paper, that is, the role of emotions in the aesthetic response. Brady argues that smells and tastes regularly involve emotional reactions and provides a number of examples.[41] Finally, she addresses the claim that smells and tastes "are not easily specifiable as aesthetic objects" in that smells and tastes are by their very nature, fleeting and therefore appear incapable of being the subjects of contemplative appreciation. While accepting this has some justification, she nevertheless contends that she has shown that there is a degree of reflection and imagination at work when smelling and tasting, and so smells and tastes "can be the subjects of aesthetic appreciation, even if they are not like more traditional objects that sit in galleries."[42]

With this in mind, I argue that bodily sensations cannot be simply agreeable, as Kant would have it. However, I remain broadly sympathetic to his views concerning the mental framework he outlines to explain how an aesthetic response is elicited and, if we accept some of Brady's arguments outlined above, bodily sensations may after all have a place in his aesthetic theory. Kant's aesthetic position may be shown to be perhaps more flexible than he himself would have had it, and I would now like to go on to show that the mental framework he outlined may elicit an aesthetic response that is more complex and can incorporate other responses, such as emotions. What we now have is possibly a way of allying the ideas of Sibley and Kant in the way I suggested at the beginning of this section. To give further support to these points I now examine what is happening aesthetically, and more specifically emotionally, when one listens to feedback.

d. Reflections on experiencing feedback

When I come into contact with feedback, I know I experience emotions because I can actually feel them. They are real to me. So, how do my emotional responses arise when I hear feedback or any other type of music for that matter? As I have explained, Kant argues that when the imagination is presented with sense stimuli, it simply delights in forming patterns from it. The understanding then attaches concepts to allow us to make sense of those patterns. It is this process that produces aesthetic pleasure. However, I argue instead that the imagination and understanding play a much wider role; that is, they are responsible for creating a much more complex aesthetic response, some of which will be emotional in nature. So what exactly do I believe is happening when I experience an emotional reaction to feedback? To help answer this

question, it might be helpful if I set out a real-life scenario in which I experienced the sound of feedback, and then go on to describe the emotions I felt during that experience. The example I will use is hearing a live version of My Bloody Valentine's *You Made Me Realise* in 1987 at the University of London Union.

Prior to hearing the track in this live setting, I had only heard it as a studio recording, although this in itself is a joy for noise fans such as myself. The song is a classic example of fuzz-guitar, alternative rock, played by a noise-orientated guitar band. However, what places the song in a higher league to its counterparts in terms of composition is its driving, mercilessly pounding middle section, where the guitars depart from the standard verse-chorus structure and enter into a freeform wall of noise.[43] [Listen to sound clip. (Click on 'Preview,' if necessary.)]. This section lasts for about 30 seconds, whereupon it picks up the rhythm again and leads into the final verse. Having already had my head pummelled by the studio recording, I was understandably nervous and excited about how the band would play the song in a live setting. Would the band be able to recreate the noise I so love on the studio version? Would it be a disappointment, or instead actually surpass the studio version?

As it transpired, the middle section took on a whole new life of its own in its live manifestation. This was mainly due to the fact that its length was somewhere close to ten minutes rather than thirty seconds. And the sound wasn't just loud, it was somewhere beyond loud: to the point where it blocked out every other sense. You could clearly see the band delighting in watching the faces of the crowd as they produced what was a kind of sonic torture (legend has it that this part was intentionally played at frequencies scientifically proven to cause the most ear damage). I could see some people move from a state of enjoyment, through puzzlement and confusion, and on to sheer terror. Indeed, some people left the hall.

In my own case, I experienced a whole range of emotional responses before and during performance of the song. I felt a kind of nervous apprehension during the build up to the freeform section. Once it arrived, complete elation overwhelmed me as the wall of sonic feedback surpassed all my expectations. However, as the feedback began to build and build to deafening levels, my feelings became strangely mixed. On the one hand, I felt a kind of quasi-religious fervour as I closed my eyes and found my mind transfixed on the sound washing over me. On the other was a feeling of genuine fear for the safety of my eardrums, and there was a number of moments when I thought it best to leave the hall. But I decided to stay on and fight through the pain/pleasure barrier. In addition, throughout the experience I felt the unusual sense of being both alone with myself and in union with those around me, and it was joyous in both respects. This mixture of awe and fear seemed like the kinds of feelings I might experience if I ever witness an alien landing. Indeed, the blinding white light that accompanied the feedback did lend an 'other-world' effect to the event.

The above description of the feelings I experienced at the concert would not be out of place in the work of either Richard

Shusterman or Crispin Sartwell. Shusterman explores the aesthetic nature of art generally, dealing with, among other things, our responses to rock music. He argues that the aesthetic response must include roles for both the mind and the senses:

> Rock songs are typically enjoyed through moving, dancing, and singing along with the music, often with such vigorous efforts that we break into sweat and eventually exhaust ourselves. The much more energetic and kinesthetic response evoked by rock exposes fundamental passivity of the traditional aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness. . . Popular arts like rock music thus suggest a radically revised aesthetic with a joyous return to the somatic dimension which philosophy has long repressed. . ."[44]

Sartwell argues for the same conclusion from examining the notion of beauty in various cultures and the importance of the myriad of responses and meanings it elicits within the members of those cultures. He particularly appeals to music of reggae artists such as Bob Marley who, he argues, creates a physical, yet spiritual, interaction with the listener through popular music:

> Marley. . . managed to convey the essence of Rastafarianism to much of the world [and] this spread is due to Marley's incredibly intense and open expression of political and spiritual longing. One longs for, through, and as Marley as one listens to his records. Marley's music exists. . .as something that drives rhythm into religious experience. It is a music that arises from and gives rise to contemplation as well as celebration."[45]

This idea of the whole aesthetic experience including, among other things, rhythm and bodily movement, is one I clearly share, and their persuasive arguments have gained credence in recent years as a credible alternative to the much narrower traditional aesthetic theories such as Kant's.

Returning to Sibley's view of the aesthetic response, my various emotions and feelings in reaction to the feedback exhibited in *You Made Me Realise* can all be regarded as aesthetic, for they can all be described using aesthetic language. In that respect, Sibley arrives at the same conclusions as Shusterman and Sartwell, albeit they are reached from a more analytical perspective.

Of course, in strict Kantian terms this appears not to be possible. Indeed, as we have seen, Kant deems all such responses to musical works as simply sensations eliciting a bodily response. Only responses to form, patterned by our understanding, can produce a pure aesthetic reaction, and the form of music is simply the sounds themselves. Indeed, it can be argued that such notes cannot themselves convey emotions, a position that I entirely support. This position is fine for a formalist such as Kant or his sympathizers. However, it is my opinion that there is more to the aesthetic response than just the reaction to a form, and that my various

responses, including the emotional, are intertwined within the aesthetic and are elicited through the mental framework Kant advocated.

Leaving aside the knowledge that Kant (1) would deem feedback as having no true aesthetic value because it is comprised of layers of sonic discordance and therefore cannot be a pure sound form (i.e., like the human voice), and (2) that he would no doubt abhor the sound of the feedback described above in any event, we can nevertheless analyze what Kant has to say in relation to the processes he claims are going on in the mind. That is, the roles played by the imagination and the understanding. This I now intend to do, examining how both contribute not just to feeling of pleasure, which Kant deemed as the be-all-and-end-all of the aesthetic response, but also to the various other responses such as the emotions that he barred from the aesthetic realm.

As I have explained, feedback is simply a meandering, formless, unstructured sound. Recapping Kant's theory, our imagination is its first port of call in the interpretation process, which then forms patterns in it and derives delight from doing so. The understanding then attaches the concept of feedback to it, and so I recognize it as feedback. However, as well as forming these patterns, I argue that the imagination is also responsible for creating a "mental reality" for whatever object I perceive. In the case of feedback, although it exists as a 'sound' in the real world, it also 'exists' in the mind as something real for as long as the imagination wishes. Consequently, when I experienced the feedback sound during the live performance of *You Made Me Realise*, my mind created a "mental" object towards which I could feel joy, exhilaration and fear. This kind of reality also applies to other art forms, such as novels and paintings. Although they exist as real objects, i.e., the words as marks on a page, and the colors as blobs and strokes of paint, it is only when our imagination gets to work on those marks and blobs that we experience the object aesthetically, one element of which is the emotional response. However, in order to feel such emotions, my imagination must be willing to be engaged, and this may not always be the case.

The arguments I have tentatively expressed in this section are similar to the "make-believe" ideas of Kendall Walton, who claims that one important kind of musical engagement consists in our imagining our "actual introspective awareness of auditory sensations" as we listen to music, that "it is an experience of being aware of our own states of mind."[46] His idea is that, in listening to music, we hear it as an imaginary experience of our own emotional or other psychological states. For example, we imagine being introspectively aware of "an impression of or a feeling about" some instance of "returning or struggling or power..." [I] am "thus imaginatively aware not just of "psychical motions," the "dynamics elements" of emotions, but of "cognitive elements" as well, objects towards which the feelings are directed."[47] This example ties in with my notion of the musical object (in this case, feedback) being given an imagined, mental reality in the mind to which emotions can be directed.

As both Shusterman and Sartwell would argue, we experience

all types of aesthetic response at the same moment, including both the emotional and unemotional. I argue that it is the imagination that allows this to happen. Focusing on the emotional responses, the imagination allows the feedback to have a mental reality to which we can direct those responses. The degree of emotional response is then regulated by the understanding, which will then attach the concept of "true reality," working out how close the reality created by the imagination is to the true reality of our everyday world. Consequently, while I am listening to music containing feedback, reading a novel, or whatever, I might well feel emotions. However, the understanding remains in ultimate control, ensuring that the level of emotional response is appropriate to the object I am experiencing aesthetically.

What I believe is borne out here is the notion of reality and how our imagination and understanding work together to form it in response to all the stimuli we receive, either through our senses or through introspection (i.e., thoughts, dreams, etc.). For me, we can experience an 'imagined' reality and an everyday "true" reality. The mind mediates both. The degree of reality determines the intensity of the emotional response that arises when my imagination is allowed to play with the object of perception, be it a physical object in our world or a single continuous, randomly shifting note like the sound of feedback. In both cases, the imagination creates a "mental reality," and the understanding applies the concept of true reality to which the object of perception is compared. It is through this comparison that the degree of emotional response to the object is determined within the overall aesthetic response.

5. Conclusion

Discordant sound is both an everyday occurrence that we tolerate and a sound that has been utilized by composers and recording artists. In the second instance, it cannot be disputed that the use of such sound has become socially acceptable over the last hundred years.

Feedback is an example of discordant sound that is employed as part of a larger musical composition - in this case, rock music - which is capable of arousing an aesthetic response from a non-prejudicial, objective standpoint. It can also be regarded as art in musical terms because it is fundamentally a human creation and we consider such creations as works of art. Consequently, feedback has a place in musical aesthetics as a legitimate dimension of musical art. It also has the ability not to be interpreted as music at all but as a sound to be contemplated as an example of installation art. This second distinction is crucially important, for even if someone fails to accept that feedback is a form of music, it can nevertheless be afforded aesthetic appreciation as an art work in its own right.

It can also be shown that feedback can have aesthetic qualities both in terms of the holistic ideas of Frank Sibley and the much narrower concept of the aesthetic envisaged by Immanuel Kant.

Exploring the types of responses one can have when listening to feedback, it can perhaps be argued that emotional responses are an important omission in Kant's theory. In other

words, Kant's view of the aesthetic response is unnecessarily narrow and should encompass the emotional. Allying the views of Sibley and Kant and presenting them within a more holistic aesthetic framework, such as that put forward by contemporary thinkers like Shusterman and Sartwell. I have attempted to link the aesthetic to the emotional, whereby the imagination and the understanding contribute to the arousal of, among other things, emotional responses, responses I believe are a fundamental component of the overall aesthetic reaction.

Endnotes

[1] From *The World as Will and Representation* (cited in *Musical Worlds: New Directions in the Philosophy of Music*, Alperson: p.1).

[2] Appendix: audio track 1.

[3] Baald, B., *Fractals and Aesthetics: Pattern and Self-Reference*,' cited at www.birdhouse.org/words/baald/fractal.html.

[4] Indeed, harmony has also been fundamentally important in terms of philosophical inquiry into the aesthetics of music. However, while harmony has reigned supreme since antiquity, there has been disagreement over what constitutes overall harmony. In the music world, it was the twentieth century that saw the most intense battle between the rights of harmony and discord. In the philosophical world, this clash can be traced back to antiquity.

[5] *An Introduction to Aesthetics*, p.12.

[6] *Musical Aesthetics - A Historical Reader (Vol. 1)*, p.3.

[7] *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*, pp.24-25.

[8] *A History of Music Aesthetics*, pp. 52-56, and *Contemplating Music - Source Readings in the Aesthetics of Music Vol. 1*, pp.271-273.

[9] *Philosophical Perspectives in Music*, p.95.

[10] *Philosophical Perspectives in Music*, pp.71-72.

[11] Link, S., "The Work of Reproduction in the Mechanical Aging of an Art: Listening to Noise," *Computer Music Journal* 25:1 (Spring 2001).

[12] In his work, *Why Hardcore Goes Soft: Adorno, Japanese Noise and the Extirpation of Dissonance*, Nicholas Smith offers an interesting examination of the continual assimilation of dissonance in music, focusing specifically on the radical contemporary works of Japanese noise artists such as Boredoms and Melt Banana.

[13] Copland, A., *What to Listen for in Music* (1957) p.74.

[14] Anonymous review, *All Classical Guide*, at www.allclassical.com.

[15] Brindle, R.S., *The New Music - The Avant-garde Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) p.23.

[16] Sixties artists such as The Beatles and Jimi Hendrix employed feedback and noise in their recordings. Indeed, The Beatles are credited as being the first to use feedback in a sound recording on the introduction to the song *I Feel Fine* (Appendix: audio track 2). The gauntlet was taken up by the likes of their contemporaries in the Sixties such as The Velvet Underground (Appendix: audio track 3), and The Jesus and Mary Chain (Appendix: audio track 11) and Sonic Youth (Appendix: audio track 4) during the Eighties and Nineties.

[17] Copland, A., *What to Listen for in Music* (1957), p.77.

[18] Much was made of Nirvana's aural assault on the public in the early Nineties when they released the single *Smells Like Teen Spirit*. However, I would imagine that more fuss was made about the breakdown of society when listeners first heard The Beatles' *Helter Skelter* in 1968. Of course, Nirvana was loud and raucous, but no more so than earlier bands such as The Sex Pistols, Sonic Youth and The Jesus and Mary Chain. I would argue that it was more a question of timing that gave Nirvana their phenomenal impact rather than their sound.

[19] See Appendix: audio track 5.

[20] See Appendix: audio track 6.

[21] See Appendix: audio track 7.

[22] See Appendix: audio track 8.

[23] *Definitions of Art*, pp.115-116.

[24] Examples of this debate can be found in the writings of Richard Shusterman and Crispin Sartwell, who both argue against the exclusivity of traditional aesthetic theories.

[25] *Approaches to Aesthetics - Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics: Frank Sibley*.

[26] *Ibid.*, p.2.

[27] Appendix: audio track 9.

[28] In a sense, Sibley's conclusions on the nature of aesthetic experience are similar to those of John Dewey, who also believed that all experience has the potential to have aesthetic qualities. In his 1934 work, *Art As Experience*, Dewey appeals to human experience generally, which he believes involves the interaction of individuals with their environment. This idea of a holistic aesthetic experience has since been taken forward by contemporary writers such as Shusterman and Sartwell, particularly in the realm of popular music. Sibley, however, takes a more analytical approach to the nature of aesthetic qualities to reach the same conclusions as Dewey.

[29] Kemal, Salim, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*, p.24.

[30] I recognize here that Kant makes a distinction between pure and dependent beauty, and the implication from this in terms of artworks is that few (if any) aesthetic judgments of art can be considered as pure. I would argue that, in the case of art, background concepts of the object as an artwork, created by an artist with artistic rules and conventions in mind, are part of the response, which is still immediate in

being disinterested, but not as immediate as pure judgments of beauty.

[31] Lyas, Colin, *Aesthetics*, p.25.

[32] *Ibid.*, p.26.

[33] *Ibid.*, p.27.

[34] Parret, Herman: '"Kant on Music and the Hierarchy of the 'Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 56:3*,(Summer 1998) 257.

[35] See Appendix: audio track 10.

[36] *Ibid.*, 257.

[37] *Ibid.*, 257.

[38] See Kant, I., *Critique of Judgement*, tr. W. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

[39] Brady, Emily, "Sniffing & Savoring," from Light, Andrew & Smith, Jonathan M., eds., *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[40] *Ibid.*, p.181.

[41] *Ibid.*, p.184.

[42] *Ibid.*, p.184.A point also worth adding here is that the appreciation of music has changed radically since Kant's time in that music is no longer listened to solely in a live environment. A song or piece of music can now be enjoyed repeatedly through the advent of recording and playback equipment.

[43] Appendix: audio track 11.

[44] Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatic Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1993) p.184.

[45] Sartwell, Crispin, *Six Names of Beauty* (London: Routledge, 2004) p.64.

[46] Walton, Kendall, "What Is Abstract About the Art of Music?"*The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46:3* (Spring 1988) and *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*, Harvard College (1990).

[47] *What Is Abstract About the Art of Music?*.360.

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APPENDIX

Compact Disc tracks:

1. Flying Saucer Attack - *The Drowners* (1993 Polygram Music).

2. The Beatles - *I Feel Fine* (1964 Northern Songs).

3. The Velvet Underground - *European Son to Delmore Schwarz* (1967 Verve Records).

4. Sonic Youth - *Total Trash* (1988 Blast First Records).

5. Autechre - *Gantz Graf* (2002 Warp Records Ltd.).

6. Squarepusher - *Kill Robok* (2002 Warp Records Ltd.).

7. Stomp - *Zippos* (1996 YES/NO Productions Ltd.).

8. Flying Saucer Attack - *The Drowners* (1993 Polygram Music).

9. Phasespace - *Crystallised* (2000 QMartin Records).

10. The Jesus and Mary Chain - *Upside Down* (1988 WEA Records).

11. My Bloody Valentine - *You Made Me Realise* (1988 Creation Records).

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