

# Can Listening to Music be Harmful to Us?

By Simon Heather (Principal of the College of Sound Healing)

We all know that loud music can damage our hearing but are there certain types of music played at normal volume that can be harmful for us?

## Muscle Testing

In the late 1970's Dr. John Diamond made a startling discovery using applied kinesiology (muscle testing). Dr Diamond discovered that muscles would strengthen or weaken in the presence of positive or negative *emotional and intellectual stimuli*, as well as physical stimuli. A smile will make you test strong, while the statement, 'I hate you' will make you test weak.

A striking aspect of Diamond's research was the uniformity of the responses of his subjects. "Diamond's results were predictable, repeatable, and universal." (Hawkins, David - Power v. Force, 1995 - p3/4).

## Anapaestic Beat

The anapaestic beat is used in most hard rock music; it consists of two rapid beats followed by a long beat as in Tahta tara, Tahta tara, Tahta tara.

In an experiment using applied kinesiology Dr John Diamond played different kinds of music to people through headphones. When music with an anapaestic beat was played volunteers would immediately lose muscle strength and have to lower their arms. The anapaestic beat seems to interrupt the natural rhythm of the heart causing stress to the body.

Dr. Diamond found a direct link between muscle strength and music. He found that listening to hard rock causes all the muscles in the body to go weak. The normal pressure required to overpower a strong deltoid muscle in an adult male is about 40/45 pounds, when hard rock music is played, only 10/15 pounds of pressure is needed to push down the arm.

Dr. Diamond found that the anapaestic beat causes a "switching" of the brain. Dr. Diamond said this switching occurs when the symmetry between both sides of the brain is destroyed. This causes stress to the body and can cause lessened work performance, learning and behaviour problems in children, and a general malaise in adults.

Dr David Hawkins also carried out research into the effects of different types of music using muscle testing. He says that, "Whereas virtually all classical music and most pop music (including "classic" rock and roll) caused a universally strong response, the "hard" or "heavy metal" rock that first gained acceptance in the late 70's produced a universally weak response." (Hawkins, p5).

A common experience observed in therapy groups and clinics is that drug users don't recover if they continue to listen to heavy metal rock music. A one-year follow-up of cocaine addicts from Sedona Villa, a branch of Camelback Hospital of Phoenix, Arizona found that none of the patients who continued to listen to heavy metal music recovered from their drug addiction. (Hawkins, p265).

Dr Hawkins concludes that "the music of Bach makes everyone go strong, even if they don't personally like it, just as heavy metal music makes all subjects go weak, even if they personally prefer it." (Hawkins, p299).

## **Rap Music**

Dr Hawkins says that , “Among our test subjects, punk rock, death rock and gangster rap music made every subject go weak, confirming earlier observations made by Dr. John Diamond.” (Hawkins, p5).

In a study of students Dr. James Johnson of the University of North Carolina found that listening to rap music increased tolerance for and predisposition to violence. It also promoted materialism and reduced interest in academic study and long term success (reported in the Arizona Republic, July 4, 1994).

## **Study of Young People**

A study published in the Journal of Media Psychology (2001) looked at how listening to different kinds of music affected a sample of 243 teenagers. Researchers looked at how music - affected levels of aggression, attitudes toward women and feelings of distrust.

The teenagers were divided into three groups. One group listened to heavy-metal music with violent lyrics, one group listening to heavy-metal music with non-violent lyrics and the final group listened to easy-listening music.

The researchers concluded that; “heavy-metal music listeners exhibited more aggression and lesser regard for women.”

The young people who listened to the heavy-metal music with non-violent lyrics developed the same negative attitudes toward women and were angrier than the "easy-listening" teenagers.

## **Blood Vessels**

Listening to your favourite music may be good for your cardiovascular system. Researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore have shown that the emotions aroused by joyful music have a healthy effect on blood vessel function.

Music, selected by study participants because it made them feel good caused tissue in the inner lining of blood vessels to dilate increasing blood flow. On the other hand, when study volunteers listened to music they perceived as stressful (mainly heavy metal), their blood vessels narrowed, producing a potentially unhealthy response that reduces blood flow.

“We had previously demonstrated that positive emotions, such as laughter, were good for vascular health. So, a logical question was whether other emotions, such as those evoked by music, have a similar effect,” says principal investigator Michael Miller, M.D., director of preventive cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center. “We knew that individual people would react differently to different types of music, so in this study, we enabled participants to select music based upon their likes and dislikes.”

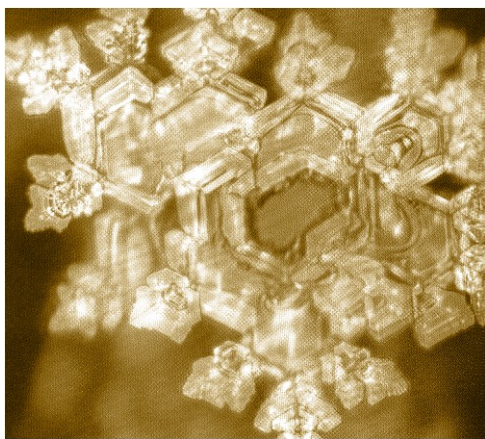
## **Masuru Emoto**

The Japanese scientist Masuru Emoto wanted to find out what happened when he played music to water and then froze the water. He wondered if different shaped ice crystals would be formed from different types of music?

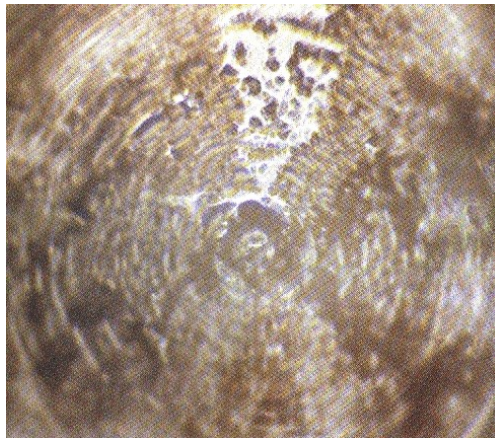
He placed distilled water in between two speakers and played one piece of music fully at normal volume. The bottle would be tapped and left overnight. The next day the bottle would be tapped again and then frozen. He found that tapping the bottle aided the crystallisation process.

For a full explanation of his method please go to <http://www.hado.net/>.

His team of researchers found that classical music produced beautiful crystals of different colours. Healing music, a Tibetan mantra and folk music also produced beautiful crystals. Heavy metal music produced a pattern that looked like the crystals had exploded into a thousand pieces. Japanese pop music produced ugly square shaped crystals rather than the normal hexagonal ones.



Water crystals produced when distilled water was frozen after being played Bach's 'Air on a G String'.



Water crystals produced when distilled water was frozen after being played Heavy Metal Music.

### **Music Helps Healing Process**

The BBC reported that an extensive study had been carried out at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital into music's healing power.

The Chelsea and Westminster Hospital provide regular live music (mainly classical) for patients. The scientific study found that patients who listen to live music need fewer drugs and recover more quickly than those who do not listen to music.

According to Dr. Rosalia Staricoff, who carried out the study, there is growing scientific evidence that music can help heal the body. She said: "The physiological benefits have been measured. Music reduces blood pressure, the heart rate, and hormones related to stress." (BBC News - July 19th 2006).

Professor Paul Robertson regularly plays violin for patients in various hospitals. He is a scientist as well as an accomplished musician. He is carrying out clinical trials to see how music affects the brain and the body. He said: "We are approaching the point where a doctor would legitimately be negligent not to actually recommend music as a therapeutic intervention."

The world's largest medical charity, The Wellcome Trust, is now bringing together academics and artists to explore the possibility of putting music therapy on a more scientific footing. (BBC News - July 19th 2006).

The College of Sound Healing is a non-profitmaking organisation dedicated to promoting sound healing in the UK

For more information please go to – <http://www.collegeofsoundhealing.co.uk/>

### **Books**

- Diamond, J (1979) Your Body Doesn't Lie. New York: Warner Books  
Diamond, J (1983) The Life Energy in Music Volume 1. New York: Archaeus Press  
Diamond, J (1985) Life Energy. New York: Paragon House  
Emoto, M (1999) The Message from Water. Kyoikusha: HADO  
Gardner, K (1990) Sounding the Inner Landscape. Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element  
Hawkins, D (1995) Power v. Force. Veritas Publishing: Carlsbad, CA

### **Articles**

Differences in Aggression, Attitudes Toward Women, and Distrust as Reflected in Popular Music Preferences - Authors: Alan M. Rubin, Daniel V. West, Wendy S. Mitchell  
Published in: Journal of Media Psychology, Volume 3, Issue 1 February 2001 , pages 25 - 42

Music Helps Healing Process by Pallab Ghosh - BBC News – July 19th, 2006  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/5194884.stm>

Joyful Music May Promote Heart Health, According to University of Maryland School of Medicine Study  
<http://www.umm.edu/news/releases/music-cardiovascular.htm>