



## Junior Aspirin Records: AUDIO ANNOTATIONS

This bulletin retrospectively prefaces the first four Audio Annotations listed here, and anticipates future installments—all of which are and will be freely downloadable from [www.servinglibrary.org](http://www.servinglibrary.org):

[www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/1-explaining-narrative.mp3](http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/1-explaining-narrative.mp3)

[www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/2-notes-on-taste.mp3](http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/2-notes-on-taste.mp3)

[www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/3-materiality-and-nothingness.mp3](http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/3-materiality-and-nothingness.mp3)

[www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/4-notes-on-community.mp3](http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/4-notes-on-community.mp3)

See [www.junioraspirin.com](http://www.junioraspirin.com) for earlier podcasts.

Cover: Mark Leckey, *Sound System*, 2002. Sound system, amplifiers, speakers, turntables, record player, acetate record, 102 x 102 x 38 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise

## #1: EXPLAINING NARRATIVE

You are sat in a pitch-black room.

Your head is gently buzzed with whisky.

Out of the darkness you hear a recording of my voice.

The playback is loud and the tone of my voice serious, leavened with a pinch of self-importance. The recording is lightly varnished with reverb, which suggests I am speaking from a large room.

You hear me say:

“Junior Aspirin Records: Audio Annotations for The Serving Library.”

A pause.

“Session number one: Explaining Narrative.”

Then the music kicks in.

What that music is, I can't say specifically, other than it is music: timbres, rhythms, melodies, sonorities, dissonances, harmonies, counterpoints, dynamics, tempi, lyrics, you-name-it. The music that leads off then leads into other music, and to more talk; talk about themes such as storytelling, taste, mortality, partying, fashion, tolerance, community, insecurity, nothingness, poetry, technology, collaboration, nonsense.

This is the framework: the dark room, the sound of my voice alternating with songs or pieces of music picked for their thematic relevance and resonance is a listening exercise, a way of trying to understand something physically. Music's affect is in the ear, brain and mind's eye and not on the page. It's a way of thinking away from the printed word.

Just as it's important to know how to read, write, speak and do, we all need to know how to listen. (What are hands for, if not to hide the eyes?) With those ubiquitous white headphone leads dangling from our ears as we walk the streets and ride the subway, today we're plugged in and listening in ways unimaginable even a decade ago. Compact discs are now more commonly used as drinks coasters, and vinyl records survive mainly as connoisseur collectibles; recorded sound has shed its corporeal form, and new structures of listening have evolved. We scroll through hours of recordings, dipping in and out of songs, symphonies, podcasts, or audiobooks. We shuffle through manifold genres and decades.

These new methods may tell us about the way we produce and consume culture. How is narrative created? What does our ability

to access almost any album or film that's ever been made at the click of a button or the tap of a screen tell us about taste and consumption? Or about history and progress, for that matter? How do modes of transmission affect the ways we relate, create and exchange information? If all that is solid really has melted into air, what of the materiality of the hardware we use to "connect"? These Audio Annotations will ask us to use our ears in order to see things a little differently.

01. "Miller's Cave" – Charley Pride (1966)
  02. "The Deserter" – Fairport Convention (1969)
  03. "Trapped in the Closet (Pt.1)" – R Kelly (2005)
  04. "0% Finance" – Gza the Genius (2008)
  05. "Past, Present & Future" – The Shangri-Las (1966)
  06. "Read the Book that Wrote Itself" – Liars (2004)
  07. "La Di Da Di" – Doug E. Fresh feat. MC Ricky D (1985)
  08. "Girlfriend in a Coma" – The Smiths (1987)
  09. "Man V Cock" – Country Teasers (2003)
  10. "You Suffer" – Napalm Death (1987)
  11. "Bicycle Race" – Queen (1978)
  12. "Wings" – The Fall (1983)
  13. "Independent Woman" – Destiny's Child (2000)
  14. "Wuthering Heights" – Kate Bush (1978)
  15. "The Booklovers" – The Divine Comedy (1994)
  16. "Jacques Derrida" – Scritti Politti (1982)
  17. "Surfin' Bird" – The Trashmen (1963)
  18. "I Am the Walrus" – The Beatles (1967)
  19. "The Horror" – Skill 7 Stamina 12 (2003)
  20. "Mega Armageddon Death" – Electro Hippies (1989)
- Throughout: excerpts from John Carpenter's music to "Assault on Precinct 13" (1976)

<http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/1-explaining-narrative.mp3>

## #2: NOTES ON TASTE AND AUTHENTICITY

In his sleevenotes to Saint Etienne's 1991 album *Foxbase Alpha*, Jon Savage writes:

"Down in Camden, London is in your throat. The lowest point in the city, a sink for pollution, noise, destitution. But it's here that you find the raw material to make the world in the way that you hear it. Walking through congested streets and alleys, you're assaulted by a myriad of sounds, looks and smells from all over the world, each with its own memory and possibility. How to make sense of this? Go with the flow, find what has been forgotten, put it together in a new way."

This is a pretty good description of our approach to these Annotations. The commentaries are constructed in eclectic ways similar to that of the playlists: they come from texts we've written, quotes from articles and books, snippets from Wikipedia, the occasional

sample of someone else speaking. A certain amount of opinionated argument holds the commentary together and shapes the order of the tracks.

Session #1 moves straight through different categories of narrative, for example, whereas #3 follows an arc. It starts with the idea of “nothingness,” then advances through the origins of matter, onward to birth, the problems of corporeality, the drudgery of the daily grind, existential dread, and finally to acceptance of mortality and disappearance back into nothingness. But as the word “annotations” implies, the spoken parts threaded through the playlists are more like marginalia than body text.

01. “Is this Cool? (Excerpt)” – Steve Coogan (1994)
02. “Public Image” – Public Image Ltd. (1978)
03. “Good Taste (Live)” – The Cramps (1984)
04. “Spiderman in the Flesh” – Country Teasers (2006)
05. “Paninaro” – Pet Shop Boys (1986)
06. “Mash Down” – Roots (1977)
07. “Girl VII” – Saint Etienne (1991)
08. “Avant Garde M.O.R.” – Stereolab (1993)
09. “Trash” – New York Dolls (1973)
10. “Judged By the Left Eye” – Socrates that practices music (2011)
11. “No One Was Like Vermeer” – Jonathan Richman (2008)
12. “Favourite Films” – Television Personalities (1992)
13. “Do the Conga” – Black Lace (1984)
14. “Class and Subject” – Keith Hudson (1972)
15. “Booker Tease” – The Residents (1978)
16. 1980s advertisement for Kit-Kat (1984)
17. “Caucasian Guilt” – Noh Mercy (1978)
18. “A Flat Man” – Ivor Cutler (1998)
19. “Can’t Hear My Eyes” – Ariel Pink (2009)
20. “Air On a G String” – J.S. Bach  
(Performed by Yo-Yo Ma with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra) (c.1717/1999)
21. “A Whiter Shade of Pale” – Procol Harum (1967)
22. “Air On a G String” – J.S. Bach (Performed by Otto Gelb) (2007)
23. “Bach is Dead” – Residents (1978)
24. “In Every Dream Home a Heartache” – Roxy Music (1973)
25. “Sinfonia to Cantata ‘Geist und Seele wird verwirret’” – J.S. Bach  
(Performed by Paul Glover, after Wendy Carlos) (2008)
26. “Mercedes Benz” – Janis Joplin (1971)
27. “Seen and Not Seen” – Talking Heads (1980)
28. “The Village Green Preservation Society” – The Kinks (1968)
29. “Taking Retro to Its Logical Conclusion” – The Mighty Boosh (2007)
30. “You Were Young Once” – Jack Too Jack (2006)
31. “Where Do We Go From Here?” – Death (1974/2009)
32. “Don’t” – Dinosaur Jr. (1988)

<http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/2-notes-on-taste.mp3>

### #3: MATERIALITY AND NOTHINGNESS. OR, THE QUALITY OF HAVING A PHYSICAL BODY. OR, KEEPING A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE

The danger of the new modes of listening is that music will be demoted to muzak—a background or a tool for drowning out the world. Arguably, from the moment recording technology first matured, music has been used as sonic wallpaper. The act of walking across a room to wind up the gramophone, change over a record, put a CD on, or to buy a physical object in order to access music—activities that remind you that there is music playing in a room and that it's not magically appearing out of nowhere—is no longer necessary for most music listeners. As a result, listening (where it doesn't involve dancing to music) has been relegated to a reassuring noise buzzing in the background, a hologram of activity and sociability, rather than an activity that requires patience or concentration, such as reading or watching a movie in the cinema.

Perhaps we do not give as much thought as we once did to where music comes from. People sitting together in rooms, singing, plucking, vibrating, pushing and hitting things—that's the first step. Then there's all that recorded information—once it was kept on wax cylinders, then magnetic tape on which the sound was organized by people pushing mixing desk sliders or pressing keys. Nowadays it's held as pure data, as ones and zeros. How are all those downloads transmitted from continent to continent? And what about all the hardware we use to listen to the ones and zeros—where does THAT come from? The hardware can't be magically teleported into our living rooms. It arrives by road and by ship—thousands of container ships that follow the trade routes between Asia, the U.S., Africa and Europe. All of these solid things are packed into cartons and sleeves made from reconstituted wood, paper and oil-based plastics which are then shipped in heavy steel containers on vast metal ships powered by three types of oil and petroleum. These ships navigate huge oceans on long journeys that take days and weeks. Human beings made of flesh and bone steer the vessels from port to port. The messages we send to each other are enabled by metal and plastic satellites in orbit around the Earth, by telecommunications towers, or undersea cables. We cannot escape the material.

A material quality of time is essential to any concentrated listening activity. Yet music's invisibility and weightlessness open a field of interpretation that material things in a room don't. Music provokes unique forms of intellectual plasticity.

01. "Sehr Kosmisch" – Harmonia (1974)
02. "Nothing" – Ōwada (1997)
03. "Nothing" – Flipper (1981)
04. "Waves Become Wings" – This Mortal Coil (1984)
05. "4:33" – John Cage (Performed by David Tudor) (1952)

06. "Something" – Butthole Surfers (1983)
07. "Sunrise" – Ras G and the Afrika Space Program (2008)
08. "I Am Alive Order" – Socrates that practices music (2011)
09. "Journey Among the Stars" – Sun Ra (1976)
10. "Through My Eyes" – The Creation (1967)
11. "I Got a Thing, You Got a Thing, Everybody's Got a Thing" – Funkadelic (1970)
12. "Same Old Thing" – The Meters (1970)
13. "The Daily Planet" – Love (1967)
14. "Bruces' Philosopher's Song" – Monty Python's Flying Circus (1973)
15. "Stepping Out" – The Fall (1979)
16. "I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight" – Richard & Linda Thompson (1974)
17. "Oscillations" – Silver Apples (1968)
18. "Of All the Things We've Made" – OMD (1982)
19. "What's the Ugliest Part of Your Body" – The Mothers of Invention (1967)
20. "Free Will and Testament" – Robert Wyatt (1997)
21. "Come On In" – The Music Machine (1966)
22. "The Whale Has Swallowed Me" – J.B. Lenoir & Freddy Below (1965)
23. "Guillotine" – Death Grips (2011)
24. "I Am the Brother of the Wind" – Sun Ra (1973)
25. "I Think I'm Down" – The Harbinger Complex (1967)
26. "My Name is Death" – The Incredible String Band (1971)
27. "By This River" – Brian Eno (1977)
28. "Mr Don Lee" – Experimental Dogs (2003)
29. "All Cried Out" – Link Wray (1973)
30. "Strangers Die Everyday" – Butthole Surfers (1986)
31. "The Bells" – Billy Ward and His Dominoes (1977)

<http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/3-materiality-and-nothingness.mp3>

#### #4: NOTES ON COMMUNITY

As blindingly obvious as it is to point out, sociability is fundamental to music's creation and reception. Music translates communalism and collaboration into form. A common assumption about communities—certainly in the context of collaborative art projects—is that harmony and agreement are the norm. Yet disharmony, disagreement, robust discussion and friction are all crucial to the lifeblood of a community. They allow for mistakes and rectification of those mistakes; for ideas to evolve rather than wither under the pressures of assent and compliance. It seems to us that any Audio Annotation session designed for the notionally pedagogical context of The Serving Library should acknowledge this. It's the happy family in Madness's "Our House" up against the alienated immigrants in Bernstein & Sondheim's "America"; Lou Reed's anger in the face of Petula Clark's optimism; the Butthole Surfers' sludge smothering John Cage's silence.

Our Audio Annotations are simple. As Jon Savage says:

"The idea is mental freedom: transformation of the familiar.  
Primrose Hill, Staten Island, Gospel Oak, Sao Paolo, Boston Manor,

Costa Rica, Arnos Grove, San Clemente, Maida Vale, Studamer:  
Stay busy, out of phase, in love.”

Now listen.

01. “One” – Harry Nilsson (1968)
02. “Our House” – Madness (1982)
03. “Your Mind and We Belong Together (Tracking Sessions Highlights)” – Love (1967)
04. “Downtown” – Petula Clark (1964)
05. “All Tomorrow’s Parties (Demo: Take 1)” – The Velvet Underground (1965)
06. “Collaboration” – The Rebel (2011)
07. “Women of the World” – Ivor Cutler (1983)
08. “Death of a Disco Dancer” – The Smiths (1987)
09. “America” – Leonard Bernstein & Stephen Sondheim (1961)
10. “I’m Legal Now” – Chingo Bling (feat. Xavier & Biggie Paul) (2011)
11. “Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos” – Public Enemy (1988)
12. “Communist Sympathiser” – Biff Rose (1968)
13. “Lead a Normal Life” – Peter Gabriel (1980)
14. “Kill for Peace” – The Fugs (1966)
15. “Reception/Group Therapy” – Broadcast & The Focus Group (2009)
16. “The Tuning Meditation” – Pauline Oliveros (1979)
17. “In C (Side A)” – Terry Riley (Performed by Invisible Polytechnic) (1964/2011)
18. “In C (Side B)” – Terry Riley (Performed by Invisible Polytechnic) (1964/2011)

<http://www.servinglibrary.org/MEDIA/AUDIO/4-notes-on-community.mp3>