

The Sense of Hearing

Most people rarely really listen to music. Music is everywhere, pouring from speakers in the supermarket, the train, and the elevator we have become so surrounded by it, so much so we tune out the music, it is heard, but rarely listened to, it has become no more than noise, much like the constant drone of traffic in the background we tune it out.

"none so deaf as those who don't want to hear".

Our ability to tune out sounds is studied with Psychoacoustics,

psy·cho·a·cous·tics

n. (used with a sing. verb)

The scientific study of the perception of sound.

psy'cho·a·cous'tic, psy'cho·a·cous'ti·cal adj.

Supermarkets use music to encourage our purchasing behaviours to speed up or slow down, Councils have installed sound systems playing classical music in areas known to attract undesirables, to assist in the cleaning up an area and moving on of people, Music is an extremely powerful medium; unfortunately many of us have forgotten how enjoyable it can also be.

The vast majority of people -- possibly over 90% -- don't have much idea of what High Fidelity is, sure many will recognize the word "Hi-Fi", usually associated with the marketing of "Mid and Low Fi retailers, however, ask what is the Definition HiFi and more often than not you'll get a blank expression. And there's a good reason for this. They have never heard High Fidelity. Indeed, 99% of that 90% never will!

How much of the population actually listen to music, 40%? 60%? So why is it that less than 1% of the population know what real High Fidelity is or where to get it?

Genuine High Fidelity can change your life!

Think, when was the last time you purchased music?

Now ask yourself have you heard all the music in that recording?

The Art Of Hearing

For background music listening, (Hearing) most moderately-priced systems are acceptable, and unless they suffer from gross distortions, they can fill most spaces adequately. Though some such systems are falsely labelled "Hi-Fi," they are in fact what most audiophiles would call, "mid-fi"...a polite label that reserves the name "low-fi" for things like MP3 players and the Telephone. They do not invite focused listening.

Generally systems of this nature encourage the urge to read or participate in some other activity. The musical values, the emotional message, the content within the music, are not present, and the music doesn't engage the listener, and cannot portray what the composer and musicians had in mind. This is true for all music especially if the music is solo acoustic in nature, not just complex music, like rock or classical. From solo guitar to a heavy rock band, if the system isn't capable then it makes no difference the style or genre of music the fact remains the fundamental flaw with the music performance isn't the music at all, but the reproduction capabilities of the system. Music, when played through a mid-fi system, is as though the music is played behind a blanket of filters taking out everything interesting, in essence there is.

The Art Of Listening

The intangibility of Hi-Fi is to emotionally engage the listener in the music, to effortlessly touch a soul if you like. Musical reproduction performance, of any competent Hi-Fi system, can engage the listener, with the Fundamental musical values of a recording. Enabling you to hear without effort the nuances of the music as well as follow the melody, feel the beat, perceive the harmonics of the music, regardless of the music, be it, orchestral or hard rock. Music that appeals to your soul, will have the hair on the back of your neck stand up or give you goose bumps, fully captivating your attention within the music.

A well designed and balanced HiFi will invite you to sit in your favourite chair and escape the stresses and worries of the world, with your favourite peice of music, even if you have heard that same peice of music many times before each time you listen you experience the music, and that experience is the enigmatic aspect of listening, the X factor of the emotional engagement of the musicians message to the listener.

High fidelity removes the blanket, leaving out the filters and creates a Holographic illusion the musicians are there in front of you.

With eyes closed, the mental image of where on stage the guitarist, the vocalist and other musicians are, can easily be defined, encouraging you to be absorbed into the musical performance, this is especially true of a live event. Studio engineers strive to replicate the positioning of musicians, but also with some artistic licence create a moving soundstage, as some instrumentation appears to move from left to right of stage as well as front to back, enhancing the listening experience.

The shear enormity of this topic is so vast I could write a book on the subject and still not have scratched the surface, as a picture tells a thousand words, a sound expresses millions.

I invite you to discover the real world of HIFI, make an appointment at AudioTrends Ringwood and really hear what is possible.

Darren Springthorpe