

# drone

A drone is an unpunctuated sound.

It's always a sound – it can be a complex of different sounds, but they must coalesce and adhere to form something with a certain aural unity. A drone is one thing.

A drone has to be long; a drone with duration of less than 1 second is a note, not a drone. But if we slowed that same note down so that it was 10 minutes long, it would be a drone. A drone emerges at somewhere between 1 second and 10 minutes in length.

The word 'drone' suggests monotony, which implies dullness. Are we meant to endure a drone, or enjoy it? A drone's lack of differentiation and the very slowness of its unfolding test us. A drone can change – our appreciation of drones usually hinges on the difference between its beginning and end – but the drone challenges us not to notice.

Eliane Radigue draws out sounds for hours, with subtle modulations that flirt with imperceptibility. Its machinations are hidden within its slowness and we are impressed because we recognise that a monumental transformation has occurred without us seeing it; like a drifting glacier or our own ageing.

The drone can be a spectacle – extremely quiet, extremely loud, extremely long, requiring extreme patience or requiring extreme levels of submission. It's interesting because it asks of us something we can do, but that we don't normally do when we hear music.

It doesn't expect to hold our attention, but it returns us to the world with a different sensibility (if only temporarily).

In this way the drone is almost inherently Cageian. It adjusts musical parameters to those ends of the spectrum that bring its own musicality into question, and its real function is displaced: it's a slow stroll from A to B that teaches us how to walk.