

Preface

Volume 3, Sound, Culture and Communication (2006)

In selecting a theme for the third volume of the *McMaster Journal of Communication*, I wanted to move the journal towards an investigation of culture. Culture matters as a site of inquiry because it emerges from the images, sounds and spectacles of everyday life. In examining musical perception, Andrea Unrau interrogates notions of “perfect” and “relative” pitch. She establishes which of these two processing methods is more useful across different listening conditions, why relative pitch seems to “win out” for most people as their primary method of processing music, and how the two processes could possibly interact or affect each other.

Aside from investigating the psychological aspects of how we as humans perceive sound, music for many of represents a form of entertainment and a site of leisure, which whether we actively acknowledge it or not, helps to inform our political views and social behaviours. The production of music at the level of industry is hardly a neutral endeavour. As Rob Petti’s paper demonstrates, artistic integrity often becomes compromised in a business where powerful gatekeepers often shape and dictate cultural trends that optimize consumer consumption. In this paper it is established that much of what the culture industry produces is based upon popular models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless. Eric Barkman’s paper demonstrates how music provides the materials out of which people construct their sense of class and race. Here we see that music helps mediate the stories we tell about ourselves, providing the materials to create identities which can then be synthesized as part of a larger global culture.

Underpinning this investigation of music is the belief that education now takes place in large part outside the terrestrial boundaries of the classroom. As students of the 21st century it is important to have publication outlets which espouse the concepts of a critical media pedagogy which will help readers to critically deconstruct the seemingly neutral aspects of consumer culture.

In closing I would like to thank Dr. Alex Sevigny for the opportunity to take on such a project. I would also like to thank the previous editor, Julia Wallace for taking the time to show me the ropes as it were. A big thank you is due to Sonja Weaver who has handled the multi-media portion of the publication. But mostly, I would like to thank the students who submitted papers for consideration (those that were successful in getting published as well as those who didn’t make the final cut). These students should be commended for taking the time and effort in helping to contribute to the greater public sphere of knowledge. Congratulations!