MA MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

CONSUMPTION AND CULTURE IN TORONTO'S URBAN SOUNDSCAPES

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Introduction

The multifaceted acoustic environments found in Toronto's urban centres are often unseen as part of the city's cultural landscape. Toronto's ambience is a direct product of the cultural fertility created in downtown communities however, certain consumptive practices are encroaching on a vulnerable soundscape. Technology is changing the cityscape, not only visually but acoustically as well. As a result, consumer culture is adapting. In the past, consumption revolved around the visual realm. Now a change is occurring, consumerism is evolving, and soundscapes are facilitating a new era of consumer culture. It is essential that we realise this shift and that we do not remain passive observers in what is considered to be an evolution from a literary to aural society.

The technological expansion and urban gentrification over the last few decades has considerably changed Toronto's soundscape. This research paper investigates the evidence of consumption and technology in Toronto's soundscapes and is an exploration of how consumption, technology and acoustic culture interact. This report seeks to determine how Toronto's consumer culture vibe has shifted from visual to aural. The following investigation identifies three sound layers that contribute to the city's urban auditory environment and how elements within these layers contribute to the production and consumption of culture.

The aural environment is not a new area of discussion. The significance of soundscapes has caught the attention of many Canadian theorists; Marshall

McLuhan asserts that new media is contributing to a shift away from literary culture back to an acoustic space. In a similar vein, R. Murray Schafer predicts a shift from the dependence on visual portrayal. This research paper investigates what McLuhan, Schafer and others have affirmed about the aural landscape and applies their theoretical assertions to an exploration of soundscapes in Toronto.

In this paper, I perform investigations of three urban soundscapes. In the analysis, the findings demonstrate that Toronto's soundscapes facilitate and shape consumptive practices. In each of these three areas, field research identifies three different categories of sounds: sounds of selling, multi-cultural sounds and urban sounds for analysis. These three categories represent the most common sounds heard in the city centre and contain distinct layers that promote consumptive practices. An investigation of these layers will demonstrate how consumer culture is reliant on the aural environment.

Literature Review

Compared to visual space (landscape), Marshall McLuhan asserts that *acoustic* space (soundscape) allows an individual to adopt a fundamentally different perception of the relationship between time and space. Void of a centre or edges, acoustic space is organic and integral because it is observed through the combination of all five senses. Unlike the successive nature of the visual, auditory environments are simultaneous and resonant (E. McLuhan, 1995). McLuhan designates the urban city as a way for men to realize simultaneous association and consciousness among themselves. "What the family and the tribe had done in this

respect for a few, the city did for many. Our technology now removes all city walls and pretexts." (McLuhan, 1967, p. 299). This is even more relevant today as technology can permeate global time and space instantly. This is what he defines as the potential of contemporary simultaneity: the return to tribal acoustic forms on a global scale. In examining acoustic space, McLuhan determines that the complexity of harmonic structures impeded on its ability to reach the status of the signified until fixed in the form of writing. This however, limits the possibilities of acoustic space. By separating and defining sound through sight, the auditory has been abstracted and thinned-out by the written word.

New media (or new languages), claims McLuhan, have begun to encroach on writing and the printed word. These media have the potential to recreate a version of the original acoustic space that has been eradicated by print. Acoustic space is capable of being re-enacted through the senses with the emergence of new media technologies (for example, MP3 players). However, argues McLuhan, the re-emergence of acoustic space would not be possible without first being designated as a sign through writing (McLuhan, 1967). This is because new technologies are unfamiliar and often initially unaccepted unless introduced to consumers visually (for example, the ipod marketing campaign).

Acoustic space is constituted through the combination of what McLuhan labels as *hot* and *cool* mediums. This refers to the different sensory effects achieved through media of high or low frequency. Greater sensory involvement from the participant is required for cool media (e.g. telephone, television) whereas hot media

(e.g. radio, cinema) provides more information and allows for less participation (McLuhan, 1994). Both hot and cool mediums contribute to the layers found within a city soundscape. For example, selling sounds are often emitted from cool media technologies like storefront speakers whereas many mediated multicultural sounds, like amplified buskers, require active participation from the listener and are thus projected by or through hot media.

McLuhan defines electronic media as created through the decentralizing, integrating and accelerating nature of electrical means. In turn, these means lead to an abundance of simultaneous events rather than taking the form of a linear progression. This structure of information creates a new perception of reality as each medium affects the senses with different ratios of stimuli. A new way of experiencing media occurs perceptually regardless of the underlying message. This is what McLuhan means by "the medium is the message" (E. McLuhan, 1995, p.3). McLuhan insists that a successful form of media technology will have a narcotic effect on its user in that it will have the ability to create an environment that will be undervalued until newer technologies confront and demote older technologies (E. McLuhan, 1995). Just as a theatre audience is forced to distance itself from the action on stage while simultaneously understanding its presence as spectator (and thus its participatory role), new media disrupts the pacifying effects of confirmed technologies. Inevitably, new media technologies become pacifying over time. This is evident in consumer culture where visual stimuli is expected but the addition of commercial audio can usually enhance and even supersede it. It city centres for example, billboards are replaced by video screens with diegetic audio.

Many musicians and performers are especially interested in the capability of technology to reach greater audiences. New media technologies allow a more accessible way for audiences to consume culture. Cell phones provide users with portable interaction; ipods permit users to design and consume a portable soundscape and laptops enable users to watch television and videos regardless of location. Following in McLuhan's (and others') lead, pianist and composer Glenn Gould defended his move from the concert hall to an enclosed studio space as a way of achieving better intimacy with his audience (Angilette, 1992). For Gould, technology maintains a redemptive quality by removing personal performance (information that may distract the listener from the essence of musicality) from the musical experience. Gould's beliefs supported the notion that technology possesses the exclusive ability to dissect, analyse and idealize. Technology then becomes the embodiment of contemplation (Angillette, p. 137). Gould affirmed McLuhan's statement that considers the self-reflexive nature of technology:

> What we fail to notice, however, is the profoundly oriental
> effect of electronic technology on ourselves, as we look
> inward in depth and begin this inscrutable life of inner
> meditation and the contemplation with electronic circuitry –
> it carries us inward all the time.
> (McLuhan interviewed by Glenn Gould. Media script.
> GGC. 1965. in Angillette, 1992).

Gould believes that the fusion of technology with art has the most potential to create connectivity and self-reflexivity. He defends technology as a means that helps to perfect musical structure. In response to critics who claim that the best communication between performer and audience occurs during a live performance,

Gould claims that an artistic mission is not a human phenomenon in the first place but an intangible occurrence. Rather, the use of technology maintains a sense of humanity because it has the power to distribute culture and thus shape the collective concept of art (Angillette, 1992). Therefore, technology shapes consumptive practices by making the norm accessible. Technology is humanizing because it connects people through the consumption of cultural artefacts. We connect through our shared behaviours and practices.

Today, there are many technologies that McLuhan and Gould would consider capable of enhancing meditation and contemplation. For example, personal music devices (such as Discmans, MP3 players, and ipods) can be cast as both promoters of self-reflexivity and as enablers of connectivity. Ipods and such devices have a twofold effect: they can be used to enhance personal meditation by eliminating the distractions of the outside soundscape and provide the means to invert the soundscape as a form of personal expression. Simultaneously, these devices enable musicians to make their music portable and more accessible to listeners. The result is the creation of a larger community of listeners and increased consumption of music.

The personal-communal connotation of new media technology contributes to its political significance. Continuing with the example of personal music devices, in 1979 the Sony Walkman (the ipod's precursor) became a fashion symbol and a means of self-reaffirmation (DuGay et al., 1997). This raised issues about the associations of class, age and nationality of its users. The Walkman became an

instrument of identity, class, and age. For example, in urban environments the Walkman became a symbol of youth and vitality. At the beginning of the technological boom of the 1980s, its use became associated with cutting-edge fashion and trendy activity. The associations of class, age and nationality correlate directly to consumptive behaviour. Consumption can create, affirm and project identity. The kind and brand of technology, and when, where and how it is used to consume carry heavy connotations and are considered indicative of personal identity. Using a technology in a public urban space promotes further consumption, acting as its own advertisement. This is particularly true in commercial areas where consumptive behaviour is expected and encouraged.

Iain Chambers claims that the use of new media both projects and internalizes identity. He explains,

> In this mobile, wraparound world, the Walkman, like dark glasses and iconoclastic fashion, serves to set one apart while simultaneously reaffirming individual contact to certain common, if shifting, measures (music, fashion, aesthetics, metropolitan life ... and their particular cycles of mortality). [...]
> [The Walkman] permits the possibility, however fragile and however transitory, of imposing your soundscape on the surrounding aural environment and thereby domesticating the external world: for a moment, it can all be brought under the stop/start, fast forward, pause and rewind buttons.
> (Chambers in DuGay et al., p. 141)

The Walkman emerged as a device that was capable of altering, if not eradicating the constancy of space and time. In Chambers view, as an instrument and activity,

the Walkman altered society both culturally and politically by changing perceptions and thus consciousness. The Walkman accomplished this by providing an escape from the confines of urban life and space. It became another element within the cluster of activities in the social order. Chambers notes that from a Nietzschian perspective, the world is dependent on the activity of its inhabitants. In this sense, the amalgamation of all human activity (including the use of media technology) causes the formation and reformation of space and time. Politics, economics, and culture are all reliant on this structure. Chambers suggests that this reorganization of time and space significantly alters socio-cultural dynamics (DuGay et al., 1997). Contrary to McLuhan and Gould who defend technology as the embodiment of introspection and contemplation, Chambers asserts that technology is not an aid to reflection and passivity.

Another Canadian, R. Murray Schafer has taken interest in the political economy of audio technology as it pertains to the world's auditory environment. Taking his cue from McLuhan, Schafer confirms that the world of sound is "loaded with direct personal significance for the hearer" (McLuhan 1962, cited in Schafer 1994, p. 11). He maintains that while sight classifies objects as distinct and detached from the perceiver, auditory stimuli can actually penetrate the body. While vision can classify objects as separate things, a heard object is not always identifiable if it is not also seen. From this perspective, Schafer proposes a natural link between sound and the supernatural, "God originally came to man through the ear, not the eye" (Schafer, 1994, p. 51). However, casting sound as a supernatural phenomenon links it to societal issues of impulse and instinct in the sense that

human hearing cannot willingly be disabled. On the body's sensory reactions to alarm, Schafer notes the significant contribution that hearing plays to response:

> When we go to sleep, our perception of sound is the last door to close and it is also the first to open when we awaken. These facts have prompted McLuhan to write: "Terror is the normal state for any oral society for in it everything affects everything all the time".
> (Schafer, 1994, p. 11).

Hearing cannot be turned on and off on whim. As technology and consumption become more reliant on the auditory realm, we find ourselves moving toward McLuhan's oral society. Consistent with McLuhan's argument in "The Gutenberg Galaxy" (1962), Schafer foresees that the universal perception of sound is on the verge of a drastic change. Since the effects of electricity compel contemporary society, McLuhan asserts that this will force communication to return to oral modes because visual representations of audio will no longer be suitable. Based on McLuhan's predictions, Schafer also expects to see a shift from dependence on the visual portrayal of sound in the same manner that society is moving away from print culture. An example of this transition is the replacement of music notation with recording devices. This builds upon McLuhan's earlier position that print culture initially disassociated the word from sound (Schafer, 1994, p. 128). Another similarity between McLuhan and Schafer is the assertion that electricity is capable of reuniting people. Akin to Chambers, Schafer sees this potential in "headphone listening" (Schafer, 1994, p. 118).

While many will agree with the concept of new media technology as a political tool and as a contribution to progressive social change, not all theorists concur with

the ostensibly optimistic considerations above. A number of theorists, including Schafer, argue that new technologies actually impede on various social structures. Schafer maintains that technology inhibits the natural environment, or "aural culture" which is the true basis for human development, collaboration, and contemplation. Schafer has performed extensive qualitative and quantitative research on sound. His most notable contribution was his role in the World Soundscape Project, an attempt to draw attention to the rapidly changing soundscape in Vancouver due to noise pollution. Schafer's concerns relate to the hazards of noise, the impact of rising ambient noise in urban centres, and the implementation and impact of noise legislation worldwide. Consequently, his book "The Tuning of the World" (1994) is the first to introduce the concept of the 'soundscape' and proposes a framework and modules for benefiting acoustic ecology through acoustic design.

In this vein, another argument for the hazardous impact of technology on sound is the theory that art in its true form (without the confines of technology) is the basis for societal and cultural change. Pertaining to aural technology, Jacques Attali's concerns revolve around the social formations of meaning involved in music production. Attali deems that music holds the potential ability to overcome the confines of the music industry. He asserts that music is prophetic because its structure provides a means for analyzing the political and economical changes of the past and potentially of the future. In "Noise: The Political Economy of Music" (1985), he outlines the historical development of musical form; each chapter describes a different stage in musical production: "Sacrificing", Representing", "Repeating", and "Composing". Atalli uses the term 'noise' metaphorically for the radical nature of

western soundscapes to initiate social change (Radano, 1989). Attali casts a different consideration of the soundscape as unrelated to self-reflection and meditation. Contrary to McLuhan's premonition that art is inevitably going to become another part of the technological soundscape or the "radar environment" (McLuhan, 1964, p. x), Attali recasts music as a venue for positive social change. He asserts that music is reflective of culture but also has the ability to shape society and is therefore an indication of development.

Attali's argument evolves chronologically and in his historical trajectory of music, he begins with the era of "Sacrificing", as a rather romantic description of initial musical societies. Here, he develops the concept of ritual sacrifice as a producer and controller of violence. In this context 'violence' is defined as 'noise' because it is the source of power and to control noise is to control operations of power. Attali claims that in this scenario the musician is symbolically blamed for the spread of violence and is forced to control it. "Representing" contextualizes music within the emergence of a market economy. Attali describes the development of the musician as a specialist during the time that codified tonal music was emerging in bourgeois culture. This development is reflective of the growth of political economy. Here, political and economical growth is presented as a spectacle in order to coerce people into believing in a universal 'harmony'. "Repeating", a similar area of interest for the Frankfurt School, examines music in the form of recorded sound in the age of mechanical reproduction. As an effect of repetition in mass production (the recording industry), music becomes void of meaning. Attali describes the absence of meaning as "the necessary condition for the legitimacy of technocracy's power"

(Attali, 1985, p.112). No longer forced into the role of scapegoat, the musician becomes a model for duplication. Repetition of this model imposes conformity and becomes a silencer of the masses. Silencing allows music to find a "use value" and is reduced to the form of 'muzak'. "Composing" is Attali's hope for the future of music. He suggests the possibility of replacing the repetitive form of music with the return to the idea of 'festival', where an individual can produce both music and his own power over it. Yet again, Attali's vision suggests confronting the original source of violence but on an individual level so that the musician becomes martyred (Erickson, 1989). During the postmodernism of the 1960s, Attali seems to find potential for the emergence of a new musical path.

In contrast to McLuhan and others, Attali does not find promise in technology as a means of improving culture and human interrelationships. Media technology is rather a tool of alienation and a disabler of communication. The detrimental effects of recording technology far outweigh the benefits for Attali. His concerns bear a resemblance to Schafer's aural-environmental unease about technology.

Methodology

This research paper is an exploration of contemporary city soundscapes. Due to economic and temporal restrictions, the fieldwork is limited to three specific neighbourhoods in downtown Toronto and aims to investigate some of the concepts observed by McLuhan, Schafer and others. This research endeavours to discern how a soundscape affects the expression and consumption of culture within Toronto's urban centres. The analysis aims to deduce how consumption is affected,

suppressed, enhanced or altered by commodification and technology and to demonstrate that Toronto's consumer culture has shifted from a visual to an aural realm. The analysis infers that not only is there an increase of sound in these urban areas but that commerce is taking place more through sound.

The three locations in Toronto chosen for this research are Yonge and Dundas Square, Queen Street West and Kensington Market, all located within the downtown core. Yonge and Dundas Square is a commercial area that has recently been rebuilt to act as a cultural performance venue. This site is significant to the research project because during construction, many new loudspeakers and amplifiers were built into the surrounding structures including the Eaton Centre and the Hard Rock Café. This potentially indicates that a new emphasis has been put on audio and its influence in the area. Queen Street West is undergoing rapid gentrification as new condominiums and mainstream stores are being built on top of and around existing independent retailers. With the invasion of corporate stores and influx of potential buyers, comes a higher volume of traffic and louder music. Kensington Market has also gone through changes over the last ten years, which has significantly altered its soundscape. Many different kinds of people live and work in the Market and it caters to many different cultures. This in turn, has attracted a larger and more diverse array of visitors.

As part of the investigation into Toronto's soundscapes, this paper seeks to define commodity culture in the city spaces of Toronto. In his unfinished *Arcades Project* Walter Benjamin sought to theorize commodities in space. He was intrigued

by the relationships formed between the public and the city spaces in Paris and described commodified phenomena "in such a way as simultaneously to convey their appeal, to dismantle their mystification, and to transform it" (Cohen, 2004, 202). From the transparent window displays of luxury goods to the construction of purely functional steel arcades, Benjamin described Parisian commodities as pure fetish and no longer linked to production or use. In doing so, Benjamin distinguished commodities as semiotic devices. Benjamin marvelled at how the arcades offered an advantageous arena for observing the fascination, desire and pleasure found within commodities and consumer culture (Cohen, 2004).

In the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin detected the shifting nature of commodities as well as the shifting nature of how people react to consumerism. He made empirical observations about the relationship between consumers and the changing nature of commodities suggesting that consumerism had shifted from a tactile practice to a visual one. Benjamin's approach contributes to the methodology used in this research but must be applied not to the semiotics of place but to that of sound because the same empirical observations can be made of Toronto's urban soundscapes. Like the shift in the environment of Parisian commodity culture, this research paper attempts to distinguish if a similar or comparable change is occurring in Toronto's auditory environment.

In a similar vein, McLuhan's work was heavily concerned with the use of multi-media and space and sought to articulate sets of relationships formed by media. Specifically regarding sound, he wished to determine how the aural world was

suppressed, mediated or enhanced by sound technologies. McLuhan (1977) formed a semiotic methodology of diegetic sound because he felt that this particular area of study had become blinded by visual semiotics. In the study of a more contemporary cityscape, McLuhan sought to convey that in commodity culture, screens and billboard ads are only singular aspects of a city's aural space. Performing a 'figure-ground' analysis of the acoustic data will determine the diegetic make-up of Toronto's soundscape. Coined by McLuhan, the 'figure' is the sound that stands out and first draws attention as the main observable element. The figure is the content that conveys an obvious message. The 'ground' is the foundation from which figures become apparent. Often ignored, the ground structures and limits the figure and is considered "the medium that determines the message" (Wrobel, 1999, par. 3).

In order to perform empirical ethnographic research of Toronto's soundscapes, Tony Schwartz's soundscape research and compiled recordings were used for reference. McLuhan considered Schwartz to be a guru of electronic media as his work anticipated a new electronic age of media. In a 1999 interview, Schwartz stated, "I am most interested in how sounds affect me and other people [...] am most interested in people's lives"[1]. Schwartz's fascination with sound and its effects provides a template for the investigation of many contemporary city sound components and characteristics. For the purposes of this analysis, three of the major sound categories discussed during his interview were chosen for observation: the "sounds of selling", multicultural sounds and urban sounds. Schwartz's "sounds of selling" include the voices of "street vendors and barkers", and "radio or TV

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[1] http://www.npr.org/programs/lnfsound/stories/990226.stories.html Copyright © 1999 The Kitchen Sisters

announcers". Multicultural sounds include the sounds of "street festivals", "jukeboxes at restaurants or bars", "international folk music or folklore", the translation of other languages, and the "sounds of people singing or shouting in their backyards". He describes urban sounds as cars (horns, tire squeals) and cab drivers.

The sounds pertaining to Schwartz's categories that were detected during fieldwork were logged for analysis. In order to contemporize Schwartz's categories, the occurrence of sounds created by newer technologies and phenomena that contributed to one or more of the three categories were also noted. The "sounds of selling" in Toronto are: live voices articulating the sale of goods or services, street workers selling charitable donations (for example, Amnesty International or Green Peace), employees offering free products or samples, recorded voices over loudspeakers, radios or televisions, the sounds of bartering, the ringing of bells denoting front door of shop is open, grocery cart wheels, clinking coins and the sound of cash registers or bank machines. Multicultural sounds in Toronto are live music or performance, music emitted from personal sound devices (ipods etc.) when audible, children's voices, and the sounds of people singing, chanting or shouting in any language. Urban sounds are automobiles of any kind, horns, tire squeals, engine revving, street car sounds, subways, factory noise, machinery, construction sounds, sirens or whistles, aircraft, crosswalk signals for the seeing impaired and bicycle bells.

In addition to identifying sound diegesis and categories in Toronto's soundscape, this research aims to investigate the individual sound components that contribute to the auditory environment. This includes identifying layers of sound, where sounds emanate from and which sound layers stand out the most. Here, we look to Chambers and his study of the relationships between multimedia and multicultural environments. In consideration of technology as both a technical instrument and a cultural activity, the sound components of Toronto's cityscape will be analyzed in terms of media source, how that source is used as a cultural tool and how sounds contribute to cultural environments. Comparing different sound-emitting technologies to Chambers' example of the walkman, an analysis of the findings will help to discern which sounds and technologies create not merely a space but an inhabited space or "site of dwelling" (Chambers in Cox and Warner, 2004, 100). An investigation of how sounds permeate the cultural landscape of Toronto would similarly identify if and how the existence of personal sound technologies (for example the ipod or the cell phone) disrupts or contributes to the inhabited nature of the urban soundscapes. Here, the analysis would confirm or deny that "the ingression of such a privatized habitat in public spaces is a disturbing act" (Ibid, 2004) or rather that personal sound devices provide an alternative inverse to an already commodified soundscape. Also, it could be argued that the two soundscapes are related because people are less likely to be tuned into their ipods because of the distraction of urban auditory environments.

For the purposes of this analysis, a convenience sample of three neighbourhoods was chosen as representative of gentrified yet cultural landscapes

in Toronto's urban centre. Yonge and Dundas Square (Yonge and Dundas), Queen Street West (Queen and John), and Kensington Market (Kensington and St. Andrew) were chosen as high-traffic areas, tourist destinations, consumer hubs, cultural centres, and are easily and freely accessible at any time. Ethnographic research performed in the specified locations recorded field notes about all detectable sounds. The descriptions of sounds, relative volume, and if detectable the sound sources were logged. Observations were made in twenty-minute segments, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon. All three locations were observed on the morning of April 1st, the afternoon of April 2nd 2006, again almost one year later on the morning of March 3rd, and the afternoon of March 4th 2007.

Findings

The Dundas Square, Queen Street West, and Kensington Market areas each have a distinct and layered soundscape. The ambient composition of each location differs however and the ambient volume in all three areas share a consistent increase during peak hours such as rush hour. Observations for this ethnographic analysis focus on three main acoustic categories based on prior ethnographic recordings made by Tony Schwartz. The three areas of focus are "sounds of selling", "multicultural sounds" and "urban sounds". These tend to be the three most prevalent sound categories in urban areas of Toronto and do tend to overlap in certain areas. Data from each sound category was collected from each of the three Toronto neighbourhoods. The analysis of these three categories will demonstrate how consumer culture has shifted from visual to aural. Each category shows a

different aspect of Toronto's soundscape that contributes to consumption of technology and culture.

Selling sounds are prevalent in urban Toronto and are an obvious indicator of the shift in consumer culture. The prevalence of these sounds strongly suggests the influence of aural landscapes on consumptive purposes. The selling sounds that are evident in Toronto include the live voices of vendors, barterers, promotional staff and volunteers, recorded advertisements and plugs, transaction sounds and other selling sounds specific to a certain location. Toronto's multicultural sounds are a less obvious indicator of the shift to an aural consumer culture but remain a contributing factor. These sounds will affect people in different ways depending on their class, age and nationality. In some instances, multicultural sounds can pacify a listener through familiarization. Other times these sounds are used to lure and fascinate through a kind of orientalism. Multicultural sounds vary extensively in source and description but generally include music and the voices of the young and old. Urban sounds are the least indicative of the consumer culture shift but are an important layer none the less. Urban sounds act as a foundation to other sound layers that induce consumption and are indicative of how a space is used. Urban noise denotes any audible noise that is caused by the industrialization of an area including automobiles, factory and construction sounds.

In addition to each of the three main sound categories used to group data, sounds were also evaluated in subcategories in order to determine which noises are most prominent, why certain sounds are most distinct and where sounds emanate

from. If possible, data was collected for each sound in the following ways: volume, diegesis, organic or inorganic, high or low frequency and high or low fidelity. Although volume was not measured in decibels, a relative volume level was qualitatively described. Sounds were labelled organic or inorganic based on source if detectable (for example, the human voice is an organic noise whereas the sound of a car horn is not). Frequency was not measured in hertz but described generally as either high or low; a high pitch sound corresponds to a high frequency and a low pitch sound corresponds to a low frequency. High fidelity sound refers to a high-quality reproduction of sound. Unlike low-fidelity reproduction, hi-fi has minimal amounts of distortion. These subcategories are useful in identifying sound layers and in determining which main sound category a noise belongs to and why.

One of Toronto's most expensively built eyesores is Yonge and Dundas Square, which has been described as "Toronto's open-air entertainment venue [...] where you can stroll or sit by its fountains"[2]. The paved city block is "an exposed industrial style anchored at Dundas Street. [...] Well-lit parking garages are sprinkled around the area. [...] Recently underwent a massive facelift, culminating in a Times-Square style media tower"[3]. The Yonge and Dundas Square serves a variety of functions and is used or inhabited by the public for various purposes depending on weather conditions and time of year. During peak times, the Square is used to host open-air music and entertainment performances or to provide a venue for vending and advertising booths. Otherwise, it is an open concrete expanse where tourists and locals alike come to sit and marvel at the enormous digital

[2] http://frommers.com/destinations/toronto/N28569.html 4/20/2006
[3] http://frommers.com/destinations/toronto/0034010031.html 3/31/2006

screens and advertising billboards surrounding the entire block. This description indicates that Yonge and Dundas Square is still a venue to consume visually however the following findings reveal the presence of sounds that tend to induce consumptive practices more effectively than the visual landscape.

It is reasonable to associate the soundscape at Yonge and Dundas Square with that of New York City's Times-Square, particularly when it comes to the sounds of selling category which is most prevalent in this particular area of Toronto. Depending on the listener's location, the selling sounds at Yonge and Dundas include radio, digital advertising, announcers, recorded music, the rustle of shopping bags, murmuring voices and footsteps of passers by and the voices and sounds of vendors, advertisers and product promoters. Radio broadcasts are a constant at the Square and emanate from several different sources. Passers-by are forced to consume the radio sounds unless they have earplugs or a personal music device. The "classic rock" broadcast of Q107 radio (and the intermittent advertising and jingles) stems from the south. The sounds are projected downward from the top of the Hard Rock Café which houses the radio station – a fact that is frequently mentioned during DJ blather) and merges with a mix of generic oldies and swing music which projects from the north end "T.O. Tix" outlet. These two sources clash with seasonal music blaring from the Sears building on the West side and intermittent advertising jingles projecting from the various digital billboards that hover from the taller buildings. These advertisements encourage the consumption of anything from cosmetics to television programs. Together these sounds create an ambient cacophony of non-diegetic, medium frequency, low fidelity and inorganic

basis to the overall soundscape at Yonge and Dundas Square. Shoppers and flaneurs that meander through the area create the subsequent sounds of selling layer. The sounds of footsteps, rustling shopping bags and inaudible conversations to others who are present or on the other end of a cell phone create a thin layer of diegetic and low frequency organic noise. The final layer of Yonge and Dundas Square's selling sounds is the most audible and pervasive. The voices and auditory gimmicks emanating from product promoters is high-frequency and detracts heavily from every other element of the soundscape (for example loud rock music emanating from ground level speakers while young female voices offer free samples of 'AXE' cologne to passers by). Here, one does not need to see to consume. Every aspect of consumer culture at the Square is dominated by audio. One can look away from the screens and billboards but it is impossible to shut out the selling sounds coming from them.

For the majority of the year, noises that contribute the Multicultural sound category are the least present at Yonge and Dundas Square but depending on the listener's location can be the most audible. During the summer's high season tourism, live musical performances occur weekly and can almost completely dominate the soundscape of the surrounding area. Otherwise, the multicultural sounds of the Square are comprised of the organic and diegetic sounds of buskers (guitar, bagpipe, drumbeats, whistles, monologues, singers etc.). Occasionally buskers will use microphones and amplifiers to raise the volume and frequency, which lowers the fidelity. Another layer of organic multicultural sound is created by the multitude of different languages in conversation and the voices of those offering

literature about different social, cultural and religious groups. Multicultural sounds will attract different consumer brackets. For instance, a steel drums concert will attract a different group of consumers to the area than a polka festival would. Like the sounds of selling, multicultural sounds create a consumption-inducing ambience by familiarizing people of certain age, class and nationality. Regardless of the visual landscape, the sounds can draw in potential consumers and pacify them through this familiarity. Pacification encourages consumption.

There are both organic and inorganic layers contributing to the urban sound category at Yonge and Dundas. These sounds act as a foundational layer for the other two categories and are indicative of the quantity of people that inhabit the space and how the space is used. Several different kinds of sounds emanate from vehicles that are constantly passing by on all four sides of the Square: acceleration, brake squeals, screeching tires, horns and whistles are the most frequent. Higher frequencies come from city buses and streetcars (particularly the bells and track noises). Traffic noises are generally at a high volume level. Construction sounds are intermittent and non-diegetic during business hours and are detectable only when other urban sounds (specifically traffic) subside. Another distinct contribution to urban sound at the Square is the inorganic yet rhythmic sound of chirping birds that indicate crosswalk signals to the visually impaired. This sound is at a very high frequency and resonates above all other sounds. The Square's inhabitants create another layer of urban sound. This element of the soundscape crosses over to the other two sound categories (selling sounds and multicultural sounds) but also holds an integral place as human presence denotes urbanism. Here, the presence of

children's laughter, heated conversation and personal music devices are acoustic indications of the multitude of ways in which the space is used. The volume of urban sounds demonstrates that there are many people in the area that are subjected to selling sounds and multicultural sounds. Even though many people use the space to travel through it, they are still influenced by the ambience to consume.

The soundscape at Yonge and Dundas Square is mainly comprised of selling sounds. Urban sounds are also present but because of the acoustic landscape are less audible. Multicultural sounds are infrequent and buried beneath other layers of Yonge and Dundas Square's soundscape but serve the purpose of drawing potential consumers.

The Queen Street West area is described as "the [former] heart of Toronto's avant-garde scene. [...] home to several clubs where major Canadian artists and singers have launched their careers, but it's also where you'll find mainstream shops [...] Edgy? Queen Street West would love to be but just isn't anymore. [...] Queen West doesn't really pick up, style-wise, till you cross University [...] lots of great bistros [...] prime shopping territory [...]"[4]. Here, the use of the word "territory" is an interesting adjective. Queen West is a commercial area that tries to be cutting edge and attempts to appeal to younger generations. Therefore, the area must have an influential soundscape that appeals to its niche market. The wider sections of sidewalk allow for window-shopping but hustle and bustle of the street generally detracts from the visual landscape. As a result, the soundscape has adapted to suit

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[4] http://frommers.com/destinations/toronto/0034021098.html 3/31/2006

the needs of the consumer culture and has come to replace many aspects of visual consumption.

This description of Queen Street West by Frommers.com suits the soundscape appropriately. Street musicians busk for money reminiscent of the "major Canadian artists and singers [who] have launched their careers". "Mainstream shops" attract large numbers of customers to the "prime shopping territory". It could be inferred that the territorial mentality of pedestrians is the reason that Queen Street is no longer particularly "edgy" (nor is its soundscape). This area is a designated shopping area but also an unofficial place to see and to be seen.

Rapid gentrification has occurred in the Queen West area over the last few years. Independent businesses are being forced out of the neighbourhood by large franchises and chain stores (McLean, 2006); this has significantly altered the soundscape. The sounds of selling are a prominent part of Queen West's soundscape but not to the degree observed at Dundas Square.

Selling sounds along Queen Street West have replaced the conventional window-gazing atmosphere of shopping areas. Instead of being drawn in by displays and billboards, consumers are easily lured into shops and cafes by the sounds they emit. Between University Avenue and Bathurst Street, selling sounds include live and reproduced music, storefront bells and transaction sounds, and the voices of canvassers, vendors, buyers, and product or event promoters. Recorded music plays from several different sources including storefront speakers and

personal music devices. Depending on the listener's location, these layers are very audible with in the soundscape but are inconsistent depending on the time of day. The larger and corporate storefronts including the City TV buildings emit the loudest levels of high fidelity, bass-heavy music. It is difficult to distinguish other sound layers when in close proximity to these storefronts. Music from small personal devices such as cell phones and other technological devices with small speakers is of extremely low-fidelity. However, because of the nature of the amplitude, this music is emitted at a fairly high frequency. Shoppers and flaneurs wear these as accessories. Unlike Discmans and MP3 players, these devices do not require personal headphones; rather they are designed to emit music that is audible at close range depending on acoustics. The availability and popularity of these devices makes the consumption of audio very accessible and convenient. Emitting a personal soundtrack has, in some ways, begun to replace the visual aspects of fashion. Trendsetters may not wear edgy apparel but rather emit trendy music as they pass by. Similarly, music blaring from open car windows contributes to a cacophonic "Top 40" soundtrack on Queen West and the music emitted is considered a form of self-expression more so than what the car resembles. The music from storefronts, personal music devices and from cars imposes musical taste on passers by. It seems as though it is becoming less important to consumer visually (clothing, cars etc.) than audibly.

Another layer of selling sounds on Queen Street West is comprised of the voices of vendors, canvassers, promoters and customers. Street side vendors occasionally call out to potential customers or can be heard negotiating. Hot dog

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vendors compete for business on the busier corners. The voices of event and product promoters roam the area at peak times trying to distribute flyers or free samples to the public. On every block, shoppers are accosted by the sounds of canvassers, "Would you like to help support Green Peace?" or "Do you have a moment for Sick Kids?" Potential consumers are now being approached by audio cues. Rather than relying on visuals only, businesses are now reaching outside of storefronts, comparable to in-person telemarketing. Additional voices of pedestrians weave in and out of the soundscape in various levels of volume and animation. Although these vocalized selling sounds are not the most prominent, the inconsistent and varied nature of the human voice is integral to the Queen West soundscape.

A third and less discernable selling sound heard on Queen Street West are transaction sounds. These include the sounds of cash machines (ATMs) printing receipts, ejecting cash and beeping. Except for the high-frequency button beeps, these sounds are only discernable when in close proximity. These sounds are direct evidence of consumption taking place and may act on a subconscious level to induce further spending.

Multicultural sounds are the least dominant of the three categories on Queen Street West but like Yonge and Dundas Square, tend to draw potential consumers to the area. Despite the number of shoppers and visitors, the acoustic cultural atmosphere is very bland and the sounds of selling overpower its layers. Any presence of multicultural sound is generally overpowered by street noise and recorded music.

Live music contributes to the meagre supply of multicultural sounds. In addition to the sounds of pre-recorded music on Queen Street West are the occasional sounds of buskers and street performers as well as live music coming from inside bars and restaurants. The majority of buskers play acoustic guitar although some have mini-amps, which direct the sound across farther distances. Live music is generally westernized rock music although bagpipes and a violin were heard during peak hours. Layers created by live music contribute to a more organic and nostalgic auditory ambience, are most often diegetic but are easily overpowered other sounds. Occasionally, music emanating from personal devices or car radios offers a multicultural layer. During observation, a type of polka music coming from an open car window and a personal music device playing East Asian music were noted. The majority of conversations detected were in English. During observation, the only audible non-English conversations were in French (noted twice). Otherwise, multicultural sounds were undetected on Queen Street West. Despite the low level of multicultural sounds on Queen West, its presence is still indicative of a shift from visual consumer culture. Although infrequent, these sounds demonstrate a need for multicultural influence in Toronto's shopping areas. This influence helps to appeal to a greater variety of potential consumers. Multiculturalism is not always easily identifiable visually therefore sounds can bridge the gap in appealing to different consumer brackets.

Urban Sounds are the most prominent of the three sound categories on Queen Street West yet are comprised of the fewest layers. This may be due to the increase of traffic caused by gentrification and amplified by the small size of streets

and buildings, which increase noise reverberations. Like Yonge and Dundas Square, urban sounds indicate how many people use the space and how the space is used.

Vehicle sounds create two distinct layers in the Queen West urban noise soundscape: low frequency and high frequency. The sounds of car, bus and motorcycle motors, general traffic and acceleration are loud, continuous, low frequency and usually non-diegetic. The second level is comprised of high-frequency traffic sounds caused by car horns, brake squeals and streetcars. Car horns occur frequently and are heard above all other soundscape layers. The sound of streetcars rolling along their tracks and the recurring sounds of their distinctive whistles and horns are also very audible. There are few detectable organic urban sounds along Queen Street West. Despite the presence of neighbourhood residents, the soundscape denotes that the majority of those who inhabit the space do not live there. Although urban sounds are not directly indicative of a shift from visual to aural consumer culture, they suggest the occurrence of increased consumption in general. For example, car sounds denote and subsequently encourage the consumption of gas.

Due to high vehicular traffic, sounds belonging to the urban sound category are the most prevalent along Queen Street West. Selling sounds are also present but tend to be less audible than traffic sounds. Like Yonge and Dundas Square, sounds pertaining to the multicultural category are the least detectable on Queen Street West.

Frommers.com's describes the Kensington Market area as "originally a Jewish community [...] now borders on Chinatown. It contains several Asian herbalists and grocers, as well as West Indian and Middle Eastern shops"[5]. Kensington is a "colourful, lively area [...] [where] you'll hear Caribbean, Portuguese, Italian, and other accents as merchants spread out their wares [...]. Most of the shops display their wares out-of-doors in decent weather, adding to the colour and charm of the area"[6].

During peak times and weather, Kensington Market is busy and crowded with a wide variety of residents, tourists, shoppers and wanderers. Of the three locations observed in this research, Kensington Market has the most layered and distinct soundscape. However, of the three locations, Kensington market is the least suggestive of a shift from visual to aural consumer culture but it seems to be moving in that direction.

Despite the consumerist connotation of Kensington "Market", selling sounds are the least detectable of the three sound categories. Selling sounds are mainly limited to the organic and diegetic sounds of any busy but small shopping area. The small, product-specific shops and cramped one-way streets limit both human and vehicular traffic, which subsequently decreases the speed at which buying and selling can be done.

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[5] http://frommers.com/destinations/toronto/S24556.html 04/15/2006
[6] http://frommers.com/destinations/toronto/A21112.html 04/15/2006

The most prominent selling sound in Kensington is created by the amalgamation of several storefront speakers playing low fidelity radio music. However, it is not always obvious that the radio-play is meant to lure customers, as its sources can easily be misinterpreted. The music choices seem to depend on the clientele the storeowners wish to attract. For example, an upscale chocolate store plays classical and an organic coffee shop plays folk music. Other sounds of selling in Kensington Market include the sounds of shopping bags rustling, shopping cart wheels turning and delivery trucks rattling down the street. Occasionally vendors will call or sing to potential buyers. High fidelity noises include the sounds of coins dropping or exchanging hands. Here, selling sounds are less sophisticated than those observed at Yonge and Dundas Square and Queen Street West. In Kensington, technology is less prevalent and tends to be out-dated compared to the corporate sponsored technologies found at the larger commercial sites. Selling sounds are used for the same purpose here, to encourage consumption but tend to be less obvious or intrusive because the area caters to a niche market.

Multicultural sounds are the most prominent of the three sound categories in Kensington Market's soundscape. This is largely due to the various layers of music and voices that are heard during the day. The area does have some visual multicultural cues but the main integrative vibe of the Market is heard rather than seen. In a way, Kensington's multicultural sounds could also be considered selling sounds because they serve to attract consumers of the niche bracket to the area. Kensington Market's multicultural soundscape emulates the dynamics of its inhabitants and visitors. In addition to the "canned" radio music blaring from

storefronts, Kensington Market is host to many different kinds of diegetic live music. There is always a different blend of music from live drums (tambas, sticks, bells, cymbals and kits), live acoustic and electric guitar, hand held instruments, chanting and singing. Singing, clapping, electric bass and guitar, harmonica, piano and drums are heard coming from bars and restaurant. Several local residents and merchants play both low and high-fidelity music from around the world over loudspeakers, especially Caribbean and Reggae, East Indian and various forms of classical (here we find evidence of the multicultural sound category overlapping with selling sounds). In certain cases, it is difficult to decipher the origin of certain musical sounds because there are so many.

Although storefront music is prominent, there are also many layers of vocal sounds prevalent in Kensington Market. Voices can be heard calling, talking and singing in a multitude of languages by the young and old. English is the prominent language detected but French, Portuguese, and Hindi were also heard during observation. These audio cues indicate the integrated nature of the area.

Not as prevalent as Multicultural sounds, urban sounds are also clearly detectable in Kensington Market. Unlike Yonge and Dundas Square and Queen Street West, urban sounds in Kensington are less indebted to vehicles and are more representational of sounds heard in residential neighbourhoods. Thus, it is revealed that the Market is a commercial and residential area.

The primary layer of urban sounds in Kensington market is comprised of the voices of locals including the elderly, youth, and children. Neighbours and friends can be heard calling and talking all throughout the area. There are also frequent non-diegetic sounds of people yelling above the murmur of voices. Vehicles create another low-volume layer of urban noise as cars drive slowly down one-way streets. Traffic sounds are infrequent with the exception of the sporadic engine start-up. Bicycle sounds are common in Kensington Market and include the periodic noises from bells, gearshifts and peddling. The presence of urban animals is also detectable and includes the sounds of seagulls squawking, birds chirping, dogs barking and dog chains rattling. These sounds are revealed in Kensington Market and not in the other two city locations because despite the many layers of sound, the general ambient level is low enough. A final noise layer distinct to Kensington Market is the random occurrence of a loud and hollow banging noise (non-diegetic) and a faint but rhythmic, high-pitched whistling.

Kensington Market has a rich and multi-layered soundscape. Multicultural sounds are the most present and come from many different sources. Urban sounds are also very detectable in the market and demonstrate that the area is not only a commercial area but a residential one as well. Selling sounds are present but unlike Yonge and Dundas Square and Queen Street West, do not dominate the soundscape. In the shift from visual to aural consumer culture, Kensington Market's soundscape indicates that it is behind the times, so to speak. The sounds confirm that the area is a place of consumption but there is still a strong sense of old-fashioned visually induced consumption. There is evidence that a shift is occurring

although without corporate invasion, the area has not adapted a strong audio influence at this time.

Discussion

The empirical data collected for this research has subsequently been analysed in order to determine the influence of a soundscape. The findings reveal that a shift is occurring in consumptive behaviour in Toronto's urban areas; the consumer culture vibe is moving from the visual realm to the aural. Revisiting McLuhan, Schafer, Chambers, Benjamin and Attali, the following is an analysis of the research findings with the purpose of determining how sound fits into a landscape and to demonstrate how sound is used in Toronto's downtown neighbourhoods to facilitate consumptive purposes. The following reveals that consumption is relying less and less on what is seen and is beginning to depend on what is heard.

Using McLuhan's definitions concerning media-transmitted sounds which were described in the literature review, the findings were identified as either hot (provides more information and allows for less participation) or cool (greater sensory involvement from the participant is required). This analysis demonstrates how a passive or un-engaged listener is influenced by mediated sounds that do not require much participation. Secondly, a 'figure-ground' analysis identifies how sounds interact. The 'figure' is the sound that stands out and first draws attention as the main observable element. The figure is the content that conveys an obvious message. The 'ground' is the foundation from which figures become apparent.

Beginning with Yonge and Dundas Square, the analysis shows that cool audio media dominate the soundscape. Almost all the selling sounds in this space are cool unless the listener is very close to the source because there is a constant mélange of sounds coming from all directions. The amplified voices of live product promoters (e.g. promoters of AXE) cologne are hot media because less sensory participation is required of the listener. Amplified buskers and street performers using LAV microphones create hot multicultural sounds. There was little evidence of cool multicultural sounds because the less audible ones were not transmitted using media. There were few urban sounds transmitted via media at Yonge and Dundas Square. Of those, most were cool (e.g. audible personal music devices). The audio cues for the seeing impaired are a hot medium for those who depend on them but are cool for those who do not. At any given time, the figure and ground are changed by how the space is being used. A mix of selling sounds, multicultural sounds and urban sounds create the ground. The figure at Yonge and Dundas Square is also always changing. The selling sound most often noted was live promoters, the most frequent multicultural sound was bagpipes and amplified buskers, and the most recurrent urban sounds were sirens and large automotive engines. This shows that the most influential sounds are emitted from cool media and require active participation. In effect, the cool audio presence is more effective in drawing a consumer's attention because if forces a higher level of contemplation whereas hot visual media are passive and easily ignored.

The analysis shows that cool audio media also dominate Queen Street West's soundscape. Personal music devices, car radios and some storefront speakers that

require more participation from the listener (in order to identify source and relevance to setting) create cool media. Cool media is also created by the loud music emitted from large chain stores (e.g. Le Chateaux, American Apparel). Here, the heavy bass beat overcomes most of the surrounding soundscape. In consideration of multicultural sounds, live music emanating from bars and restaurants are representative of a hot medium requiring the use of only one sense to distinguish or participate with the sounds. Like Dundas Square, most multicultural sounds, when audible were not mediated but those that were including international music from car stereos are cool media.

Few mediated urban sounds are heard on Queen West. Those present were all cool media because they were difficult to discern above the ambient noise. On Queen Street West, the ground is composed of several layers of automotive traffic sounds including acceleration, engine revving, car horns, streetcar tracks and brake squeals. Although these sounds increase and decrease dynamically, there is a constant flow of noise from the street, which buries most of the other layers (especially urban and multicultural sounds). The figure is created by the hot selling sounds emitting from large retail stores. Due to the loud volume and low frequency, these sounds dominate and draw attention while being supported by the ground. The figure would not be at such a high dynamic if the ground were not present.

McLuhan designated the radio as a hot media however, due to the low-fidelity mix of several radio sounds, Kensington's mediated selling sounds are cool media because they require more participation to identify and separate. There are no

detectable hot media sounds in Kensington Market. Mediated multicultural sounds are abundant in Kensington and generally fit into the hot media category. The majority of hot multicultural sounds consist of live performances that produce hi-fidelity, diegetic music that emanates from the street, inside apartments and restaurants. Cool multicultural media create the occasional sounds of low-fidelity recordings of international music or television broadcasts. There are few mediated urban sounds in Kensington Market. Those that are present are of very low dynamic level or are inaudible and therefore considered to be cool media because any interaction with these sounds would require active participation. Different kinds of music contribute to both the figure and ground sounds in Kensington Market. The ground is made up of several cool media including radios and loudspeakers. Different layers, levels and types of music flow from storefronts and bars. This foundation becomes apparent after the figure is identified because the sounds of live performances draw the listener's attention to all the other tiers of multicultural music found in the Kensington Market area.

In order to determine the main uses of space in Toronto's urban centres, the figure-ground analysis was used to determine how each space is inhabited. The sounds at Yonge and Dundas Square reveal that the space is constantly inhabited. It is used to sell, advertise and promote products, services, lifestyles and social and political messages. This also occurs visually but the soundscape more pervasive and encompassing. It is a place used for consumptive behaviour (not only in terms of goods and services, the space is also used for the consumption of gas, electricity and culture).

The Queen Street West soundscape indicates that it is a place of transportation or migration. The area is a high traffic zone but because of the width of the street, both vehicular and pedestrian traffic is condensed. Queen West is also a "place to see and be seen"; it is a place of socialization. Like Yonge and Dundas Square, Queen West vendors use the acoustic space to sell, advertise and promote. This space is also used to consume (food and drink, fashion, cosmetics, electronics, entertainment, furniture and home appliances). Ultimately, as will be discussed further, Queen Street West is a place to experience pseudo-culture.

Both locals and non-locals inhabit Kensington Market. The soundscape indicates that it is a space used to consume and shop. Sounds reveal that the area is often used as a place to sit or stroll and is not an efficient place for migration or transportation because it contains crowded sidewalks, one-way streets, small streets and busy intersections. Many inhabit the space to enjoy or perform live entertainment.

Once the use of space in each area was determined, the analysis sought to determine if this use depended on a visual representation of sound. Based on McLuhan's predictions, Schafer expected to see a shift from dependence on the visual portrayal of sound and this is found to be true at Yonge and Dundas Square. In this urban centre, advertising has leapt from the realm of visual media to a phenomenon that relies on sound to draw the attention of potential consumers (for example, The Hard Rock Café draws customers by blaring music into the Square). It

is more common to *hear* promoters accosting passers-by before any product is visible to the eye. Similarly, multicultural and urban *sounds* are just as if not more prevalent than their visual counterparts. This is largely because there is so much non-diegetic sound at this location.

Similarly, the visual representation of sound is easily ignored or unacknowledged on Queen Street West because sounds are so common and frequent. Here, the figure sounds easily detract from the incredibly low frequency of the traffic noise. Pedestrians are not interested in discerning the source of sound gimmicks and music but rather they are drawn to the accompanying window displays. This consists with Schafer's theory that there has been a shift from the visual portrayal of sound because sound source is not relevant to passers-by

Kensington Market is the only area of the three where diegetic sound is abundant. Observations made in this neighbourhood seem to conflict with Shafer's premonition. The Kensington community tends to promote conservation (second-hand clothes, organic foods, minimal vehicular traffic). In a similar vein, there is a preservation of the visual portrayal of sound. Speakers and amplifiers are easy to detect and live music abounds. Kensington Market's streets are small and force a more authentic atmosphere that is reminiscent of the past.

Following Chambers' lead, the findings were then analysed in order to discern which sounds and sound technologies create not merely a space but an inhabited space or "site of dwelling". Sound components were analysed in terms of media

source, how that source is used as a cultural tool and how sounds contribute to cultural environments. At Yonge and Dundas Square, shoppers and tourists inhabit the space. However, the selling sounds denote that in order to facilitate the presence of these consumers, the space is also inhabited by workers, students and local residents who may use the space to listen to their own personal audio devices (cell phones, ipods). Urban sounds denote that this is a migratory space; the sounds of busses and cars indicate that the Square is used just as much as a point of passing as it is a place of selling. Since the source of many sounds at the Square cannot be concretely identified (e.g. visually locating all the speakers mounted atop the Eaton Centre), subliminal and unidentifiable media detract from the cultural environment.

On Queen Street West, the media sources that dominate the soundscape seem to promote a pseudo-cultural ambience. As Queen West has become a gentrified region of Toronto's core, it has abandoned what many feel was innovative and different (McLean, 2006). Replacing avant-garde with the mainstream, Queen West has continued to be an inhabited place but the cultural significance has changed dramatically. Most media sources are used on Queen West as cultural tools to promote consumerism. The music emitted from stores and personal music devices promotes what is so-called "cutting edge" in the music, clothing and lifestyle fields of consumption. Although Queen West is used partially as a migratory space, it is generally a place to consume avant-garde culture. Because of the heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic, Queen West is generally not an efficient place to travel quickly. Of the three locations, Queen West is most similar to Benjamin's

analysis of the Parisian arcades because it mimics the same sorts of cultural uses. However, beyond flaneury and window shopping, this neighbourhood also demonstrates how the auditory environment is just as integral to consumption of culture as is visual stimuli.

Live music in Kensington is used as a cultural tool and to lure customers. Live performances and certain broadcasted sounds promote and represent the many different cultural influences found in the area. This area facilitates many different residents, visitors and their customs. In doing so, is known as a tourist and shopping attraction in the downtown area. Kensington is a rich and colourful cultural environment visually but this is truly amplified by the soundscape. The layering of international musics accentuates the different kinds of goods and services offered by the vendors in Kensington Market.

Again, following Chambers' lead the findings were analysed in order to determine if the presence of personal sound technologies (like the ipod or cell phone) disrupt or contribute to the inhabited nature of the soundscapes. It was found that in all three locations, personal music devices that use headphones (ipod, Walkman, Discman etc.) do affect the soundscape. In certain locations, particularly in Kensington Market where pedestrians are most likely to walk on the street, the "tuned-out" world of the listener contributes to urban sounds including car horns and tire squeals. In all three locations, personal music devices that can be heard by others (audio devices with portable speakers that are now available on some cell phones and mp3 players) have become an increasing trend since the fieldwork done

in 2006. These high-frequency sounds change the way in which spaces are used because they impose the personal soundtrack acquired by headphones onto the rest of the environment. These technologies enable the user to subject their preferred music choices onto the rest of the location's inhabitants thereby influencing their consumptive or cultural practices. Similarly, the use of cell phones imposes personal sound space onto a location as one-way conversations intrude upon the rest of the soundscape. This is consistent in all three locations. It was found that personal sound technologies contribute to the inhabited nature of the soundscape.

In order to discern why these spaces are inhabited, the findings were analysed in order to determine how cultural expression in affected, suppressed, enhanced or altered by commodification and technology. Employing a Benjaminian approach, the analysis sought to establish how cultural expression in inhabited spaces is affected by sound technology and the soundscape.

Yonge and Dundas Square's intended use is to facilitate consumptive and cultural practices on a large scale (concerts, promotions, high use of energy and high gas consumption). This space is inhabited because is a high-traffic location where people can commute and consume simultaneously. Despite the designation of the Square to be a multicultural centre conceived to hold open-air concerts and festivals, cultural expression is in actuality suppressed by the other uses of the space. The sounds of buyers, sellers and commuters greatly overpower almost all forms of cultural expression. The live and diegetic sounds of buskers and spoken

international languages are unable to compete with the broadcasted sounds of selling let alone the roar of constant traffic.

In an attempt to promote and continue to produce Toronto's avant-garde scene, cultural expression on Queen Street West is forced and manufactured because there is a heavy influence of mainstream culture. True cultural expression is altered but not entirely suppressed by commodification on Queen West. Not only has the mainstream become more visible in this community (corporate overpowering the independent), it has also become more audible. The multicultural sounds of buskers, ethnic music and different languages are easily ignored because overbearing music and loud traffic sounds distract passers-by. Cultural sound and thus cultural expression is evidently manufactured and this undermines the cultural integrity of the area.

Sound technology is present in Kensington Market and consequently cultural expression is both enhanced and suppressed simultaneously. Cultural expression is enhanced because the amplification of multicultural music and international TV and radio programs allows for a broader dissemination of cultural influences. It provides the opportunity for different cultures to share tradition and ideas that promote awareness. At the same time, different cultural sounds compete for dynamic dominance and become overpowering. While the ability to amplify cultural expression has the potential to enhance the community aspect of this neighbourhood by transcending cultural boundaries, it also has the ability to suppress cultural expression. In Kensington Market, there is a danger of commodifying the rich

cultural environment. Storeowners, pedestrians and residents must compete not only for visual and physical space but also for acoustic space in particular. The combination of diversification with the competition to be individualistic (or culturally significant) greatly diminishes the impact of cultural expression.

McLuhan was interested in the correlations between communication and human interrelationships. In this vein, the analysis aimed to identify how sound interacts with a space's purpose. At Yonge and Dundas Square, sound facilitates the consumptive nature of the space. The sound technology found there is detrimental to human relationships as it detracts from a true personal sense of communication amongst the people. There is an inability to engage in a live or telephone conversation because of the ambient noise. It is evident that culture cannot be experienced at Yonge and Dundas Square but rather, it can be consumed.

Sound has made the construction of pseudo-culture possible on Queen Street West. Known for being an edgy area in terms of fashion, music and art, Queen West's tradition persists because it continues to draw young people. This is essentially facilitated by the constant flow of contemporary rock, punk and alternative music ebbing from storefronts and the City TV buildings. Sound interacts with the space's purpose because the area draws those who want to portray a cutting-edge or individualistic trend but are wary of a strange or different environment. Queen West's visitors are comforted by the familiarity and normalcy created by the soundscape. This leaves them at ease to consume mainstream culture under the

guise of the "avant-garde" without intimidation. Similarly, those who prefer to use personal music devices are comforted by their personal sound narrative, which instils familiarity and comfort without infringing upon the dominant soundscape.

The sounds of Kensington Market tend to coincide with the space's purpose of being an open-air market and meeting place. It is a space that facilitates many different kinds of people and practices. Sound contributes to Kensington Market's purpose of drawing tourists and visitors because the soundscape implies a welcoming and diverse neighbourhood. In many ways, Kensington's soundscape creates awareness about the different cultures found in Toronto. Both visually and acoustically, the space represents a condensed rendering of Toronto's international residents. Kensington Market has the potential to strengthen cross-cultural human relationships by creating awareness and promoting tolerance. This is made possible by its diverse soundscape that has not been overwhelmed by the sounds of selling or urban noise.

In Chambers view, as an instrument and activity, the Walkman altered society both culturally and politically by changing perceptions and thus consciousness. The Walkman accomplished this by providing an escape from the confines of urban life and space. It became another element within the cluster of activities in the social order. It is then essential to determine if sound has a use and if so, if sound supports or challenges a space's designated use.

Sound supports the designated uses of Yonge and Dundas Square. Sound is used to bombard the public with social and political messages through advertising. It is effectively used as a subliminal device and as a concealed strategy of manipulation. Sound is used to distract (urban sounds overpower conversation) and to engage (music promotes consumption).

The Queen Street West area provides a simulation of what it once was: an edgy place of meeting for up-and-coming artists, designers and musicians. Sound has dulled and cheapened the potential for this area to live up to its original designated use (a hub of individuality) and now promotes pseudo-uniqueness. The Walkman altered society both culturally and politically by changing perceptions and thus consciousness just as the sounds being manufactured and promoted by the mainstream shopping areas like Queen Street West are creating a counterfeit culture. Sound's use on Queen West is to pacify which ultimately promotes consumption.

The presence of sound in Kensington Market supports the space's intended use. The Market provides an alternative shopping, meeting and entertainment arena for the city's residents and visitors. It is visually and acoustically representative of many of Toronto's cultural influences. The city of Toronto is known for its multiculturalism and international influences and visiting Kensington Market is one way to experience this diversity. The sounds of Kensington have the ability to alter Torontonian culture in general by changing perceptions about cultural expression and difference.

Benjamin wanted to decipher how the visual aspects the Arcades affected consumption. In the same way, this analysis aims to determine whether Toronto's soundscapes facilitate more or less consumptive practices. While consumer culture in Benjamin's Paris had shifted to the visual realm, Toronto's consumer culture vibe has shifted toward the acoustic. City sounds are coming to represent the branding of space in Toronto. At Yonge and Dundas, sound facilitates more consumptive purposes. The combination of visual and acoustic stimuli has surpassed the solely visual practices of consumption in Benjamin's Arcades project. Similarly, Queen West's soundscape facilitates consumption. Here, sound also facilitates pseudo-individualisation. This neighbourhood is a perfect example of how soundscapes are becoming branded in gentrified areas. Despite seemingly good intentions to promote cultural expression, Kensington Market's soundscape is equally responsible for facilitating consumptive practices. Many sound technologies in Kensington Market, though used rudimentarily in comparison to other areas, are intended to attract tourists and consumers and to promote the consumption of goods. This seems inevitable in any urban neighbourhood.

Attali recast music as a venue for social change. He maintained that music is reflective of culture but has the ability to shape society and is therefore an indication of development. There may still be a chance to alter Toronto's soundscapes in order to promote Attali's optimism about music. At Yonge and Dundas Square, the space could be used more effectively in order to cast music as an outlet for cultural change. Regrettably, most musical performances at the Square are corporately sponsored which undermines the cultural significance of performance. The commercial

development and traffic noise in the area detract from culture's ability to shape society. The space is designated to promote consumerism visually and acoustically but the landscape and use of the area do have space to revamp the soundscape in order to contribute to cultural or social change.

There is still potential to revamp Queen West's soundscape because of its infrastructure. It is a four-lane street lined with mainly three-story buildings. With minimal tall buildings, there is less potential for loud-speakers to be mounted, as is the issue at Dundas Square. At this time, traffic noise overpowers the area's soundscape. If vehicular traffic decreases or is reduced only to streetcars, there would be more acoustic space for music and cultural sounds. There is still the problem of mainstream influence and its increasing dominance on Queen West. Bylaws should be imposed on commercial zones to limit the kind of enterprise allowed to occupy Queen West's storefronts and to what capacity each business is able to alter to the soundscape

There is potential in Kensington to enact social change through music and there is evidence of this even now. The infrastructure and community representatives of this area have prohibited corporate invasion into the soundscape. The streets are too narrow to facilitate the invasion of large stores and restaurants and there has been a lot of effort on the part of Kensington's residents to forbid corporate invasion. This has left the acoustic opportunity for independent musicians to perform, for independent and culturally diverse storeowners to move in and for residents and visitors to experience uninhibited cultural expression.

Conclusion

This paper investigated the effects of consumption and technological expansion on Toronto's soundscape. By identifying the factors and layers that contribute to an urban auditory environment, this investigation concludes that sound is integral to a landscape and that in Toronto's urban centres, residents, visitors and workers inhabit the space. This study demonstrates that sound interacts with the purpose of a space by supporting an area's designated use and promotes and facilitates the consumption of culture. In addition, the city soundscapes single-handedly indicate that Yonge and Dundas Square, Queen Street West and Kensington Market are places of consumption. In the city of Toronto, sound does not necessarily facilitate the production of culture but rather it encourages consumptive purposes.

Accordingly, we must acknowledge a transition that is occurring within the consumer culture vibe. Consumerism is moving away from visual space in Toronto and cities worldwide. Benjamin's investigation of the Arcades demonstrates that the consumer culture of the past relied upon and revolved around the visual. Today, as cities evolve and consumption becomes more reliant upon all-encompassing technology, we find ourselves adapting and returning to an oral society. Window displays, billboards and dioramas are being replaced by incessant audio cues that encourage and facilitate the consumption of culture.

In this research paper, Toronto was subjected to a different type of enquiry in which the sense of hearing was used as newcomer in the research field. Investigating the soundscapes at Yonge and Dundas Square, Queen Street West and Kensington Market reveals that each area has its own distinct soundscape made up of selling sounds, multicultural sounds and urban sounds. Together, these sound layers are indicative of and facilitate a shift away from the visual in the consumer culture vibe. The sounds heard at Yonge and Dundas Square reveal that it is a high traffic location used primarily to advertise and influence social and political thought. Queen West's soundscape reveals a trendy façade for subversive corporate businesses. Kensington Market sounds embody an area that encourages consumption while maintaining a culturally diverse soundscape.

This investigation uncovers how city space continues to facilitate consumptive practices in different ways. Like many cities, Toronto's visual landscape encourages consumerism but now is becoming branded not only visually but also acoustically. Noise pollution is infringing upon Toronto's cultural soundscape. Rather than being valued, the city's acoustic space suffers from invasion and abuse. Business owners and corporate entities should have not privileged access to alter our soundscapes. The practice of overpowering the city's acoustic environment with consumption-inducing messages is cheapening, commodifying and pseudo-individualising Torontonian culture.

Although this study was limited economically and temporally it acknowledges that the neighbourhood sample size was small and that location choice was

subjective. In addition, the field research component was somewhat brief and could have benefited from a more comprehensive approach. Hearing is a somewhat subjective way of gathering data and this subjectivity could have been minimised by employing a more quantifiable methodology.

To improve on this study, additional ethnographers should be employed to collect data and designating a larger sample size would be beneficial. Moreover, the execution of ethnographic fieldwork during different times of the year would yield findings that are more thorough. For example, findings could be recorded once monthly or twice per season. Employing the use of a decibel sound meter to measure dynamic level and a hertz meter to detect frequency would provide the analysis with more quantitative results. Another potential improvement would be to do field recordings and for implementation in a sound lab for analysis. The comparison of field recordings with live fieldwork results would provide the research with a different and potentially more accurate analysis.

There will be alternative explanations of this study's findings. A different interpretation could infer that Toronto's soundscapes promote technological advancement and corporate progress. Others could argue that the use of sound to endorse consumption is economically beneficial. Some may agree with the interpretation that supports McLuhan's prediction and proves the occurrence of an inevitable shift away from literary culture. Depending on the listener's familiarity with or concern regarding Toronto's soundscapes, pessimistic conclusions as presented

here might not be drawn. Of course, there will also be a lack of conclusion or consensus in this field as interpretations of sound and hearing are highly subjective.

As a contribution to the field of urban planning in Toronto, this report advocates the implementation of a new approach. The city's acoustic environment has suffered greatly in an attempt to gentrify the area's visual space. Bylaws should have greater restrictions regarding sound laws beyond the current temporal and noise level regulations. The preservation of Toronto's cultural soundscapes should be prioritized above consumerist strategies. The shift to an auditory consumer culture is inevitable but it should not go unnoticed by a passive public. It is integral to preserve certain authentic cultural forms while this transition takes place.

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