

The Destructive Potential of Music

Research studies done on animals shed even more light on what different kinds of music can do to our brains.

A study done by Dr. Harvey Bird, a physicist from Fairleigh Dickenson University and Dr. Gervasia Schreckenber, a neurobiologist from Georgian Court College in Lakewood, NJ, studied the effects of music on laboratory mice.

One group of mice was subjected to constant voodoo drum beats (the same syncopated beat found in rock music), another group to Strauss waltzes, and the last group to no music at all. During the experiment, the music was played at a low volume so that the volume was not a cause for changes observed in their behavior. During the experiment, the different groups were tested to see how well they could run through a maze to retrieve their food.

The mice that listened to the voodoo music had a difficult time navigating the maze that actually increased over the length of the experiment to where they were so totally disoriented that they couldn't even complete the maze to find their food. The other two groups had no problem learning how to navigate the maze although the group that listened to the waltz music had a slight edge over the other group. Even after having a break from the music for three weeks, the first group still couldn't figure the maze out while the other groups did it just fine.

Even more interesting were the discoveries at the end of the experiment when the brains of the mice were dissected. The mice that listened to the voodoo had abnormal changes to the structures of their brain cells. The neurons had been growing wildly all over the place without connecting to other neurons. Shreckenber commented "We believe that the mice were trying to compensate for this constant bombardment of disharmonic noise." Dr. Bird added, "What we are seeing here is the effects of disharmonious music on mammalian brains. And, insofar as human beings have mammalian brains, we cannot preclude the possibility that disharmony may affect human brains as well".