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Beyond Auditive Unpleasantness: An Exploration of Noise in the Work of Filthy Turd

James Mooney and Daniel Wilson

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Beyond Auditive Unpleasantness: A Case Study of Filthy Turd

James Mooney and Daniel Wilson

University of Leeds / j.r.mooney@leeds.ac.uk / d.wilson@leeds.ac.uk

Introduction

Filthy Turd is one of several monikers used by the UK-based noise artist Darren Wyngarde. Wyngarde's live performances as Filthy Turd are typically very loud—timbrally noisy—and often involve nudity, acts of violence, masochism, scatophilia and other forms of subversive behaviour. The album art, track titles and promotional materials include references to vomit, faeces, acts of self-harm and sexual imagery. There are two Filthy Turd online blogs (Filthy Turd, 2009a, 2011a) comprising a curious mixture of informative text and what appears to be complete gibberish. The following is a representative example of the latter:

> ksykin radiation radiation ckougcockttenccock.Unfortunatefilthyy cussihcking ckougcockttenccock.Unfortunatefilthyy taidationtaidation and ineim and radiation lucartilarhips tadiationdnd ckougcockttenccock.Unfortunatefilthyy rbfra ckougcockttenccock. (Filthy Turd, 2009a, "Radiation Leg")

What exactly is one to make of all of this? Is there any artistic merit to be found here or is it simply obscene nonsense? And what of the music? One might expect it to be noisy—most of his releases are categorised under the genre of "noise",[1] and Wyngarde himself has, on occasion, self-identified as a noise artist—but what does that actually mean? Is the music merely cacophonous—nasty to listen to, "auditive unpleasantness" to borrow Hegarty's phrase—or is there more to it than that? And how, if at all, is the music itself related to other aspects of Filthy Turd's practice, to all of those behaviours and imagery that seem designed to provoke disgust?

"What we think of as [...] inherent to an idea of noise, its unwantedness, comes [...] with an undesirability that goes beyond the auditive unpleasantness of certain sounds" (Hegarty, 2007, p.26). Here, Hegarty points to "unwantedness" and "undesirability" as fundamental characteristics of noise. Importantly, he also points out that noise "goes beyond the auditive unpleasantness of certain sounds", that is, noise should not be considered

[1] See http://www.discogs.com/artist/Filthy+Turd [accessed 7 August 2012]

exclusively a sonic phenomenon. If noise is not exclusively a sonic phenomenon, then how best to generalize the territory that noise occupies? Jacques Attali generalises noise as something that can exist within any system of inscription: "Noise [...] does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed" (Attali, 1985, p.26). To combine Attali's and Hegarty's sentiments: noise is not (necessarily) sound, but anything that is unwanted or undesirable within a given context or system of inscription.

In this chapter we examine the work of Filthy Turd with a particular focus upon its relationship with noise, exploring the specific ways in which Wyngarde's practice can be considered "noisy", as well as suggesting what this might tell us about the nature noise itself. As our title suggests, we will show that—far from simply being a "racket"—the notion of noise is explored and presented here in several different ways that go beyond the superficial, "common sense" conception of noise as mere auditive unpleasantness. In doing so we will show how several disparate aspects of Filthy Turd's practice—nonsense text, repulsive imagery, graphic design, as well as some specific musical techniques—come together to form a coherent noise aesthetic. All of the Filthy Turd tracks referred to in this chapter are available online (see Discography), and the reader is encouraged to listen to them alongside reading our analysis.

Timbral Noise

Let's start with what is, probably, the most intuitive common-sense understanding of what noise is: something that we hear. Noise is sound. Specifically, noise tends to refer to particular types of sound: pneumatic drills, jet engines, traffic, heavy machinery, sirens, alarm bells. What these sounds have in common is that they are: (a) loud; and/or (b) harsh in timbre. (Sounds having a "harsh" timbre tend to have broad frequency content, which in layman's terms means they are typically unpitched. "White noise"— sound containing equal energy in all frequencies across the audible spectrum and sounding rather like radio static—is another example.) Generally, a sound is likely to be considered "noisy" if meets either or both of these criteria. The sound examples just given all share these timbral characteristics and could, purely on the basis of those sonic characteristics, be categorised as noise-sounds. This kind of noise—where sounds are characterised as "noisy" based purely on their spectral content—we will call "timbral noise". Much of Filthy Turd's work makes use of sonic materials that are timbrally noisy, My Name is Filthy (Filthy Turd, 2006b) being a good example. Here, the sound itself <u>is</u> the noise; it is "<u>a</u> noise". Timbral noise is a subcategory of

sound in general, and this is in contrast with the varieties of noise we will discuss later, which need not be directly concerned with sound at all.

Affect, Disgust, Lust

Timbral noise has two significant by-products. Firstly, it can disrupt aural communication: imagine trying to have a conversation with somebody whilst standing next to a noisy pneumatic drill. (We will return to this during our discussion of "medial" noise.) Secondly, it can cause us to experience visceral, bodily sensations. This kind of experience, known as "affective response", is described by Goodman as follows: "[Noise] moves up through your body, constricting your internal organs until it is in your chest and throat, making it impossible to breathe" (Goodman, 2009: p.xiii). Huron, in his book on music and expectation, suggests that our affective response to loud sounds has to do with our biological predisposition toward increased alertness in situations where there is potential danger:

> Loudness is known to increase physiological arousal. There are good reasons for this connection: loudness is indicative of events in the environment that entail a large expenditure of physical energy. Whether physical energy is embodied in animate agents (such as a herd of elephants) or in inanimate objects (like boulders rolling down a slope), high levels of physical energy are more likely to pose a danger than low levels of energy. (Huron, 2006, p.34)

Furthermore, the knowledge that no real danger exists (as is usually the case in noise music) cannot suppress the affective response (Huron, p.6). The use of timbral noise in music, in other words, serves to provoke an affective response in listeners—a heightened arousal—despite the knowledge that there is no real danger. Indeed Huron goes on to suggest that the instinctive negative "defense" response followed by the more gradual evaluation that no real danger is posed plays a significant role in the enjoyment of music generally. One can see why this effect might be particularly pronounced in music that makes extensive use of loud, timbral noise:

> [W]hen music evokes one of these strong emotions, the brain is simply realizing that the situation is very much better than first impressions might suggest. In this regard, music is similar to other forms of pleasurable risk-taking, such as hang gliding, skydiving, riding roller coasters, or eating chilli peppers. (Huron, 2006, p.36)

Or dripping hot wax on oneself, as is sometimes the case in Filthy Turd's live performances (see Filthy Turd, 2006d, c. 4'10"). In the same performance (c. 4'30") Wyngarde sets fire to lighter fuel contained inside the bell of an upturned cymbal, which when struck causes flames to jump several feet in the air. This puts the audience in increased "danger"—the presence of flames being likely to evoke similar kinds of affective response to

the loud sounds—and hence increases the potential enjoyment of the performance further when an evaluation of "no real danger" is reached.

Of the affective response known as disgust, Curtis and Biran state the following:

> The manifestations of disgust include a particular facial expression (wrinkling of the nose, pulling down the corners of the mouth), characteristic neurological signs (lowered blood pressure, lowered galvanic skin response, and nausea) and characteristic actions (stopping, dropping the object of disgust, shuddering or saying "yuk!"). (Curtis & Biran, 2001, p.18)

Curtis & Biran's research identifies numerous stimuli that are apt to provoke disgust. These include: bodily secretions such as blood, faeces and sexual fluids; dead bodies; things or people contaminated with disgusting material; certain animals including fish; poor hygiene; "violations of the body envelope" such as the breaking of the skin or penetration of an orifice;[2] and what they term "moral disgust [...] the type of disgust that is reserved for politicians, injustice [...] and abuse of power" (Curtis & Biran, 2001, pp.18–21). The name Filthy Turd itself evokes several of these images, of course. Consider also album titles such as Piss Enema (Filthy Turd, 2005; referring to bodily fluids and the violation of the body envelope), Death Ray Orgasm/No Sexual Hygiene (2007b; death, allusion to sexual fluids, poor hygiene), and Death Ejaculations (2009b; death, sexual fluids). Consider Bloody Waters/Dirty Fucking/Slaves (2007a), whose title references blood, dirt and sex and whose album art depicts people urinating on each other. Power*Control*Lust (2003) and An Occult History Of The Midlands (2010) both include death references (in the form of images of the grim reaper) in their artwork, the former also alluding to the "moral disgust" associated with the abuse of power. Kill The Women Rape The Men (The Rita & Filthy Turd, 2005) features a track charmingly entitled "The Fish-Woman Has Her Finger In Your Arse-Hole", the disgusting components here being the fish (identified by Curtis & Biran as a "disgusting" animal) and the invasion of the body envelope. (Incidentally, note also the reversal of an unfortunate Biblical reference in the title. This is a neat example of schematic noise, which will be discussed later.)

Last, but certainly not least, in Filthy Turd performances it is customary for Wyngarde to remove his clothes and smear his body in what appears to be excrement (see, for example, Filthy Turd, 2006c). When Curtis and Biran state that "certain categories of [...] people are [...] found disgusting, notably those [...] contaminated by contact with a disgusting substance" (Curtis & Biran, 2001, p.21), it is hard to imagine a more fitting example.

[2] For further reading see McNally (2002).

It will be clear from some of these examples that there are sexual undercurrents in much of Filthy Turd's work. Pornographic imagery is used in the album art for several releases, including Love Hotel (2006a), whose front cover depicts a man masturbating. Clearly there is a link between sexual behaviour and affective response. The response could be one of arousal or perhaps one of disgust, but in either case it is a definite affective response. There is also, of course, a sense in which these behaviours and types of imagery are "undesirable" and "unwanted" (recalling Hegarty) within the system (recalling Attali) of mainstream culture as a whole. In this sense they can be regarded as "noisy" although not directly related to sound.

Medial Noise

We use the expression "medial noise" to denote the occurrence of anomalies arising within a system or framework as a direct consequence of the design or architecture of that very framework. Elsewhere (Mooney, 2010) one of the authors discusses the "affordances" of tools, which in plain English means "the things they allow you to do."[3] As the examples given will demonstrate, medial noise always occurs as a function of the affordances of the framework itself. Here we will discuss two phenomena—glitching and clipping—that are examples of medial noise in the digital audio domain, arising "from within" the digital audio framework itself.

The conventional wisdom in digital audio is that edits should be made at zero-crossings, that is, at points where the sound wave crosses the horizontal axis when represented graphically. If an edit is made "badly", at a point where the waveform has a large amplitude above or below the horizontal axis—in other words, not at a zero-crossing—this results is an unnaturally abrupt "step" in the waveform as shown in Figure 1, and a corresponding click or "glitch" in the sound when it is played back. It is only because the digital audio paradigm allows us to dissect and re-order sonic events in time that it also, inherently, allows us to produce anomalous discontinuities like this. The glitch is an artefact that comes "from within" the digital audio framework itself, and hence medial noise.

Now we turn to clipping. Digital audio represents sonic events as long sequences of numbers within a finite range (in Figure 1 the range is -1 to +1; every point on the waveform has a value within that range). It is not possible at any point for the digital audio signal to

[3] The concept of affordance was first introduced by Gibson (1966) and has subsequently been elaborated by Gaver (1991), Norman (2002), and others.

have a value outside this prescribed range. Loud sounds that would, hypothetically, result in a waveform that breaches this range are "clipped", that is, forcibly restricted to the minimum and maximum allowed values. When this happens, it results in abrasive and rather unnatural-sounding distortions of the sound. In digital music production, therefore, the recording and manipulation of sound is typically undertaken in a way that avoids clipping. Again, the clipping is a direct consequence of the digital audio framework itself.

In "God is Everywhere" (Filthy Turd, 2008), we can find examples of both clipping and glitching.[4] Figure 1 shows where Wyngarde has made an edit without adhering to the zero-crossing rule. This results in a sharp discontinuity in the waveform and a glitch as described previously. Additionally, the signal has been overdriven, and we can clearly see the results of digital clipping, where the peaks and troughs of the audio waveform have been flattened.

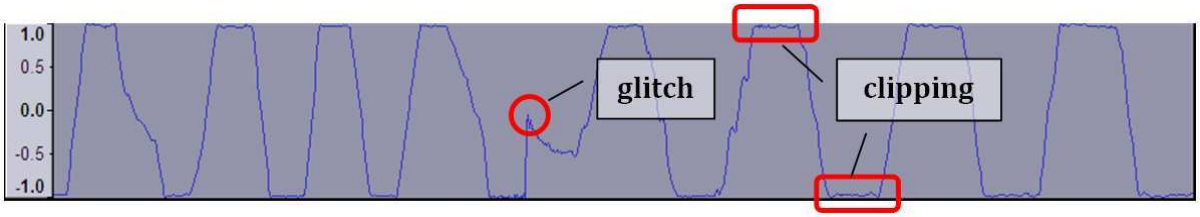

Figure 1. Extract from Filthy Turd's 'God is Everywhere' showing glitch where two samples have been joined together at a non-zero point in the waveform (approx. 0'59" in). Digital clipping is also present throughout the track, as evidenced in the flattened peaks in the waveform.

The introduction of clipping—a form of medial noise—also happens to render the sound more timbrally noisy, since it results in an increase in frequency content that literally renders the sound closer to white noise. Medial noise in the audio domain can, in other words, actually cause timbral noise. The clipping technique can also be found elsewhere in Filthy Turd's work. "Help Me Now Help Me" (Filthy Turd, 2008), for instance, makes extensive use of sampled material which has been overdriven to the point of distortion through signal processing (see Figure 2). This track will be discussed further in the section on "Schematic Noise".

Another example of medial noise can be found in "c20h25n30", where some of the material contains glitches as though being played from a damaged CD. This is aesthetically reminiscent of the work of Yasunao Tone, whose Solo for Wounded CD (1997) is composed entirely from the sounds generated by deliberately damaged discs (Stuart, 2003). The

[4] All the tracks from Cock the Lights are available online for download or streaming playback. See Discography.

deliberate hijacking of the CD player's error correction system is an example of medial noise since the noise is an artefact of the playback medium itself. Agamben describes the production of medial noise as "the exhibition of mediality: the process of making a means visible as such" (cited in Crocker, 2007). The compact disc is not used as a transparent carrier of content, but is itself exhibited as a latently noisy medium. The practice of appropriating a system such that it generates noise "from within itself" is the defining characteristic of medial noise and, of course, a staple of the glitch aesthetic.[5]

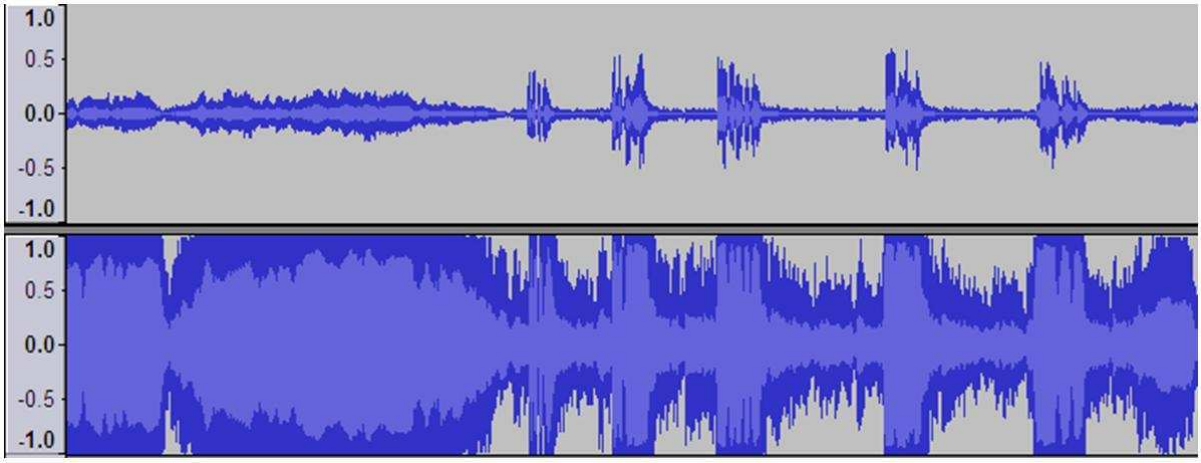

Figure 2. Extract from Telly Savalas's 'If' (upper waveform) compared with how it is quoted in Filthy Turd's 'Help Me Now Help Me' (lower waveform).

Earlier we noted that noise need not necessarily concern sound, and medial noise can, naturally, occur outside of the audio domain. The digital image and video work of Rosa Menkman, for example, subverts the internal structure of video files, producing artefacts that are essentially the visual equivalents of audio glitching and clipping. Menkman (2010) includes a selection of screen shots illustrating the visual results of medial noise in digital images. For an example of an audiovisual work combining elements of medial noise in both video and audio domains see Menkman and Wilson (2010). Similar visual characteristics can clearly be seen in the artefact-like background image used until recently in Filthy Turd's MySpace website (see Figure 3). Note also the unusually large font size, meaning that no more than three or four words can ever be seen on-screen at any time. The garish image and large font make the information on the website, to all intents and purposes, unreadable (though the layout and graphics have subsequently changed following restrictions imposed by MySpace).

[5] For a brief summary glitch music see Cascone (2002).

Medial noise can also occur within the framework of digital text-formatting. If a text file (a word-processing document, or the HTML code for a website for example) is incorrectly "parsed"—that is, if the computer for some reason ends up interpreting it incorrectly—then this can result in a scrambling of the text and, potentially, the introduction of erroneous characters. Again, this is analogous to the introduction of clipping and glitching artefacts in digital audio. The results can end up looking rather like the quasi-understandable gibberish-prose that we see on Wyngarde's Filthy Turd blog, quoted at the start of the chapter. Both of these Filthy Turd website examples—the oversized font with glitchy background image and the nonsense blog text—present information in such a way that it appears illegible. This can be regarded, in a sense, as a deliberate inhibition of communication. Recall that earlier, we identified the inhibition of communication as a potential by-product of the presence of timbral noise. Here, the same trope—the inhibition of communication—is evoked deliberately in the visual domain.

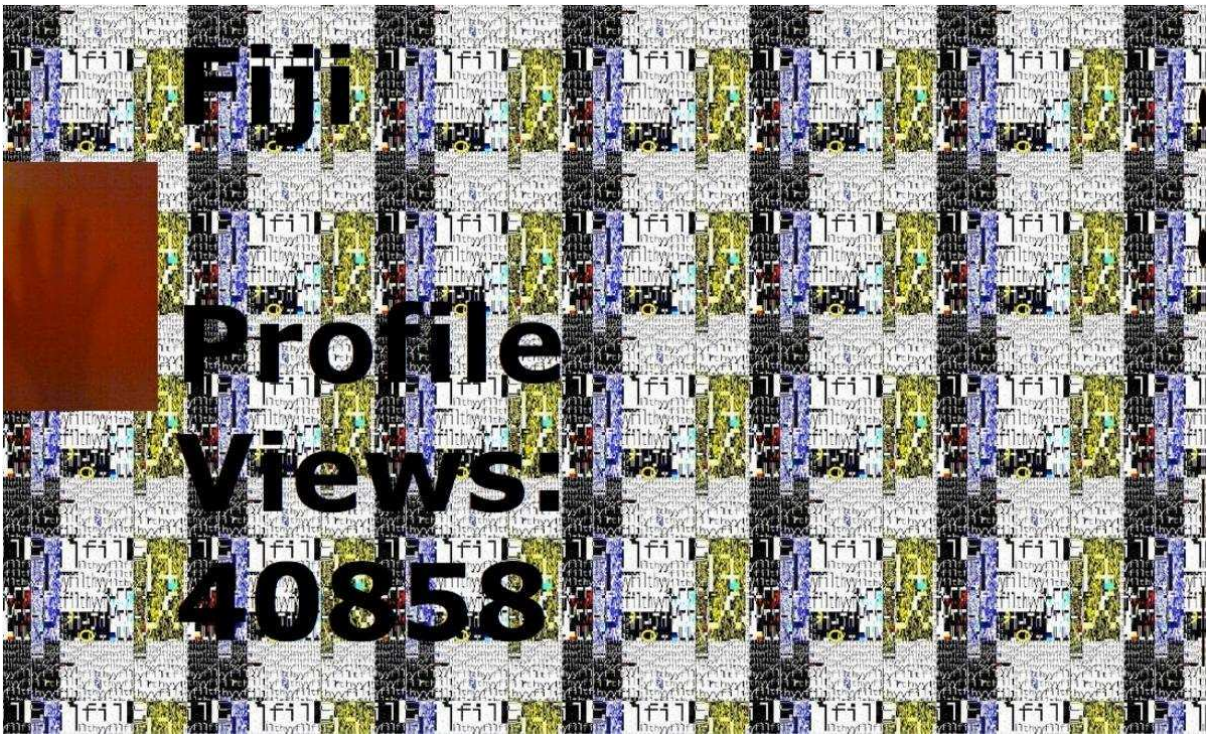

Figure 3. Screenshot of Filthy Turd's website on MySpace (accessed 19 July 2010).

Schematic Noise

Let us return momentarily to "Help Me Now Help Me", for medial noise and timbral noise aside there is something else at work here. "Help Me Now Help Me" quotes extensively from Telly Savalas's 1975 single "If". Although the original Savalas track has been quite heavily distorted, it is still clearly recognizable. "Help Me Now Help Me" is, in effect, one

long, uninterrupted quote: we hear the Savalas song almost in its entirety, from start to finish, in its original form, save for the introduction of distortion. Anybody familiar with the original song will have no trouble whatsoever in recognizing it, and—crucially—even those unfamiliar with that specific song are still likely to recognize it, generically, as fitting within the idiom of the pop song, with all its attendant characteristics. Thus, the listener is able to understand that a pop song normally would not—should not—sound like this. Pop songs do not usually contain distortion in this way; it comes across as erroneous.[6]

Consider another example that uses material sampled from a pop song: "c20h25n30" (which, as mentioned previously, samples Mungo Jerry's "In the Summer Time"). Again, the quotes are lengthy: the first verse of the song is quoted in its entirety, followed by most of the second verse. There is no signal processing, and for about 50 seconds we hear the track exactly as in the original. Around 50 seconds in, the quoted music is abruptly interrupted by a glitch and jumps back to the beginning of the second verse. Since we hear two (almost) complete verses of "In the Summer Time"—over thirty seconds of directly sampled, unaltered material—so this establishes an expectation of continuity. We expect to hear the rest of the song, and the sudden anomalous glitch disrupts this expectation. Again, the listener does not necessarily need to be familiar with this specific song in order to experience this disruption of expectation. Any listener familiar with the western pop song idiom in general will intuitively understand that discontinuity of this kind is a breach of the rules. The effect is one of surprise.

"Surprise", Huron states, "[...] arises from a discrepancy between an actual outcome and a highly practised schema" (Huron, 2006, p.14). In this latest example (and also in the previous), the schema is that of the western popular music song. This particular schema can be thought of as a generic template of all of the normal characteristics of pop songs. If the listener is familiar with pop songs (through conscious or unconscious cultural conditioning) then we can say that they are "highly practised" in this schema. The quote from "In the Summer Time" activates the expectations of the schema and the listener makes certain structural predictions based on it. The "actual outcome", however, is at odds with the schematic prediction and the sudden glitch is therefore surprising. The same can be said of "Help Me Now Help Me" (quoting Telly Savalas). It is schematic expectation that allows the listener to understand that there is something "wrong" about the way the Telly Savalas song

[6] Our analysis assumes that the listener is culturally familiar with western pop songs. If this is not the case then it is unlikely, we suggest, that the listener would have the kind of aesthetic experience we describe.

is presented: the pop-song schema (although the possibility of distortion almost certainly does figure somewhere within it) does not allow for distortion to be presented to the listener in this particular way. In both tracks, in other words, there is a difference between the schematic characteristics of pop songs, and the ways in which the quoted material is presented by Wyngarde. We will therefore refer to this type of noise as "schematic noise".

In order for this to work it is crucial that the sampled material be clearly recognizable as fitting within the pop-song schema. Huron alludes to this when he states that "[c]omposers must activate either normative schemas (such as styles) or commonplace clichés in their listeners if their violations of expectation are to have the desired effect" (Huron, 2006, p.36). There is also a sense in which Wyngarde's use of material quoted from pop songs generates noise in relation to a different schema: that of noise music itself. Many noise artists base their practice predominantly on the use of timbral noise—materials that are noisy in the spectral sense described previously. Filthy Turd's Cock the Lights (2008) album in particular (although it does make some use of timbral noise) is notable in that many of the sounds presented to the listener—such as undistorted pop music samples—are not timbrally noisy. This, in some sense, represents a violation of the unwritten rules of the noise-music schema—if, that is, we regard timbral noise as one of the defining characteristic of that schema. In any case this argument serves to demonstrate the fact that noise operates on multiple simultaneous levels in Wyngarde's work.

"A Call to Arms" (Filthy Turd, 2008) quotes from Nilsson's "Everybody's Talkin" and this time the quote takes the form of a loop, such that we repeatedly hear the phrase "I'm going where the sun keeps shining through the pouring rain." Or, at least, that is what we expect. In reality, the word "rain" is cut slightly short, so what we actually hear is "Through the pouring ra..." before the loop jumps back to the start of the phrase. The result is three-fold. Firstly (and perhaps most obviously) there is a disruption of the lyrics. Secondly, there is a disruption of the meter of the song, that is, the rhythmic continuity. Nilsson's track—like most pop songs—has a metric rhythm in 4/4 time, but when cut short and looped in this way the meter is disrupted. We expect 4/4, but what we actually hear is a slightly truncated version of it that sounds rhythmically incorrect. Thirdly, the loop-points also happen not to occur at zero-crossings in the digital waveform, meaning that digital glitches are present when the loop jumps from the end back to the start. (A similar treatment can be found in "God Is Everywhere", which includes sampled material from Freda Payne's "Band of Gold".) To summarize, there is schematic noise with respect to two different schemas: the linguistic schema, responsible for our surprise at the noisy truncation of the word "rain", and the pop-

song schema (or possibly a more generic metric-rhythm schema), which is surprised at the non-continuity of the expected 4/4 meter. There is also medial noise in the digital audio domain. Once again, a close analysis reveals multiple forms of noise operating at multiple levels within the music.

Cutting short the word "rain" creates schematic noise at a linguistic level. Although this is apt to cause surprise, it is unlikely to affect our understanding of the meaning of the lyrics, for in a sense we still hear the complete word "rain" in our mind's ear. The syntactic integrity of the sentence, in other words, remains more or less intact. In "Spiritual Filth (Reprise)" there is a more pronounced disruption of the linguistic schema. This track samples material from Paper Lace's 1975 single "Billy don't be a Hero", and the quoted material is introduced part-way through a word ("lovely"), which is itself part-way through a sentence. The resulting sentence is as follows: "…ly fiancée. From where I stood I saw she was crying, and through her tears I heard her say, 'Billy, don't be a hero, don't be a f…" Clearly, the syntactic integrity of the sentence is destroyed, along with its linguistic intelligibility. "c20h25n30" employs a similar technique, quoting from Lee Marvin's "Wand'rin Star" to produce the following nonsense sentence: "To pack, I've never seen a sight that didn't look better looking back. I was born under a wa…"[7]

Schematic noise and medial noise can be (but are not always) related, and in order to demonstrate this we will return once more to the example of "c20h25n30", where Mungo Jerry's "In the Summer Time" is played from a faulty, glitching, CD. The CD glitch—an example of medial noise—results in a disruption of the structure of the quoted pop song, which in turn results in the production of schematic noise within the pop-song schema. The schematic noise, in other words, is produced as a by-product of the medial noise; medial noise can cause schematic noise.

Earlier, we drew upon quotations from Attali and Hegarty to posit noise as that which is unwanted or undesirable within any given context or system of inscription. In recognizing that the glitch is unwanted and anomalous within the digital audio framework, and that the structural discontinuity is unwanted and anomalous within the pop-song schema, it is easy to make the transition to an understanding of noise as "that which is unwanted" within any schema or framework. Furthermore, the fact that the unprocessed Mungo Jerry quotes are not

[7] These nonsense sentences might almost make sense to readers familiar with the lyrics of these songs. For those who are not, an Internet search for the complete lyrics may help to better illustrate the point.

timbrally noisy neatly demonstrates that our understanding of noise "goes beyond the auditive unpleasantness of certain sounds".

Conclusion: The Filthy Turd Aesthetic

We have defined three different noise types—timbral, medial, and schematic—giving examples of each in Wyngarde's work. We have described some of the musical techniques, performance characteristics, and thematic tropes present in the work—disgusting imagery and behaviour, pornographic material, nonsensical websites, and so on—and explained these in terms of the three noise types. What remains is for us to summarise how noise is used by Wyngarde to provide—despite first appearances—a coherent aesthetic in his work as Filthy Turd. In doing so we will also allude to something more general about how the three noise types might be related to each other.

Earlier we identified two human consequences of noise: affective response and the inhibition of communication. These two central characteristics are key to our interpretation of Wyngarde's work. Most aspects of the music and its surrounding practice can, we argue, be interpreted as attempts to invoke these two responses. The production of affective response and the production of a sense of inhibited communication usually happen simultaneously and in parallel, but for the sake of explanation it is clearer to illustrate these processes in two separate diagrams.

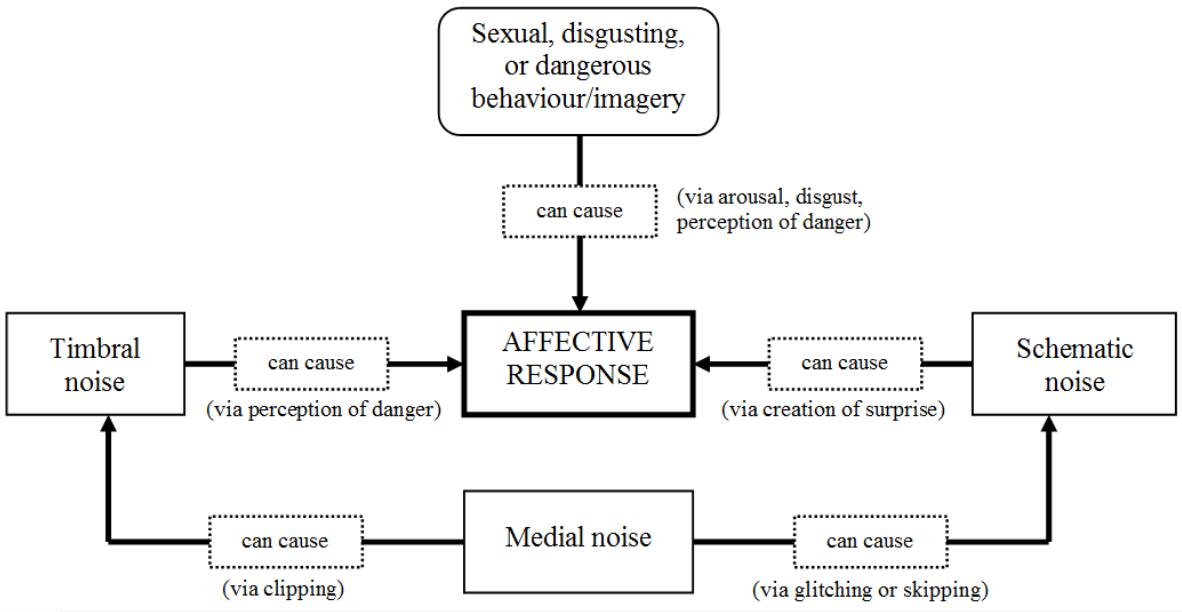

Figure 4. Diagram illustrating Filthy Turd's use of noise alongside sexual, disgusting or dangerous behaviour and imagery to produce affective response. This operates in parallel with the production of perceived inhibition of communication shown in Figure 5.

Figure 4 shows the mechanisms by which noise is used alongside sexual, disgusting or dangerous behaviour and imagery in order to produce affective response. Timbral noise invokes a perception of potential "danger" (even if no real danger is present), resulting in a heightened affective state. Schematic noise, by confounding expectations, creates the affective response of surprise. Other, non-musical techniques, such as sexual, disgusting or dangerous behaviour and imagery are used to produce or enhance affective responses of arousal, disgust, or the perception of danger. Medial noise can cause timbral noise, as happens in digital clipping, which enriches spectral content and renders sounds closer to white noise, in turn causing affective response. Medial noise can also cause schematic noise, for example where glitching and skipping interfere with linguistic, musical-structural, or stylistic schema, in turn resulting in surprise.

Figure 5 shows how, in parallel, noise is used to give the impression of an inhibition of communication. Timbral noise (momentarily ignoring the reference in Figure 5 to "visual noise") inhibits communication by "drowning out": "What did you say? I couldn't hear you because of that pneumatic drill." Schematic noise inhibits communication by rendering materials structurally or syntactically incoherent. Medial noise can cause timbral noise, for instance where a vocal recording distorted by clipping (medial noise) becomes denser in frequency content (timbral noise) and becomes unintelligible (inhibition of communication). Medial noise can also cause schematic noise, for example where skipping (or deliberately perverse editing) destroys the syntactic integrity—and hence intelligibility—of lyrics in a vocal recording. Wyngarde's use of nonsense text, and the garish, illegible nature of the Filthy Turd MySpace page (sadly now rendered legible through the enforcement of a standard layout template by MySpace administration) emulate the effects of medial noise in digital-text and digital-image frameworks, respectively.[8] As always, medial noise can cause visual noise (returning now to the "visual noise" in Figure 5), which in this context means the randomisation of pixels or characters, a visual "drowning out" analogous to white noise in the audio domain.[9] Medial noise can also cause schematic noise, for example where the improper parsing of digital text data results in sentences that are garbled and incomprehensible.

[8] Whether the nonsense text, garish graphics—or indeed any "noisy" artefacts in Wyngarde's work, sonic or otherwise—are the bona fide results of actual medial noise processes or simply engineered emulations designed to look or sound similar is a moot point, really, since the end result from the point of view of an audience member is the same in either case.

[9] The analogy is not a perfect one, but hopefully it is strong enough to show that analogous processes are at work across multiple modalities.

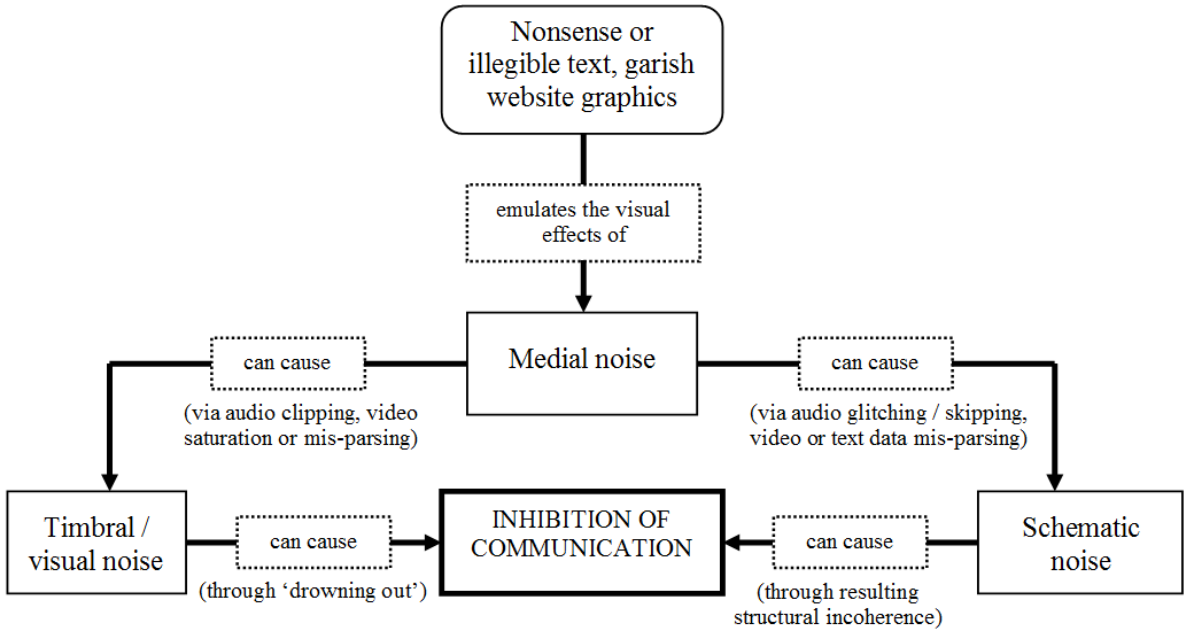

Figure 5. Diagram illustrating Filthy Turd's use of noise alongside graphical and textual means to produce the impression of inhibited communication. This operates in parallel with the production of affective response shown in Figure 4.

Filthy Turd is noisy in ways that go "beyond the auditive unpleasantness of certain sounds" (Hegarty, 2007, p.26). For certain, there are plenty of sounds that are auditively unpleasant: what we call timbral noise. But there are also plenty of sounds that are not of themselves timbrally noisy—such as sampled pop songs—which manifest themselves as schematically noisy because of the context and manner in which they are presented. There are uses of text and graphics that are noisy even though they do not produce any sound at all. There are hijackings of digital media systems that produce, not timbral noise, but medial noise, ostensibly unwanted and undesirable. And there are dangerous and provocative behaviours, disgusting and sexual imagery, designed not just to amplify the effects of exposure to noise through the production of affective response, but also to be unwanted and undesirable—schematically noisy—within the framework of mainstream society as a whole. Noise is anything, sonic or otherwise, that is unwanted or undesirable within a given framework, and Filthy Turd exemplifies this in many ways.

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