

noise

Noise is apparently whatever isn't meaningful – 'the rest is noise', 'that's *just* noise'. Data that's irrelevant to a scientific theory is called noise, noises don't signify.

We ask kids: 'what noise do dogs make?' but not 'what noise do humans make?' because we intuit that human emissions are meaningful, while doggy ones are unstructured and don't refer. What, then, does it mean to call a musical genre 'Noise'?

Coming from the outside, it can seem like an insult – noise is, almost by definition, not music. It is unstructured and meaningless: music is formed out of noises. It's a middle-aged put-down for teenage rackets.

Coming from the inside, it's defiant and strident. It pre-empts accusations of being 'noise' by labelling itself as such from the very beginning. It reclaims the word for punks, bohemians and metalheads who want noise and aren't ashamed of it. Ok, so noise isn't music but neither is archery. Something that doesn't aspire to the status of music (as defined by reactionaries) cannot be criticised as not-music. We might as well call Picasso tone-deaf or say that Shakespeare was a lousy saxophonist.

We are obsessed with music, such that anything aural that doesn't conform to our expectations of it *offends* us. We treat it as a zero-sum game, as if the presence of Prurient or Wolf Eyes negates the presence of Mozart or Frank Sinatra, as if they fight over the same territory.

Noise can convey emotion (but need it do so?) and can provide information. In this way, it isn't strictly noise. It utilises the morphology of noise (qua meaningless, unstructured sounds) to do the job(s) of music. Once noise is put to use, it is no longer noise, but Noise.