

The Orb of Whammy

~Life, Music and the Pursuit of Happiness~

tuesday, may 5, 2009

Pitchy Talk

Look at me go! I take months and months off from the blogosphere, and now I'm doubling up and going back to back. When it rains it pours in blogland.

My other (and some might say better) half directed me to a great podcast discussion yesterday, which I, of course, feel the need to share with the world. This episode of WNYC's Radio Lab combines my two passions into one intriguing conversation. Language, meet Music; Music, may I introduce you to Language. Listening to this panel of experts go to task on the marriage of language and music made my skin all tingly. The first 10 minutes or so of the discussion hooked me right away, as expert [Diana Deutsch](#) (a musical psychologist – hello, dream job!) detailed the process that goes on in the production booth and how language can morph into music right between your very ears. Give it a listen. You'll have a spoken-word ear worm in about 4 minutes flat. Amazing stuff!

After hooking you with Deutsch's audio illusion, the team goes on to talk about perfect pitch, and tonal languages – the speakers of which are reportedly at a huge head start in the acquisition of musical skill as compared to us plain ol' intonation speakers. It's all very amazing stuff. I spent a good amount of time following links to other [audio illusions](#), too, and each one was mesmerizing to me. This whole topic, and the [bulk of Diana Deutsch's research](#) seems to strike a delicate balance between my pleasure principal (music) and my career (Speech and Language Pathology). I'm so grateful that I stumbled across all this.

Listening to this recording made me think of times when I've heard music in seemingly random noises in the environment, and thought I was a little off my heezy for doing so. I remember being in Disney World about 10 years ago, riding the tram across the park, and hearing the beeping of the doors as they opened and closed. I sat there, riveted, and pointed out to my husband that those tones were the opening notes to a CSNY song that I couldn't place. I hummed it, and hummed it... and finally came up with the song. Elevator tones, doorbells, microwave dings... to me, I can always link them back to some tune that has been etched in my brain subconsciously. (Does this happen to you, too? I'm hoping someone can relate.) I've not had a lick of formal music training to speak of, but as Dr. Deutsch explained "[perfect pitch](#)" – I felt so connected. *No*, I'm absolutely *not* saying I'm any form of musical genius. Far from it! (The most talent I ever displayed was being able to peck out harmonies by ear on my old Casio keyboard after my brother spun a favorite album.) I just think those of us who live and breathe music can hear it in anything, anywhere, at any time. This whole paragraph has me thinking of the movie "August Rush", by the way, which I have a like/hate relationship with... but I digress.

If the brain/music connection excites you as much as it does me, consider drifting your mouse over to WNYC and giving a listen to [this series of](#)

now blasting:

Wheedle's Groove - (entire album! Delish!)

"Heartbeats" - Jose Gonzalez

"Young Adult Friction" - The Pains of Being Pure at Heart

"Good Arms Vs. Bad Arms" - Frightened Rabbit

"Come On Feet" - Pete and the Pirates

"History of Lovers" - Iron & Wine/Calexico

"South of France" - Harlem

"Lalita" - The Love Language

"Plasticities" - Andrew Bird

"Grounds for Divorce" - Elbow

"Saints" - Army Navy

"The Kids Don't Stand a Chance" - Vampire Weekend with Chromeo (remix)

"You Broke My Heart" - Lavender Diamond

"Energy" - Apples in Stereo

"Fools" - The Dodos

additions to the "fun to say" word list:

[Binomial Nomenclature](#)

[Lugubrious](#)

[Spelunker](#)

[Kerfuffle](#)

[Fractal](#)

[Grebelet](#)

[Boondoggle](#)

[Esplanade](#)

[Plunk](#)

[Besmirch](#)

now clicking:

[New Funk/Soul Podcast and Playlist](#)

[Spinner](#)

[Mecca! "The Soul-Sides"](#)

[CD Baby - \(a great place to find new music from artists with a limited distribution situation\)](#)

[Daptone Records - Home of Sharon Jones, Budos Band & Sugarman 3](#)

[The Tofu Hut \(Music Hotness\)](#)

[iLike](#)

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[music-related discussions](#) on Radio Lab. I started with "Musical Language", but have "Sound as Touch" and "Musical DNA" cued up for my ride home. I mean, really, any time you can listen to [Robert Krulwich](#) explain astoundingly complex information in such people-friendly terms, it's gotta make your day better, right? I'd love to hear your thoughts after you give it a listen.

Sing it with me, now, people:

... Sometimes behave so strange-ly...

Posted by Amy at [4:03 PM](#)

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