



NEW MUSIC, NEW LISTENING
The Social Capital of Experimental Music:
From John Cage to Denton, Texas

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7 December 2015



Introduction

“Everything we do is music.” — John Cage

In the 1955 edition of *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, John Cage describes an indeterminable new music, a new music that he calls an affirmation of life.

For many people, John Cage is the wild-eyed¹ composer who labored to create “4’33””, a composition in which a performer enters the stage, sits at a piano, then literally does nothing for four minutes and thirty-three seconds (Ross, 207, p.396).

Critics and admirers battle to this day about whether it is the most important, liberating musical work or art or “the biggest con ever” (Gray, 2009, p.159). It is obvious why the piece would be considered a rip-off—you need only [watch a performance of it](#): the conductor postured in front of a classically-trained symphony as an audience dressed for the opera gawks at a silent stage—understanding why it is prized as brilliant is a far more difficult undertaking.

Cage was inspired to create “4’33”” during a visit to Harvard’s echoless chamber, where he had expected to observe absolute silence. Instead, he heard his heartbeat, his pulse, his body (Cage, 1961, p.8). He realized that sound is always present, that there is always something around us. After his enigmatic persona², much of the focus given Cage is on his ideas, and not on the undeniable influence he has had on music, his interweaving art and music with the nascent technological advancements of the 1930’s (Gray, 2009, p.159). In short, John Cage is known for creating music that, for most people, is fascinating yet unlistenable or inaccessible (Levitin, 2006, p.263).

To him, it was the new music.

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This new music changed everything. Until then, composers and performers had always considered their art to be something they were *in charge of*, something they could, from themselves, create. The disproving of this longheld assumption was for Cage as much an indication that modern times had grown irrevocably weirder as it was proof that music itself had evolved beyond human control (Mauceri, 1997, 191).

With this new music, artists could forego the conventional strictures of tone and format, choosing instead a devotion to the essence of sound, to an openness, drawn along until, in Cage's words, they found themselves "giving up everything that belongs to humanity" (1961, p. 10).

He called it *experimental music*.^A

Its modern incarnations are so varied and multiform that you almost need a play-by-play commentary to stay clued in on the advancements.³ With every fresh clarifier, the complexity of an already tortuous category multiplies and redoubles, influencing everything from hip-hop to country, tap dance to black metal, punk to gospel (Cox, 2004, p.208). For an artistic movement with such bearing, however, experimental music is rarely given the credit it deserves. There is added irony in that, while it is a force that has empowered outsider populations and given voice to the subjugated, it has remained emphatically disregarded.

As for the community within it, there is often an environment of competitive snobbery (Wilson, 2007, p.89). The prevailing natural order is founded on social currency, wherein value is attached to aesthetic judgment (Zolberg, 1986, p.512). The

^A Refer to APPENDIX A on p.20 for a thematic breakdown of experimental music.

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effect is similar to class divisions, wherein the dominant elite oversee the middlebrow and lowbrow populations, only in this case you have a culture that uses a subjective concept (taste) in order to determine the social hierarchy (DeNora, 2003, p. 48). Much of this is common in any artistic community, but the transient, ethereal nature of music itself requires a currency that is purely intellectual and social. In other words, the motivating force is *symbolic power* (Wilson, 2007, p.100)

This study looks at these dynamics from several angles in a process that can crudely be simplified into the following two divisions: 1) Outer view: The perception of experimental music, how it relates to popular culture, its status as an outsider that empowers subjugated voices but never itself advances. 2) Inner view: The system of ranking within the community, how it views the “middle-brow,” its currency of taste, how it reckons with the constant flow of unknown music becoming popular, ordinary. In other words, Social identity in relation to group identity, especially with regard to

Using in-depth interviews and ethnography, this study explores the role of modern experimental-music, and the cultural capital it provides musicians, journalists, and consumers (music listeners), especially in relation to the function of music journalism, with particular attention to how these outcomes affect the music scene both within Denton, Texas and in comparison to those of Austin, Dallas, and Houston.

Literature Review

Paste Magazine estimates that, on average, there are one hundred active bands in Denton, a city of roughly 100,000 people (Sims, 2008). In other words, for every 100,000 people, there are approximately 100 bands⁴. Yet, while Denton is well known as a music city⁵, there exists a dire lack of research on its music scenes, especially regarding the role that experimental music plays.

Typically, cities like New York, London, Berlin, and Tokyo get all the credit. They alone are considered epicenters of musical innovation (Ross, 207, p.567). The underhanded assumption is that smaller cities or towns are not able to support counter-cultural movements, let alone experimental music scenes. As a consequence, the research that has been conducted on experimental music scenes almost always chooses the setting of an urban environment (Seman, 2014, p.13). Seman writes a great deal about the relationship between music and small towns/cities. For him, the study is geographical, like the peculiarities of language in relation to where it is spoken.

With its array of ensembles, programs, and facilities, the University of North Texas in Denton has long been considered one of the best music schools in the country (Zuckerman, 2014). The One O’Clock Lab Band, for instance, has, in its sixty-eight years: performed around the world, amassed a daunting catalogue of albums, earned six Grammy nominations, and produced some of the finest percussionists and jazz players in modern music. In addition to the College of Music’s choirs, bands, and symphonies, there is particular emphasis on composition, both classical and modern (University of North Texas, 2014, Composition Studies section, p.51). The school’s renown likewise extends

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to intellectual studies of music (University of North Texas, 2014, Music History, Theory, and Ethnomusicology section, p.73).

While all of these programs and ensembles embody elements of experimental music, the college's greatest contribution is The Center for Experimental Music and Intermedia. Beginning in the 1980's, CEMI emerged as a thriving hub for the advancement of a brand of computerized music that has burgeoned into the electro-acoustic experiments which drive experimental music of today (Austin, 1991, p.108). This emphasis on technology broadens the span of CEMI's influence on experimental music from a strictly jazz- or avantgarde-oriented to the electro-acoustic and computerized processes that undergird broader music (National Association of Schools of Music, 2014, Music Technology section, p.105).

Yet, despite CEMI's prominence within a certain musical community, the musical community itself is largely disregarded. A large part of this has to do with the shift in scholarly attention. Unlike the experimental musicians of Cage's era, today's musicians do not receive the scholarly attention—let alone the celebrity status—that Cage and his contemporaries enjoyed. As such, there is a dire lack of scholarly literature about modern experimental music. This insufficiency might have to do with the pace of the music's changes, its innovations and advancements—that it is developing so rapidly the literature cannot keep up.

In “High Analysis of Low Music,” Dai Griffiths decries the lack of scholarly analysis given to *popular* music. For one, most journalists of popular music lack the research background that one might expect of an art critic or a political reporter, a disparity which is evinced by the lumbering small-talk that often characterizes their work

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(Atton, 2009, p. 63). The literature available is mostly journalistic, critical, or historical. With regard to the critics with more specialized tastes, however, the assumption is that they are more respectable, more en pointe, and, as such, that their writing should be considered respectable, even academic (Griffiths, 1999, p.391).

Nonetheless, experimental music⁶, with its unforeseeable high ideas and conceptual furies and abstract commotions—all known to provoke the highbrow types' drool glands—remains a lack of peer-reviewed studies, especially when it comes to the more obscure facets of the genre. There is no shortage of books on the subject, but as if to honor the music's outsider status—a kind of sly nod to its rebellious spirit—the books that exist stop mere inches from academia's belauded stamp of approval.

Beyond a smattering of highbrow magazines (namely, avant-garde publications like *The Wire*, *Fader*, and *Wax Poetics*), there are very few non-blog outlets dedicated to underground artists. Interestingly, these media stand as some of few phenomena within experimental music that the extant peer-reviewed literature actually writes about, and even then they usually do so with a lanky foreboding, determined to prove that the unenthusiastic (or nonexistent) coverage⁶ of experimental music is the fault of journalists, critics, bloggers (McLeod, 2001, p.50). This is largely attributed to music critics' proclivity for genre-labeling (Brennan, 2006, p. 230). The question most asked but never answered is something to the effect of, “Are musicians reduced or discarded as a consequence of their being labeled as *experimental* by journalists”?

The job of music critic necessitates the same obsession with authenticity and originality that complicates the online music community, the main difference being that,

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unlike the guy or gal reading Pitchfork, a critic has authority, power (Wilson, 2007, p.88). This dynamic is the basis of my study.

By applying Bourdieu's theory^B of social capital, this essay is able to argue that, within the artistic world, there exists an elaborate system of value in relation to taste and belief. Bourdieu's theory details the cultural force of aesthetic judgment, and how it is used to build or maintain cultural standing. The system is based on financial currency, though in this case the exchange involves belief, and taste, instead of anything tangible (Putnam, 1995). By imposing a hierarchy of taste, the dominant elite attach value to belief—in other words, they apply a system of objective measurement to an experience that is personal and highly subjective—all as a means to trigger social inequality.

Bourdieu finds correlations between social class (working class, middle-class, upper class) and taste (low-brow, middle-brow, high-brow). In both constructions, Bourdieu argues, the dominant elite use judgment as a tool to manipulate the language so that they alone can uphold symbolic power—a way for the elite to differentiate themselves from lower classes (1985, p.261).

The specific currency consists of: 1) Cultural capital: the wealth of what a person knows as evinced by the quantity of their references, the depth of their catalogue's rarity, the quality and uniqueness of their ideas; and 2) Social capital: the power and influence a person enjoys within a culture, and the relationship they have to other people of influence (Wilson, 2007, 89). The whole process is viciously competitive.

^B Refer to APPENDIX B on p.23 for a thematic breakdown of social capital.

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In modern speak, it is a matter of “coolness,” of determining who is uncool, a task that gets snapped up by the person whose social and cultural currency is highest, and whose process of distinction is deemed most innovative (Bourdieu, 1985, p.16).

In the music community, for example, music critics⁷ play the part of gatekeepers, often able to manipulate the image and desirability of artists, thereby in control of the artistic career and historical impact whoever they review (McLeod, 2001, p. 51).

Much of the superiority a person gains from social capital is an effect of their having laudable taste, which is accepted as if it were an objective, proven thing (Wilson, 2007, p.74). In *Popular Music and the Avant-Garde*, a sociological examination of 1960’s avant-garde Rock music, Bernard Gendron explains how “musical eclecticism and creative autonomy served rock musicians’ desires for socio-economic advancement,” eventually flourishing into the “legitimization” and “cultural accreditation” usually reserved for Pop musicians (2002, p473.). His study pinpoints the irony in this: That avant-garde rock music, which had long been thought of by critics as exclusionary and pretentious, “actually bolstered the cultural elite that sought out the liberating stimulus of the youth culture,” which belongs, mostly, to Pop (or mainstream) music⁸ (Keister, 2008, p.441).

Research Questions

Above, I noted that for every 100,000 people, there are approximately 100 bands. If you were to find the ratio of population to bands with Houston's 2.3 million, Dallas's 1.3, or Austin's 860,000, you would find that, with the possible exception of Austin, there is a disproportionate amount of musicians in the Denton population.

In what ways is Denton being a small city (esp. relative to its reputation as a "music city") framed as an out-group in the music world, and what qualities does music journalism attribute to in-groups Austin and Houston that it does not attribute to Denton? UNT's status as a highly-regard music school, known for having produced many well-known musicians (including experimental musicians)?

First, we must decide who the authority is in order to understand what the cultural obscurity of "experimental music" tells us about the social world. It is a matter of determining who is in charge, and why exactly they do so through a type of music that is "challenging and difficult for the average listener" (Levitin, 2006, p.263).

The majority of attention given to experimental music, as well as the social environment of the music scenes, has been limited to large cities. Towns and small cities have gone unnoticed (note that there is an aspect of Bourdieu's theory at play here), on the assumption that they are too small to maintain a scene of any import. Denton, to the contrary, is a small city with a thriving musical community, full of, to name a few, musicians and scholars and composers and enthusiasts. Where better than Denton to observe the interweaving lives of people and music? (Paquette, 2014, p.3).

Methods

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, ethnographic in conjunction with in-depth interviews, to collage a uniquely Denton purview, which is applied in such a way that it is also expandable, able to spread universally so that the essay's broader examinations are addressed as well.

The interview subjects vary: Music students at the University of North Texas (especially those involved with the Center for Experimental Music and Intermedia), various musicians and audio engineers from Denton experimental and noise bands, as well as renowned, classically-trained avant-garde composer and ambient/experimental pioneer William Basinski, who studied saxophone, jazz, and composition at The University of North Texas, and whose 2002 album *The Disintegration Loops* completely transformed how experimental music is thought of and listened to.

The sampling involves mostly convenient sampling, as much of the attention will be on the Denton music community, or specific journalists and musicians. For the ethnography portion, I observe music journalists in Denton, then compare the findings to Pitchfork.com. The ethnographic method will be applied to observations of online music communities and blogs that feature experimental music. In doing so, the study contrasts the coverage by traditional media with that of social media and millennial platforms. Further ethnographic approaches include attending concerts and visiting record stores. For these tasks, there is little difficulty in gaining entrée.

Theoretical Basis

As mentioned above, Bourdieu's theory of social capital is foundational to the paper. So, too, is Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, specifically any passages regarding the philosophy of taste, which he extensively covers, tracing it back to Plato's *Republic*, and noting "[t]he long history of [taste] before Kant made it the basis of his *Critique of Judgment* shows that the *concept of taste* was originally more a moral than an aesthetic idea" (2004).

While Gadamer's hermeneutical foundation is also important, especially for the interpretation of music, Theodor Adorno, who was musically trained, cultivated a critical philosophy which "sublimated music into philosophy and, simultaneously, sublimated philosophy into music"⁹ (DeNora, 2003, p.27).

Perhaps most important, all abovementioned philosophers know that, well beyond the authority of pitch and harmony and rhythm and tempo, music thrives as social, culture-driving force. It is important, conversely, to approach any study of music not just with philosophy, but with sociology as well.

Lee celebrates the value of music, noting that it allows us to "bring our own personal contexts and emotions to it. We can use it to escape from our lives, emotional or otherwise, and focus briefly on pure form" (1987). If analyzed using strictly philosophical ideas, without regard for the overarching social aspects, Lee's quote, while still powerful, remains fairly close-quartered. Where Gadamer's attention to tiny

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moments and infinite things amplifies the intense subjectivity, Adorno's sociological expertise serves to reveal the open-wide entirety

As the study requires under-researched topics, Grounded Theory is the most viable option, and lends itself to extensive use of coding, as well as allowing for the incorporation of various philosophies.

Conclusion

“One need not fear about the future of music.” —John Cage

In 1997, artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid sent out polls asking for Americans to describe: 1) What are the characteristics of the perfect song? and 2) What are the characteristics of the worst song? If taste is objective, they reasoned, we will use democracy to find it. They used their findings to create the two songs, which were aptly titled “The Most Unwanted Song” and “The Most Wanted Song.” (Hillings, 1999, p.58).

The Most Unwanted Song: Twenty-two-minute-long ballad with accordions, bagpipes, tubas, flutes, banjos, political slogans shouted through a loudspeaker, an opera singer who raps about Wittgenstein between vulgarities, and a children’s choir who screeches about holidays.

The Most Wanted Song: Five minutes of what critics have likened to a Celine Dion track. With this, Komar and Melamid concluded that the art world is “not a democratic society, but totalitarian one,” without checks and balances, the people “who create its laws and criteria are also its main decision makers. This conflation of executive, legislative, and judiciary is a hallmark of totalitarian society” (Wilson, 2007, p.75).

It was a scathing criticism of mass culture: The unwanted song was objectively appalling, something that nobody would enjoy, but the most wanted song, many people were okay with the result. To not like the song involves

“Something must be more than merely tastefully pleasant in order to please as a work of art.” Wilson’s belief that “‘difficult’ music can help shake up perceptions, push

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us past habitual limits,” ; he continues: “As Simon Frith wrote in his book *Performing Rites*, difficult listening bears in it traces of a ‘utopian impulse, the negation of everyday life’—an opening toward ‘another world in which [the difficult] would be ‘easy’” (Wilson, 2007).

*

We hear a trap beat, and, most of us, do not realize that the majority of trap music’s most immediate forerunners are not the chopped-and-screwed¹⁰ rappers from Houston’s 5th Ward, but young, mostly white, producers from the U.K (Hudson Mohawke, Girl Unit, Kromestar, Rusite, Jamie xx, Star Slinger, to name a few) who grew up listening to oldschool jungle, Afrobeat, and battered Keith Sweat cassettes. Weirder still, who would guess that trap has a direct connection to Ireland’s notoriously eccentric Aphex Twin, the figurehead of modern experimental, and whose music, for the most part, sounds nothing like trap? His *Selected Ambient Works Volume II* is two hours of ghostly, beatific, droning synthesized growls and sighs. It bears a closer to resemblance to clouds than it does to Young Jeezy.

Hip-hop itself would not be the rich, vibrant artform we know today if it were not for its bizarre world-spanning progression through experimental history: How the work of minimalist composers like Indian-raga vocalist Terry Riley and Steve Reich—whose many contributions to music include [It's Gonna Rain,](#) a 17-minute-long composition in which he manipulates the magnetic tape recording of a blazing speech that Pentecostal preacher Brother Walter gave in San Francisco’s Union Square, 1964—influenced the German Krautrock movement, a musical renaissance responsible for, among other things, creating electronic music, or *kosmische musik*, which in turn wound up in the bedrooms

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of affluent black teenagers in the suburbs of Detroit, the birthplace of techno, and from there made its way into hip-hop, where it established the foundation in electronic music that allowed hip-hop to distinguish itself from funk, and plying it with the motoric stability that lends itself to rapping (Young, 2009, p.104)¹¹

Johan Fornäs divides modernity into three categories: recent times, the evasive present moment, and the new (1996). Experimental music thrives in the new.

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APPENDIX A EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

I. Origin

1. *European Avant-Garde Musicians*
 - a. claim “discourse of originality,” we came first
 - b. further evidence of Europe’s cultural superiority
 - c. imply the experimental movement is a bad rendition of avant-garde
 - d. prefer structure to music, even if it is hidden
 - e. different technique: classically trained and highly educated
 - f. strong and historied institutional support built into culture
 - g. treated with luxuries unusual to Americans (cf. the role of artist in each place)
2. *American Experimental Musicians*
 - a. claim
 - b. involves opposition towards the old ways of doing things
 - c. aspires to a cultural authority
 - d. in actuality, they reject European tradition
 - e. different technique: Whitman approach,
 - f. lack the resources and institutions for performance and exposure
 - g. outsider status, though supported by academia

II. Various Connotations of the Label “Experimental”

1. *The term is negative*
 - a. suggests the work is unfinished, constructed pell-mell
 - b. the genre’s earliest figureheads refused the label, not agreeing with the earliest, seemingly derogatory definition
 - b. reduces art to scientific standards via sterile language
 - c. implies a lack of musicianship
 - d. denies the artist a home
 - e. so broad that it could be easily dismissed
 - f. many people associate it with Cage’s more outlandish early appearances (e.g. his eating an apple on stage, then leaving)
 - g. “I can’t tell if it’s horrible or unlistenable,” i.e. there is a risk that good music could be overlooked while poor music could be hailed as brilliant
 - h. “boring”
2. *The term is positive*
 - a. it is an enactment of theories and a return to
 - b. returns music to its origins in spirituality
 - c. devoted to resisting generalizations, to emboldening the outsider, and to exploring unexplored musical terrain
 - d. a movement of constant, unbound newness
 - e. pure form of music, a celebration of sound
 - f. incorporates technology in ways that eventually benefit mainstream
 - g. removes boundaries, allowing a freeness to the music

h. artist “goes with the flow,” making the experience about the music, eschews traditional “rock star” status in favor of the music itself

3. *The term is outdated*

- a. its newness has faded, the experimental movement belongs to newness
- b. it is literally 60 years old, an old age for a music title

4. *The term is heuristic*

- a. supposes that the language being used to describe the movement is as versatile as the movement itself
- b. allows for a greater objectivity in the aesthetic judgment of the music
- c. reflects the malleability and depth of the movement and its innumerable, ever-multiplying sub-genres

III. Comparison of Environments

1. *Underground*

- a. subcultural, outsider status, at once accepting and difficult to gain entree
- b. avoids mass culture
- c. creates a specialized language among the followers, dialogue of culturally-aware secrecy, bonding, live for music
- d. “the thrill of hunting for unknown amazing music”
- e. still able to enjoy the mainstream in a way that members of a mainstream audience could not enjoy underground scenes: a dual-citizenship in the musical world
- f. Adorno: “Mass culture is a kind of training for life when things have gone wrong.”

2. *Mainstream*

- a. easily accessible, widespread and convenient
- b. allows for a wider dialogue, mass culture
- c. can be found on the radio, TV, internet, etc.
- d. “not always bad, you know”
- e. mass culture is the most powerful alliance against snobbery

3. *Indifference*

- a. composed of those rare types who could not care less what music is playing
- b. do not notice background music, etc.
- c. “could take it or leave it”

IV. Positionality

1. *Composition*

- a. an iterative process unlike traditional composition
- b. exposure to
- c. freedom to choose medium/media, techniques, platform

2. *Realization (Performance)*

- a. brought to an awareness of Time and identity
- b. the first to realize a new-fangled thing
- c. active interpretation and involvement, “a player in the game”
- d. guided into unpredictable performance

3. *Communication/Audience (Listening/Observing)*

- a. allowed a focus, a centeredness that likely whirred past the creator/performer
- b. given time to become enveloped by the sounds
- c. “taken for a ride, where who knows what comes next”
- d. involvement in the process, which incorporates any and all sounds

IV. Influence On The Actors

1. Music Critic

- a. threatened by the newness of the movement
- b. pressured to “endure” occasionally unlistenable music
- c. forced to balance pretensions and approval
- d. “and when I like something that’s weird, there’s the risk that nobody will pay attention,” accused of weird for weird’s sake

2. Musician

- a. allowed a freedom uncommon to other genres
- b. unlikely to be as successful as pop musicians
- c. often uses uncommon or self-made instruments, found sound, tape-music, electronics, etc.
- d. allowed to be technique-driven

3. Listener

- a. “some of it is difficult to listen to, like reading a tough book,” process involves work, demands intellectual involvement
- b. constantly new as an artform, unpredictable, transcends traditional formulae
- c. the music often connects the listener to cultures, ideas, languages, melodies from around the world
- d. gets to be a part of the new music.

APPENDIX B **SOCIAL CAPITAL**

I. Taste

1. *Taste*
 - a. is there any objectivity to it?
2. *Bad taste*
 - a. necessary, just as important as valued taste
 - b. familiar, predictable, or generally unpleasant
3. *Valued taste*
 - a. adventurousness

II. Elements of Taste

1. *Distinction*
 - a. how personal are opinions,
 - b. is there any objectivity to it?
2. *Knowledge*
 - a. more abstract or unpleasant works of art require a process of *learning* to enjoy
3. *Imitation*
4. *Conformity*

III. Social Classes

1. *Popular Taste*
 - a. often rooted in pragmatism; concerned with entertainment, convenience, automatic satiety
 - b. provides insularity
2. *Middle-brow Taste*
 - a. inured of a bold sense of confidence in their taste that they attribute to themselves, their personality and intellect
 - b. more likely to feel a sense of superiority over popular taste, despite their being more alike than not, i.e. the knowledge gap is not dramatic, though the level of contentedness is (more often in favor of popular taste)
3. *Commendable Taste*
 - a. the dominant elite
 - b. in control of the rules, decision-making,
 - c. represent the controller of the totalitarian society: executive, legislative, and judiciary all in one

IV. Authority

1. *Music Journalists:*
 - a. gate-keeper, “able to make or break on a whim”
 - b. influence, and the social trajectory it affords
 - c. cultural nobility, though only insofar as they can only ever react
 - d. “able to expose people to incredible music, stuff they might never have found on their own”
 - e. a duty to spread the word about unknown or under-appreciated artists
2. *Musicians:*

The Social Capital of Experimental Music

- a. producer, an agent of production, a conduit of the creative process in a way critics and audience are unable to be
- b. the sole fully active player in the games of the underground culture
- c. agents of cool, “if they play it right,” though their cultural coolness can abruptly be revoked

3. Listeners

- a. can choose to listen or not to listen to musicians and/or critics
- b. “able to change styles and genres”
- c. dependent on others to bring the music

¹ At age eighteen, he took a boat to Paris with only Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*.

² Charles Bukowski famously wrote: “If John Cage could get one thousand dollars for eating an apple, I’d accept \$500 plus air fare for being a lemon.” As is often the case with myth, one would do well not to take it all as true at first glance.

³ It is possible, for example, to *create*, right now, on the spot, a subcategory of Electronic Experimental music, which we will call “Millennial Post-Ambient Noise,” by grouping albums, made between 2001-2014, that contain all of the following subgenres: Drone, Microsound, Process-generated, Electroacoustic, Musique Concrète, Noise, Post-Digital Noise, Minimalism, and Ambient:

Ben Frost: *By the Throat* and *A U R O R A*. Black to Comm: *Alphabet 1968*. Caretaker: *An Empty Bliss Beyond This World*. Chihei Hatakeyama: *Minima Moralia*. Emeralds: *Does it Look Like I’m Here?* Fennesz: *Endless Summer*. Fuck Buttons: *Tarot Sport*. Gas: *Pop*. Grouper: *Dragging a Dead Deer Up a Hill*. Keith Fullerton Whitman: *Playthroughs*. Oneohtrix Point Never: *Rifts* and *R Plus Seven*. Manual: *Ascend*. Mark McGuire: *Along the Way*. Stars of the Lid: *The Tired Sounds of Stars of the Lid*. Tim Hecker: *Harmony in Ultraviolet*. William Basinski: *The Disintegration Loops*.

⁴ Note: Bands, not people.

⁵ There is of course the [New York Times article](#). PopMatters featured it as ["the Nation's next hot spot for indie rock"](#). Paste Magazine ([RIP](#)) awarded it [Best Music Scene of 2008](#). According to ListVerse.com [it ranks as #1 on its list of Underrecognized Music Cities](#). Mic.com included it on its [on its list "11 Top Cities for Young Musicians that aren't New York or \[Los Angeles\]](#). Even the [The Guardian holds Denton's music scene in high regard](#).

⁶ Griffiths is more referring to pop music as ripe material inasmuch as nobody has cared to pluck it from the vine.

⁷ Take Pitchfork Media, who have a reputation for having the power both to boost unknown bands into success and to squash established bands into discredit.

⁸ Thurston Moore considers it [to be a far more troublesome situation](#): “People see rock-and-roll as youth culture and when youth culture becomes monopolized by big business what are the youth to do? Do you have any idea? I think we should destroy the bogus capitalist process that is destroying youth culture, by mass marketing and commercial paranoia behavior control, and the first step to do is to destroy the record companies ”

⁹ Occasionally, Adorno is overtaken by cynicism, though mostly as a response to the cynical glower of postmodernism (Huaco, 1980).

¹⁰ Maybe chopped-and-screwed is a bad example, because it is fairly well known, most people know about it, right? Or has my time in Houston given me the wrong idea about how well known it is? Either way, its influence is ubiquitous in not just hop-hop but in much of modern music.

¹¹ Obviously there was more at play to the history of hip-hop than what I just presented (replete with slippery slope connection, no less)—the undeniable funk, soul, gospel, and spoken word; the subjugated communities’ need for a voice—and it does seem ridiculous to think that a group of German musicians who (literally) dressed up as robots could be so crucial to the formation of hip-hop, one of America’s most astonishing contributions to the history of literature, but it is no joke (Tompkins, 2010, 176). If you prefer a visual of this history, there is Ed Piskor’s comic book series *Hip-Hop Family Tree* (2013).