

Hey Jude: Get that song out my head!

EurekaAlert

Montreal, May 26, 2010 ? Some 98 to 99 percent of the population has, at some point, been "infected" with a song they just can't seem to shake off. This common phenomenon has rarely been researched, until Andr ane McNally-Gagnon, a PhD student at the University of Montreal Department of Psychology, decided to examine the issue in an ongoing investigation.

In most cases, earworms will disappear after a few minutes. In some cases, earworms can last hours or even days. McNally-Gagnon is also a musician, who is often infected, which is why she wanted to better understand how and why it occurs.

For starters, she asked French-speaking Internet users to rank 100 pop songs according to their ability to be compulsively repeated within one's mind. The top five were: Singing in the Rain (Gene Kelly), Live Is Life (Opus), Don't Worry, Be Happy (Bobby McFerrin), I Will Survive (Gloria Gaynor) and, in first place, *a fait rire les oiseaux* by Caribbean sensation La Compagnie Cr ole. (A complete list is published at www.brams.org [1]).

In the laboratory, McNally-Gagnon and her thesis director Sylvie H bert, professor at the University of Montreal School of Speech Therapy and Audiology and a member of the International Laboratory for Brain, Music and Sound Research (BRAMS), asked 18 musicians and 18 non-musicians to hum and record their obsessive songs and note their emotional state before and after. The researchers found earworm infections last longer with musicians than with non-musicians.

The phenomenon occurs when subjects are usually in a positive emotional state and keeping busy with non-intellectual activities such as walking, which requires little concentration. "Perhaps the phenomenon occurs to prevent brooding or to change moods," says H bert.

The study also revealed that auditive memory in people is can accurately replicate songs. Humming among musicians was only one key off original recordings, while non-musicians were off by two keys.

McNally-Gagnon and H bert now plan to study earworms using MRI or Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation technology. "The only such studies that have been conducted were on test subjects who mentally imagined a song," says H bert. "We believe the neurological process is different with earworms, because the phenomenon is involuntary."

[SOURCE](#) [2]

Hey Jude: Get that song out my head!

Published on Medical Design Technology (<http://www.mdtmag.com>)

Source URL (retrieved on 10/25/2014 - 5:05pm):

<http://www.mdtmag.com/news/2010/05/hey-jude-get-song-out-my-head>

Links:

[1] <http://www.brams.org>

[2] http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2010-05/uom-hjg052610.php