

For the Love of J.S. Bach and Johnny Cash, Give Us Some Real Music

As I type these words, I'm sitting on a bench outside of a Hampton Inn in Jacksonville, Florida. It's just before 5 a.m., and as I'm an early riser these days, I came to the lobby and breakfast lounge to do some work. There, the clerk informed me that the lobby was closed until 6 a.m. for cleaning, so I grabbed a cup of dark roast from their all-night coffee station and am working outside.

The bench is a bit uncomfortable, and the temperature is 59 degrees, but the real trial is the music playing overhead. Though there's not another soul in sight, the music-jacked-up pop most appropriate for a workout in a gym—is booming away above the entranceway to the inn. If one were devising a means of torture for the likes of me, this noise would act as my iron maiden.

Many public spaces bombard us with sound—the grocery store, the fast-food joint, the mall—and large numbers of us contribute to this assault on our ears and senses with our televisions, car radios, and electronic devices. “The devil has made it his business to monopolize on three elements: noise, hurry, crowds,” wrote missionary, author, and speaker Elisabeth Elliot in [*Shadow of the Almighty*](#). “He will not allow quietness.”

Given the constant blaring from our sound systems, we might rightfully conclude that the devil is having a field day in America.

Theology aside, it's unlikely that our modern jumble of cacophony will disappear anytime soon. McDonald's won't be shutting down its piped-in tunes, and earbuds stuffing our

craniums with racket and babble will remain in place.

But here are two suggestions that might ease our pain, improve the peace of our souls, and add a touch of class and culture to any enterprise.

We can rid our lives of extraneous noise by exercising control over our personal listening devices. In "[Get Rid of Your TV](#)," Jerry Powlas tells us that he hasn't owned a television in over 30 years, and his wife has never owned one. Instead of listening to the babble of the tube from supper to bedtime, read Powlas's article and then follow his advice by turning it off, unplugging it, and maybe eventually ditching it. I gave up television almost a decade ago, and like Powlas, I can honestly say I have never missed it.

The same principle applies to today's canned music. Few of the songs have any salutary moral effect, many are incomprehensible or repetitive, and nearly all of them will be forgotten by next year. Whether making supper in the kitchen or riding to work in the car, let's turn off the top 40 and put on an enlightening podcast, Bach, or Johnny Cash or enjoy some of Elisabeth Elliot's cherished quietness.

In the public square, businesses might consider substituting the gold of Western culture rather than the dross of the last 40 years. From classical music to the great American song bag, restaurants, hotels, and other places of commerce have at hand hundreds of years of music they might offer instead of today's electric caterwauling and obscenity-laced rap.

Imagine sitting in a restaurant in the evening with Mozart's piano sonatas wafting through the room. Imagine—this one's a bit of a stretch for the imagination—a basketball game where Beethoven and Tchaikovsky accompanied the warmups instead of rap.

That these are possibilities became clear two evenings later when I stayed in a Hampton Inn near Rocky Mount, North

Carolina. There, the music consisted of Christmas tunes and classic American songs, including a few tasteful ones from the last 50 years.

If corporate gives you the freedom to choose your piped-in music, or if you operate a small business, an insurance agency, say, or an independent restaurant, try playing some of the great works from the past. You'll not only enhance the experience of those customers visiting your establishment, you'll be striking a small blow for civilization itself.

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