

THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF ROCK MUSIC

Twenty-two years ago as I left the house to go to see Motorhead – known at the time as “the loudest band in the world” – my mother’s words followed me out of the door: “You’ll ruin your hearing one day!” At the time, I rolled my eyes dramatically, and proceeded to assault my ears with 140 decibels of noise, which I now know is ten decibels above the sound of a jet plane taking off. That night, I left the venue with my ears ringing and it took more than a week for the ringing to diminish. But after that, I thought no more of it.

That is, until I was in my mid-20s. I was working in a busy store with background noise from shoppers and music, and I started finding it difficult to hear what customers were saying. At home, my husband began to notice that I was either mishearing or not hearing things at all. On one occasion when we were at a noisy party I had no idea what someone was saying to me, but I was nodding and smiling as if I understood. Afterwards, my husband informed me that the person had been telling me that her dog had just died. Needless to say, I was extremely embarrassed. The result of this episode was that I went to see my GP to have my hearing checked.

The news was not good. I had hearing loss of 50 per cent. It affected the top range of my hearing, which meant that any high-pitched noises, speech, phones, and day-to-day sounds were gone. I also had tinnitus, which was causing an infuriating ringing in my ears. The doctors explained that years of listening to loud music has caused the tiny sensory hair cells in the inner ear to become irreversibly flattened – meaning I would never hear properly again. And unless I protected my ears, my hearing would deteriorate even more.

So it turns out that my mother was right and I have, indeed, ruined my hearing. Today, I wear a pair of hearing aids that are quite discreet but still definitely very uncool. But according to the World Health Organization, I am not alone. They say that around four million Britons risk serious damage to their ears by exposure to loud music. Hours spent listening to music on MP3 players and at concerts are to blame.

There are so many things that can be done to protect our hearing and it is often a case of “it’ll never happen to me” or thinking that “only old people go deaf”. However, in our modern life, where most people spend half their time plugged into a music device, it is very likely that it may, indeed, happen to you.

TASK

a) Answer the questions.

1. What danger does the article refer to?
2. Who is affected by the problem?

b) Mark the sentences true or false.

1. The writer’s mother didn’t want her to go to the concert.
2. The music at the concert was louder than the sound of a jet plane taking off.
3. After the concert, the writer had no symptoms of hearing damage.
4. The writer had problems with her hearing at work, but not at home.
5. The writer pretended that she could hear what a person at the party was saying.
6. Despite her problems, the writer can still hear sounds at the bottom range of the scale.
7. The doctors told her that her hearing would eventually recover.
8. Now the writer wears a device in one ear to help her hear better.

9. According to the writer, most people don't take the dangers of hearing loss seriously.

c) Find the words and phrases in the text and match them to the following definitions.

obviously	showed annoyance at something that was said	not fashionable	affect your senses in a way that is very unpleasant or uncomfortable
very annoying	in the end we discover	sounds that you can hear, but you are not listening to	become worse

Bibliography:

Christina Latham-Koenig, Clive Oxenden with Jane Hudson, English File Upper-Intermediate Workbook with Key, Oxford University Press 2014, Unit 6A Music and Emotion, s. 37

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