

21M.380 · MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY
RECORDING TECHNIQUES & AUDIO PRODUCTION

READING ASSIGNMENT 13 (RD13)
NATURE BUILDS NO TELEPHONES

DUE: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2016, 9:30AM
SUBMIT TO: MIT LEARNING MODULES ▶ ASSIGNMENTS
1% OF TOTAL GRADE

1 Materials to study

Sterne, Jonathan (2012). "Nature builds no telephones." In: *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*. Duke University Press. Chap. 2, pp. 61–91. MIT LIBRARY: 002076847. Available at: MIT Learning Modules ▶ Materials.

2 Questions to respond to

Consider the following quote from Sterne's book chapter, which relates to a diagram that Wever and Bray used to depict their cat experiment from 1929:

What a perfectly coercive propaganda model! Here is a head, physically connected to a communication system, from which it cannot disengage itself and which it cannot turn off. (Sterne 2012, p. 73)

1. How does Sterne relate the symbolism in Wever and Bray's diagram to the logo of the popular *Napster* file sharing service (1999–2001)? If you have never heard of Napster before, do a little research online.
2. How does this symbolism contrast the message that Napster itself wanted to convey through its logo?
3. Which of these two symbolisms do you consider more plausible with regards to your own music consumption? Are we contemporary music listeners more like Napster's rebellious underdogs, or are we closer to Sterne's hard-wired propaganda victims?

3 Guidelines

- Your answers need not be very extensive (a short paragraph per question is enough), but they should demonstrate that you have actually read the article and understood its main points.
- Be concise and pay attention to form, grammar, and spelling.

References & useful resources

Sterne, Jonathan (2012). *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*. Duke University Press. 341 pp. MIT LIBRARY: 002076847.

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