



Eddie Jobson Forum



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Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic

Date: 11-15-11 04:22

Carrying on a comment I just made on the Theme of Secrets puzzle thread, I am interested to learn if other Eddie fans on this forum have perfect pitch or absolute pitch.

So for those who'd like to participate, please feel free to post answers to these questions:

1--Do you have absolute or relative pitch?

2--Do you play an instrument or sing, and if so, what age did you start taking regular music lessons? Which instrument was it?

3--Is your native language a tone language (such as Mandarin, in which different pitches of the same syllable can mean different things) or a non-tone language (such as English, which is not dependent on tone).

Absolute (or perfect pitch) is the ability to correctly name a note that is played or sung without first having to find it yourself on a keyboard or other instrument.

Relative pitch is the ability to identify a sung or played note with the aid of some reference (such as a nearby piano keyboard).

A psychologist whom I know named Diana Deutsch at the University of California, San Diego, has been advancing a theory for the past several years that perfect pitch is primarily a learned phenomenon, rather than a purely genetic one (as was previously thought). In other words, the theory says perfect pitch can be acquired in early childhood years, with early exposure to playing a musical instrument or learning a tone-based language, such as Mandarin, in which different pitches of the same syllable (such as "Ma") can mean different things and children then have to learn to associate certain pitches with certain word meanings. You can learn more about this theory at <http://philomel.com/asa157th/deutsch.html>

You can take a test for absolute/relative pitch here:

<http://www.acoustics.org/press/157th/deutsch3.htm>

Based on the above information, I have certain guesses about the answers we will get. It'll be interesting to see!

Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic
Date: 11-15-11 04:23

I'll start here!

Ben
1--Relative Pitch
2--Yes, I play an instrument, and started regular lessons at age 19; I play keyboards
3--Non-tone language (English)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: ferrari801
Date: 11-15-11 04:59

1) Relative pitch (I live in a tent in my brothers yard)
2) Yes I play started at 9 on the cornet and 15 on the drums
3) English (well kind of)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Helen
Date: 11-15-11 05:06

1. I'll have to test myself first to supply a proper answer to this question. What I do know is that I have a very good ear for anything that is even slightly off-key/off-pitch (I don't quite know if this terminology is right or wrong). If something is not tuned exactly right or sung exactly right, I can immediately hear it. But I cannot tune anything correctly myself or sing anything correctly to save my life. So I hear well, but "do" very badly. Does this affliction have a name?

2. I started playing piano at around age 4 or 5 and violin a few years later. I was quite good at both, "composed" piano pieces and did well in exams. I even got singing lessons from my opera-singing aunt who had perfect pitch and who was one of the best opera singers in the country. (She won a scholarship to study at the Royal School of Music, just like Eddie.) However, as I grew older, I became progressively worse at everything, and now I am totally useless. I love and appreciate good music (hence Eddie), but I cannot play anything properly or sing at all. I don't know what happened!

3. Very unmusical, guttural language - Afrikaans.

Post Edited (11-15-11 05:44)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Dicky
Date: 11-15-11 05:29

OK I can have a go at this.

1. Relative pitch, give me an oscillator and I can tune it to something else.

I can also sing a tone, I just don't know which one. Difficult to play a tune on a drum.

2. played clarinet for about 6 months when I was about 13 years old.

Now like Helen lack of practice has lost all I ever knew.

3. Monotone northeast English.

My ears are bombarded every day by people speaking english from all over the world and after a very short time I can usually allow and compensate and understand, some find this difficult. pork pies, porque pies, por que pies.

Post Edited (11-15-11 05:30)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Helen

Date: 11-15-11 05:55

With me it wasn't just a lack of practice. Despite practicing an hour or so every day (probably not enough!), despite hearing music all day long (my dad played saxophone in his own jazz band, and also trumpet, guitar, banjo and piano), accompanying my aunt on her singing and church-organ playing excursions, and listening to Eddie and other musicians constantly, I lost the ability to "perform" music completely.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic

Date: 11-15-11 06:01

Great to see the interesting answers thus far. Keep them coming!

Helen, the lead researcher on the perfect pitch study that I mentioned above once told an audience that she has perfect pitch but sings off key. Let us know the results of the test, and it's interesting to learn more about your and others' musical backgrounds!

As the first link above describes, the study found that absolute pitch was more prevalent in those who started musical training from between the ages of 2-5 compared to the 6-9 year old group, but that there was an even stronger correlation between absolute pitch and those whose native languages were tone languages.

By the way, for more information on which languages are tone languages, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tone_\(linguistics\)#Tonal_languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tone_(linguistics)#Tonal_languages)

Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: ferrari801

Date: 11-15-11 06:04

Slightly off topic, But i am so envious of my daughter Emily she has just joined a 2 yr full time music degree course I recently saw video of her performing in the band shes in they had only been given 5 days to learn two songs (Brown sugar and a muse number) they were great I so wished i could have been doing it with them Oh to be young again !!! Ps Im getting a Cornet and a drum kit TODAY !!!! Call me Leo Sayer !!!

Post Edited (11-22-11 23:51)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: ferrari801

Date: 11-15-11 06:08

I knew a guy once who had perfect pitch Unfortunately both his ears were cut of when his friend Edward tried to remove his hat. In a pioneering operation doctors gave him pigs ears. Hes doing well but when listening to music all here can hear is Crackling !

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: KillMyMusic

Date: 11-15-11 07:04

Quote:

I knew a guy once who had perfect pitch Unfortunately both his ears were cut of when his friend Edward tried to remove his hat. In a pioneering operation doctors gave him pigs ears. Hes doing well but when listening to music all here can hear is Crackling !

He's listening to the original prog band Spock's Ears now.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Rafael Electric

Date: 11-15-11 07:14

In my case, I've almost perfect pitch, for I agree that it is an acquired skill (albeit over years of training). I guess that makes me a relative pitch one. To identify pitches I compare them to songs/musical phrases I know. Other times I just identify them on the spot. I've also found that one can identify chord progressions; years of transcribing music have indeed help me on this.

Playing synthesizers, or rather tuning them, has definitely helped my tone identification. I believe that now that I've been practicing the Theremin for a couple of years, my pitch recognition skills will improve.

I remember teaching at school years ago where there was a string program for 4th and 5th graders. It used to drive me crazy when they played out of tune – uufff – it was painful!!!

I started piano by ear when I was 4, then moved on formal lessons at age 8.

I speak none-tone languages: Spanish & English (and some very little Italian).

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: miar

Date: 11-15-11 08:43

1. Perfect Pitch.. I feel lucky to have it.. I find it very useful and helpful at in all kinds of musical situations :) My grandmother, father and brother also have perfect pitch.

2. Do I play and instrument? Duh.. lol.. I play all kinds of keys, flutes, guitars, some drums/percussion and also sing a lot. Started learning piano at the age of 5.. and everything has just evolved since then.. I do read sheet music, but hate it.. I use my perfect pitch, eyes and brain instead. I learn faster and find it more fun to learn a totally new piece of music I've never heard before by ear if someone plays it for me than to learn it from reading sheet music..

3. Tone language. Norwegian is a very musical language in all sorts of ways. I also manage to speak English without a stupid norwegian accent, but I do speak it a bit more musical than a real englishman I guess.. hehe

Mia

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: C.Cat

Date: 11-15-11 09:11

I've got a friend who has perfect pitch, and he can't stand listening to soprano saxophones because they always sound slightly out of tune to him!

My sax teacher once wondered if I had perfect pitch, but I think it's more likely I have relative pitch.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic
Date: 11-15-11 09:15

Perfect pitch is something coveted by most of the rest of us, but I've been told relative pitch has its advantages. I've heard that it's apparently extremely annoying when something is out of tune, as Alexx mentioned, and it might be easier for those with relative pitch to adjust to a choir that goes a little bit off key.

Also there are some great musicians who have relative pitch. I believe Keith Emerson is one.

I also can completely see that there are some people who fall in between, as in Rafael's case. It's very cool to hear about other's experiences and how they perceive sound.

Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo
Date: 11-15-11 09:47

What a cool
thread !

Let me get the perfect firewood pitch off of my fingers and join in....

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Fz
Date: 11-15-11 12:14

1. relative pitch (i think it's more usefull than perfect pitch especially for harmony insight) you can have perfect pitch but no musical feeling at all.

2. Started at 6 years old on accordion.I have my conservatorium (is that an english word?) diploma with the accordion. Play guitar, bass guitar all kinds of keyboards and a bit of drums.
Don't give me a mike because the windows will crack.

3. Language > Dutch (non musical)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic

Date: 11-15-11 14:07

Ferry, I remembered how well you picked out the differences between the live and studio versions of Ice Festival. It's interesting to learn about all the instruments you and others on the forum play.
Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: BadBay

Date: 11-15-11 15:03

1. Relative pitch.
2. Studied piano (theory, and voice) starting at age 7, for a decade. Have not touched a keyboard in about 25 years; never added other instruments, although Gogo has recently offered to teach me harmonica. ;-)
3. First languages were English and Spanish (I was a bilingual baby until around age 5 or 6).

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: EJ

Date: 11-15-11 18:13

1. I have relative pitch, but with occasional hints of perfect pitch. Sometimes I can hear certain things 'in colour,' as David L. Burge describes it. For instance, I can tell if the violin 'A' string is, in fact, an 'A.' Mr. Burge claims that it can be taught, but who has the time?

I think the studies on this seem to be about right; I didn't really start on an instrument until I was 7, so the perfect pitch I am sure I was inherently born with was not developed soon enough. The only musician I know that I am aware has perfect/absolute pitch is my son, Christopher, who I started in music at the age of 3. He always knows what key a Beatles song should be sung in, for instance. A great example of the actual use of perfect pitch is Christopher's "Black Dog" video on YouTube; you will see that he starts the song without any prior pitch reference.

2. Keyboards and some guitar at 7, violin at 8 - but I still have trouble playing the violin in pitch (but see the 'Eddie on Physics' thread for my excuse).
3. Non-tone language (English)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic

Date: 11-15-11 18:45

Thanks, Eddie!

For all those interested, you can read Eddie's excerpt on violin playing here:
<http://eddiejobson.com/forum/read.php?f=1&i=8875&t=648>. See Eddie's first post.

I've been interested in trying out the perfect-pitch training programs such as the ones that David Burge advertised for years in Keyboard magazine.

If I recall correctly, Diana Deutsch, the study lead author, said a parent had presented a xylophone to her as a very young child with different colored keys for the different notes, and she associated specific pitches with different colors afterwards.

Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Helen
Date: 11-15-11 20:14

I'm going to study this thread properly later on, but the "hearing in colour" bit reminded me that I often hear "in taste". For instance, Madonna's voice sounds very "salty" to me.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: EJ
Date: 11-15-11 22:48

The colour-note xylophone may have been a valuable aid in learning to perceive so-called 'pitch colour.' But to be clear, the 'hearing in colour' concept is not essentially about visual colours, but about each pitch or chromatic frequency having a 'tone' or 'sonic colouration' to it - not a timbral tonality, but a sense of tonal colour that makes the frequency distinctive and recognizable. This can be perceived clearly by very few people, but once able to be recognized, allows the perfect pitch listener to easily identify pitches regardless of the actual tone or timbre of the instrument producing the pitch.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo
Date: 11-15-11 23:04

Sorry if I babble a bit here.....

1--Relative pitch....almost perfect but I am very reluctant to say so because I do not want to get cornered at some party by some huge guy with beer breath asking me to name notes that he wavers at me.

I can sing songs that I have known of since I was a kid, (and in the right key), just because that is what the song SOUNDS like. My singer and bass player are like that as well, but they don't make a big deal about it; they just drive their BMWs, dress really well and order room service a lot.

I have another band that plays a ski resort, and that singer wants to tune-down a half-step to help his voice at that altitude, and the whole night sounds ridiculous.

I grew up with both parents with perfect pitch and at least half of my 6 siblings with it...that I know of for sure....so it was expected that you sing stuff right and that you know what the next chord is. It was as if that was a part of the culture. My Granparents sang and played...all my uncles sing...even the sewing machine was a singer (sorry).

I think that having perfect pitch is a pretty strong claim that I am not willing to try to defend....and also I think I have it some days better than others, so I probably do not have it, really. But now I am curious and want to test myself a bit over the next few days.
ummmm if I have to test yusef then I probably do not have it hahaha.

2--PIANO.....My Mom started all 7 of her kids on piano right away. She was a serious classical player and went right from playing a wedding to the hospital the day I was born...I can not ever remember not playing, and my memory goes back to being one. She had 3 pianos in the house and would shout out the names of the wrong notes from the kitchen. very strange....everything we did was either music, church or both....with some firewood....because we also had a whole lot of forest land in the family. With all that you would think that I would be really GOOD....and I am, at splitting firewood.

I started on other instruments, campfire guitar, basic violin as a teenager and really I am about equally horrible at everything...but somehow I have a ton of fun with it all and have managed to make a life out of it.

I did not start formal music lessons until I was 8, which is odd because I had already been in dance class for a long time by then. I never had any real discipline in life and was a free spirit and terrible student but then decided to get serious through my teens to the point of obsession, which has been a character flaw ever since.

Singing is the most fun I have. I am a serious support vocalist in every act I have ever been in, and a lead singer for less-rocky stuff. The actual lead singers in my bands over the years have been REAL singers...the best guys in my Country, and I loved singing all their harmonies.

Years before I got my TROOPER gig, I met the band by walking into their backstage hotel room and singing a Simon and Garfunkel song with their lead singer. I did not even say HI or introduce myself.

I always want everyone to sing and am absolutely shameless about it.
I got kicked out of school for randomly singing...and I did not blame them either.
Most of what I do is fake choir-boy high stuff.

I sing when and where I want to...in the bank and also play banjo if I have it with me. What are they gonna do ? Kick me out ? My Dad was even worse. He sang EVERYWHERE. And the City invited him to sing at every serious event. He sang at everyone's funerals. He was an AMAZING singer. He made loggers cry. I can aspire, but I am not that good. I rely on novelty a lot.

3--Canadian English is a really pure language...ay.
I am told that many student people come here to learn English
because the accent is not terribly exaggerated in any one direction....ay.

I also can sing the AVE MARIA in classical Latin....

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: ferrari801
Date: 11-16-11 00:08

Great thread this Ben, I have been to many gigs in the past and come away disappointed because the musicians could not play their instruments properly (Roxy Music circa 2001 !!!) The rest of the auditorium and the press raved about the gigs but all i could hear were mistakes and poor tuning. I think this is something to do with the fact that i played in bands but ive been to gigs with great musicians and they either didnt hear or were too excited to care. I cant rival Gogo or others on this forum for music experience but when i was 15 the brass band i played in qualified for the national championships at the Royal Albert Hall.Two weeks before the contest the conductor announced that the role of principal cornet would go to whoever could play the solo in our test piece (Prometheus unbound) at next weeks practice I practiced for hrs everyday that week and got the job. My peripatetic teacher was crying when i got off stage He must have had perfect pitch !!!! I havent played for yrs but emily has inspired me to start again. I wondered whether any of you who have played at any level feel that you view gigs differently.

Post Edited (11-16-11 00:21)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo
Date: 11-16-11 01:24

This is the best thread in a long time.
ferrari801....that last post just blew my mind.
I love it.

I have played gigs where all I want to do is to get off of the stage.
Hundreds of them.

...and Hundreds that I forgot about as soon as I did them.

And also hundreds where I am in the zone....
and hundreds more that I hold dearly in my heart.

At this point, every gig is golden.
I no longer take anything for granted.
Every moment of this life is golden.

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: KillMyMusic
Date: 11-16-11 02:01

Quote:

My peripatetic teacher

What's a peristaltic teacher? ;-)

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Dicky
Date: 11-16-11 02:10

peristalsis noun (peristalses) physiol in hollow tubular organs, especially the intestines and oesophagus: the waves of involuntary muscle contractions that force the contents of the tube, eg food, further forward. peristaltic adj.

ETYMOLOGY: 18c; peristaltic, first used in 17c: from Greek peristellein to contract round

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo
Date: 11-16-11 02:20

Man....you English folks act
like you invented this language.

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: ferrari801

Date: 11-16-11 02:24

All the above and a teacher travelling (In my case) from school to school teaching specific instruments. I was very fortunate to have a guy called Geoff Merkin, An excellent Euphonium player who was best man at my Wedding (not sure which one !!!) we travelled the whole country in a fiat 126 one of the worlds smallest cars !! He only listened to classical so we would be up and down the motorway listening to Les Preludes or the Planet suite Geoff conducting both our fingers going like a bees wing I bet a few people wondered if Fiat had started to make the 'special' buses. With that kind of musical upbringing is there any wonder i love Eddies music !

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: miar

Date: 11-16-11 08:33

EJ wrote:

> The colour-note xylophone may have been a valuable aid in
> learning to perceive so-called 'pitch colour.' But to be
> clear, the 'hearing in colour' concept is not essentially about
> visual colours, but about each pitch or chromatic frequency
> having a 'tone' or 'sonic colouration' to it - not a timbral
> tonality, but a sense of tonal colour that makes the frequency
> distinctive and recognizable. This can be perceived clearly by
> very few people, but once able to be recognized, allows the
> perfect pitch listener to easily identify pitches regardless of
> the actual tone or timbre of the instrument producing the
> pitch.
>

Yup. I can relate to this.

Mia

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic

Date: 11-16-11 15:47

That seems like a valid distinction, now that you mention it. "Hearing in color" is classified as a form of synesthesia, an involuntary connection of the senses, or at least something related to it.

I just found a Discover article in which Diana Deutsch mentions hearing in color, and distinguishes it from the xylophone experience.

In 2009, I discovered I have a recently discovered form of auditory synesthesia, in which I sometimes hear a pitch or sound when I watch something moving, such as an animated ball on a computer screen bouncing against a wall. I had gone through my life experiencing this and assuming that everyone else did, until I started asking others.

Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo

Date: 11-16-11 18:04

Wild.

" an involuntary connection of the senses"

I have no idea if this is related or not but I was email chit chatting with a friend far away the other day and for a moment I captured the scent of that person....I could smell her.

Today I was thinking how Ben has this factual look on life, and how I have really very little logic or education to base anything on....I just go where the spirit moves me.

I take everything as a message from God, and it would never even occur to me to look for an actual explanation outside of that. To me it is the ultimate liberation. To others maybe not so much (?)

All ways of looking at or dealing with phenomenon get equal respect from me, of course. And intelligence is not really the thing that determines either outlook, says I.

SO...because I am such an untechnical thinker....it makes it even more interesting to me to hear how anything is perceived and possibly explained. And as you can see, this type of discussion can go on until 3am, no problem...

Dont you pity my bandmeates ?

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic

Date: 11-16-11 18:42

Haha, Gogo. Actually, the "factual" side is just one aspect of me that I sometimes bring out in the forum. In Myers Briggs, for what it's worth, I test as being more of an emotional type rather than a thinking type. (Can't you tell sometimes :-)?) Does emotion trigger thoughts or do thoughts trigger emotions? Maybe it goes in both directions. There's no one way to all the answers; just different modes for glimpsing some pieces of the puzzle. And then new pieces are created.

Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo

Date: 11-16-11 18:52

Well the one time that we actually got to talk,
after the UKZ NYC one city world tour....
we talked about religion the whole time.

So I am not saying that you are Doctor Spock...
and I am not saying that I am The Pope....
but I sure do have the threads, hey....and the hats.

And I think that thoughts trigger emotions.
Emotions just trigger more emotions.

I think that all of here at the forum are emotional people....you think ?
hahaha

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Dicky

Date: 11-16-11 18:54

Slightly OT

I have a friend who, as a small boy, could see the colours iin monochrome movies.
His mother thought he was telling porkies

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo

Date: 11-16-11 19:22

COOL !

My Dad could see the face of Jesus on people
serving at the soup kitchen.

Someone told me recently that my Dad used to
go there and just sit around and talk to people.

He was the most charismatic person I have ever met.

And somehow he just knew things. (even though he faked a lot of lyrics...like God Save the Queen....oops)

love
gogo

PS...I had a girlfriend once who could look at a photo and tell you who was still alive...

gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: EJ
Date: 11-16-11 20:25

Yes Ben, I think the connection between perfect pitch and synesthesia is fascinating—I would be very interested to learn of further conclusions Diana Deutsch and others have come to regarding the linkage. We must still be careful though not to think of perfect pitch as being related to visual colour, other than in extremely rare cases of sound/color synesthesia.

But I do think that the concept of hearing a tonal 'color' from a particular frequency - like having an extra sense to perceive something most others can't - may be related to a similar brain function (or malfunction?) as the one that leads to synesthesia.

By the way, for those who don't know, Diana Deutsch herself has indirectly contributed to our old 'physics' thread; because of that thread, she even invited me to be the key-note speaker at the annual gathering of the Acoustic Society of America—an invitation I didn't quite have the confidence to accept at the time. I needed a few more 'master classes' under my belt first...

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Helen
Date: 11-16-11 20:38

Relative pitch. I was sure I had no pitch at all.

I can remember that I did much better in hearing tests than in the actual playing exams where my nerves always got in the way.

What about music theory? I always got full marks for music theory exams, but I've forgotten just about everything I learnt at the time.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: BadBay
Date: 11-16-11 21:14

EJ wrote:

>she even invited me to be the key-note speaker at
> the annual gathering of the Acoustic Society of America—an
> invitation I didn't quite have the confidence to accept at the
> time. I needed a few more 'master classes' under my belt
> first...

Really? I've been to more academic presentations than I care to remember, and you can more than hold your own. Your audience would be heartened to not have to sit through another staid colloquia.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo
Date: 11-16-11 22:39

staid colloquia ?
cool.... will bring the avocados....

The thing we talked about on the Physics thread is very real, and I had it happen several times, years ago on smaller stages, to my confused brain.

Not anymore, with the in-ear monitors.

BUT the bass player and singer still get that and they talk about it while we travel.
I talk them a bit about our thread but they think that my science is just cosmic fluff talk.

Oh they will find out, when the revolution comes....

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Helen
Date: 11-16-11 22:58

Eddie wrote:

"... she even invited me to be the key-note speaker at the annual gathering of the Acoustic Society of America..."

Ben told me about this way back when there was no hint of any musical return yet, and I was actually planning my

trip to attend this gathering. That's how desperate one can be.

And then I heard:

"I didn't quite have the confidence to accept at the time."

Big disappointment. But in the end it all turned out not too badly.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: hiltonius

Date: 11-17-11 06:06

reading EJ's description of his own sense of relative pitch, and his son's perfect pitch - i am struck by the extent to which it mirrors my own experience.

i always felt i had really good "relative pitch" - but over the past few years, i've noticed that i can pretty much identify and sing the highest open string "g" on a bass guitar consistently and straight away with no pitch reference - so perhaps that hints at perfect pitch.

also not unlike EJ - my son Corey can identify pitch accurately regardless of the circumstances, and i can rely on him to tell me the key of a song or any of the notes within a chord. i, too, could chalk this up to his very early training on numerous instruments - except i had that too, and came away with a different result - i so i do wonder if some aspect of this comes with genetics.

wishing you all well
Rich

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Lenny

Date: 11-17-11 10:03

1--Relative Pitch

2--I play foremost bass and guitar. I use keyboard as a composing and programming instrument, and if the dog is out - I occasionally pick up the old flute.

3--tone language (Swedish)

Like many others, I was afraid of knowing and learning music theory, "kinda takes the fun and the feeling out of it". Nowadays I feel very different, now I really wish I could read music and have some theory knowledge. It would help solving problems I stumble across while composing.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: benonemusic

Date: 11-17-11 10:04

Rich, very interesting to hear your observations and experiences. I am sure there is a genetic component.

I asked my new boss if he has perfect pitch. He once played bass with Stevie Wonder. He reported very much the same thing. He can identify and play the low "E" on the bass. So I'll tell him he's in great company.

Take care,

Ben

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: guitarorama

Date: 11-17-11 13:06

Lets see... need to read the whole thread but I'll add this based on the initial set-up. I can pull pitches out of the air such as an E, tune a guitar to that pitch memory and will be within 100 cents on a good day. Its based on pitch memory I hear in my head. When I need an E I think of the intro to "working man" by rush, sing the note, and then compare the sung note to a guitar string pitch. Usually pretty close.

If music is playing, I can identify and shift to the various chord changes or pitches but the external music throws off my internal pitch sense. I cant identify a specific note unless the external sound ceases, and I can then internally compare it to my pitch memory. But any pitch relative to the initial one, such as a 4th or a 6th, I can hear and go with it.

I can now tune a Uke spot on without a tuner. A dubious skill.

English speaking.

Started trumpet in 5th grade, both parents were musicians.

Not sure where this finds me falling.

Karl

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: guitarorama

Date: 11-17-11 13:19

Just took the test. Today my internal E was off, and I had all of line one transposed by a whole step down. So I was exactly correctly wrong... which would have been fine if the guitar player was tuned to concert D instead of E. ;) Should have picked Passage to Bangkok instead of Working Man apparently... as that internal E was correct.

Karl

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: Mike Piazza
Date: 11-17-11 13:26

Another awesome thread !
Thanks Ben and Thanks Eddie !

1. Relative pitch.....pretty good ear for a musician wanna be....
2. Schoolyard percussion on all sorts of Djembe's, steel tongue drums, tubular bells, and any other cool sounding stuff that we buy and find peace with in our little chalet in the Vermont Mountains.
3. Non-tone language (English)

Cheers !

Mikey P

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: peter2
Date: 11-17-11 18:16

Relative pitch.

Started with the banjo at the age of 14, switched to guitar the same year.
Started "singing" because most singers turned out to be, ahem, difficult characters.
As a little boy I wished to have a piano, but no way! I was always fascinated by keyboards and owned some Moog-, Roland- and Korg-stuff which I also used on stage. But I wouldn't consider myself as a keyboardist. I also play bass if necessary, but I play it like a guitarist – you know what I mean...
Musically I'm absolutely self-educated: learning by doing (and listening).

My native language is German which is a non-tone-language.

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo
Date: 11-19-11 01:35

I really like how Karl explained this:

" I cant identify a specific note unless the external sound ceases, and I can then internally compare it to my pitch memory"

I can relate.
I can be distracted by blasting canned music and everyone yelling.
And I think I too have pitch memory rather than anything perfect.

And I am OK with that.

I always saw my Mom's pitch sensitivity as much more of a curse

than a blessing. She was already a total spazz but if the passing train blew ugly notes over what she was playing it actually caused her some kind of pain. This may have been one of the factors that made her very musically intolerant. She did not have the option or ability to really have fun with a lot of crappy music like I do, and jazz made her go even more insane.

But still, many guitar players got their start as kids in her guitar mass folk ensembles. How she dealt with that without making the kids cry, I don't know. But for everything there is a season,...turn turn turn....

...right....PITCH.....

Some players are rightfully horrified at how whacked out-of-tune my 6-string banjo gets at parties...but do I care ?
I think it is all percussion anyway.

What I find as interesting as these pitch-savy people are the tempo-perfect ones.

I LOVE when a drummer can go totally ultra-spazz and then go back into some song right at the exact same tempo.

But I do not enjoy when a drummer assumes that he is the only guy who can do that. I had a guy once who actually clicked his sticks all the way through a piano ballad intro that I was playing on a tour. Like, what ? The guy is my personal metronome now ?

Don't worry, I didn't make him cry too badly.

love
gogo

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: guitarorama
Date: 12-02-11 16:04

Hi ya'll !

So a question for those who feel they have a clearer sense of "perfect pitch"... Does the equal tempered scale throw you off ? I've often wondered about that. We've adopted the western notion of the math, the 12 equal tempered intervals, but they're "wrong" in just enough of a way to make all 12 keys "right".

Its been a portion of my imaginings that folks with perfect pitch would hear the entire tomb of western music as "out of tune" - does this hold true for anyone ?

Does the temperment of a keyboard when played with a guitar sound off ? I have been noticing this lately too at jams (non FHO), perhaps because the guitarists in question are infact out of tune. The keyboard adheres to the math, a guitar can only truely be in tune one chord at a time. Thoughts ?

Inquiring minds and all that.

Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: gogo
Date: 12-02-11 17:25

hmmm
I don't know...
I have a tin ear
and a plastic hat.

Right...has anyone here ever tried to tune a piano ?

One of my best friends is a master German Piano tech,
and he uses the timing of the vibrations between notes
even more so than the pitch.
Wild.

I used to tune my CP-70, and not having a clue what I was doing,
and using some guy's strobe tuner, I had a decenet mess the first time.

I remember reading that Donald Fagin did not want to get into
synths until the manufacturers stretch-tuned them like pianos.
(with the pitch going up slightly sharp as the notes increase in pitch.)

One would think that guitar techs have this together as well...

I have never been so fussy about tuning
(which is nothing to brag about)
But I sure appreciate those who do have a grip on it.

Back in a bit.
They put us in these really dated theme hotel rooms.
Mine as a fake tropical thing with a waterfall tub.
Ok, I like the '70s, but not THAT much !

love
gogo

Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: peter2
Date: 12-02-11 17:29

Karl: >>a guitar can only truly be in tune one chord at a time<<

My guitars always sound off. Especially when I record direct line-in. If there is air stirred up by speaker vibrations, it's not so obvious. I think it's more connected to the character of this stubborn kind of instrument than to my sense of pitch. Once you've heard the effect, you get hysterical! Even when your buddies tell you that everything sounds right.

Sometimes I record chord by chord on different tracks, tuning the instrument between the takes, and mounting them later. Nice work! And a huge challenge

to keep the same mood and attack during the procedure.

peter

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: guitarorama

Date: 12-02-11 17:38

Tune a piano ? Yup. Tried that. Didn't have a tuner, so I used my Juno60 set to a fairly pure sinewave and then went right up the keyboard tuning each note so it didn't "beat" out of tune with the Juno.

The first few chords played on the piano clearly indicated this was folly.

Then I tried tweaking it by starting in the middle and going up and down in octaves, once again tuning it so the intervals didn't "beat".

It was worse.

Then I tried just getting chords in tune in the midrange, and once again spreading that out in octaves.

Oh it was a mess now.

It was an apartment style portable piano, non-electric, kinda like the Baldwin but with no pickup system. I brought it home sticking out of the hatch of my Honda Civic.

It was an interesting learning experience in what not to do re tuning.

It was probably a whole step flat to begin with, and my regulation attempt didn't help. Turned out it had an aluminum(sp) harp and a plywood soundboard. Each adjustment caused everything else to shift the other way.

I gave up, and gave it to my sister.

I think she still has it.

My Kawai needs tuning. I won't even open the lid because I know better.

Good times... good times...

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: guitarorama

Date: 12-02-11 17:50

@Peter - At best it's a compromise. I have found...

a) tune open strings to a tuner

b) adjust 5th fret to adjacent open

c) adjust octaves on adjacent

d) adjust octaves skipping a string

e) check unison and octave harmonics

...and amongst all of those, shoot for the least beating between the bunch.

Amen on the one chord at a time thing, or often I will find a position where the chord is the least out of tune even if it isn't the easiest position to play it in. And then sadly the amp and signal chain seem to bugger things too. This may seem whacked, but a tube amp seems more forgiving of intonation... solid state and/or modeling makes the impossible worse.

Or the bad habit I adopted 30 years ago... never play the B or hi E string in a chord with distortion, for with the wanking and bending they are almost always out of tune in context.

I have been playing with a couple guitarists at some loose jams who don't have a developed ear for intonation... and often find that the only thing I can add that doesn't sound bad is nothing. Unison of root, maybe fifth, but if I add the third it starts becoming riff pudding... horrible. They tune to a tuner and "swear" their guitar is in tune... which it might be, if all they played were open strings. I just switch to single notes and then it's fine. Ymmv.

Karl

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: peter2

Date: 12-02-11 19:05

Karl,
thanks for the advices. My tuning strategy is similar, but more intuitive, depending on the situation. But at least the 3rd remains a main problem. As does the G-string in my case. Fact is also that the more distortion gets used, the less strings should be played at the same time. Richie Blackmore once said that he never played chords. Smart guy!

And it's true: tube amps are merciful! Digital distortion makes it all worse. I understand that some guys feel happy with a Tele and a Pro Reverb, and nothing else. Sometimes I wish I could, too.

peter

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: guitarorama

Date: 12-03-11 12:22

Heya,

Ritchie had Jon, who played a Hammond with a particular temperament. It was safest to stick to 1-5-8 and avoid the 3-7-9-11-13. Let those be carried by the keys.

Jazz folks, or anyone playing chords of any complexity on guitar, tend to play clean as it allows the voicings to not get garbled in context.

Even order harmonics vs odd order harmonics... and the "tube vs squalid-state" debate still rages to this day, now in the form of intonation.

So what did people do back in the day when a Conn Strobe-tuner was a luxury only available to a select few ? A tuning fork as an A reference, or tune to the keyboard device if used/available by ear... and try to get it all to sound as musical as possible. Its assumed in this age of digital tuners that once used, the instrument is "in tune" and not thought of again... except they arent in tune.

Simple gear and clean tones, less is more. Heck... sometimes it bugs me that my various keyboards arent all the same temperment, but I try to strike a balance without TOO much OCD on it... though some I cannot avoid.

Ymmv.
Karl

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Re: Do You Have Perfect Pitch or Relative Pitch?

Author: C.Cat
Date: 12-03-11 14:19

My friend with perfect pitch temporarily lost it a few days ago - he was under a lot of stress rehearsing and recording, and it just went. He was really upset and distressed about it, he said: "It's just so confusing you wouldn't believe, imagine if all colours suddenly switched their hue totally to something random and kept changing."

I hope he's ok now...

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