The Top Ten Sounding Out! Posts of 2020-2022!

Jennifer Stoever

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Abstract

. It's baaaaack! For your end-of-the year reading pleasure, here are the Top Ten Posts published within the last three years (totals as of 12/8/22). Read and re-read this brilliance today–and often! And please do listen out for us in 2023– our Racial Bias in Speech AI series co-edited with Johann Diedrick is already in the works for May 2023 and a new CFP related to a print edition (!!) of *Sounding Out!* just launched!

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Editorial Collective, Sound Studies, Top Ten, Alexander Cowan, Andrew Salvati



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It's baaaaack! For your end-of-the year reading pleasure, here are the Top Ten Posts published within the last three years (totals as of 12/8/22). Read and re-read this brilliance today–and often! And please do listen out for us in 2023– our Racial Bias in Speech AI series co-edited with Johann Diedrick is already in the works for May 2023 and a new CFP related to a print edition (!!) of *Sounding Out!* just launched! Please take good care, stay safe and well, and we'll see you in January. Thank you for your readership and continued support. We're here because you are here. –JS

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10). A Feast of Silence: Listening as Stoic Practice

Andrew Salvati

. . .Over the past decade, Stoicism, which teaches that self-discipline, moderation, and emotional equanimity are key to overcoming hardship and living a good life, has had something of a revival as a self-help paradigm – and Holiday has been one of its most energetic evangelists. Articles in *Vice*, the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, the *New Yorker*, the *Guardian*, *Forbes*, *Wired*, and *Sports Illustrated* have all taken note of his influence among Silicon Valley tech workers, corporate executives, professional athletes, military personnel, and celebrities to whom he markets the philosophy as a "life-hack"; his six best-selling books on the subject, meanwhile, have positioned him as perhaps the most commercially successful author in a mushrooming genre of Stoic literature; and *The Daily Stoic*'s A-level guest list, which has included Malcom Gladwell, Camilla Cabello, Matthew McConaughey, and Charlamagne Tha God, has established Stoicism's cultural cachet as a practical guide for living, and positioned Holiday as its authoritative interpreter. . . **[Click here to read the full post!]**

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9). **Voice as Ecology: Voice Donation, Materiality, Identity**

Steph Ceraso

I first heard about voice donation while listening to "Being Siri," an experimental audio piece about Erin Anderson donating her voice to Boston-based voice donation company, VocaliD. Like a digital blood bank of sorts, VocaliD provides a platform for donating one's voice via digital audio recordings. These recordings are used to help technicians create a custom digital voice for a voiceless individual, providing an alternative to the predominately white, male, mechanical-sounding assistive technologies used by people who cannot vocalize for themselves (think Stephen Hawking). VocaliD manufactures voices that better match a person's race, gender, ethnicity, age, and unique personality. To me, VocaliD encapsulates the promise, complexity, and problematic nature of our current speech AI landscape and serves as an example of why we need to think critically about sound technologies, even when they appear to be wholly beneficial. . . **[Click here to read the full post!]**

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8). Broadcast Kidnapping: How the Rise of the Radio led to the Fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier

Jennifer Garcon

On January 23, 1973, Jean-Claude Duvalier, only 18 months into his life-long appointment, received a call that threatened to profoundly destabilize his nascent presidency. On the other end was Clinton E. Knox, a close political ally and advisor, who also happened to be the US Ambassador to Haiti. Knox, Jean-Claude was informed, along with US consul general Ward Christensen were being held hostage at a residence just outside of Port-au-Prince. To secure the safe return of two high-ranking US officials, the captors demanded the release of political prisoners, a hefty ransom, and a plane to facilitate their escape. The kidnappers "meant business," reported *The Washington Post, Times Herald* on Jan 26, 1973, and during the call, Knox warned Jean-Claude of the severity of the situation, that they "threatened to blow my head off, if they didn't get what they wanted" . . . **[Click here to read the full post!]**

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7). "Vous Ecoutez La Voix du Peuple": The Kreyol Language Pirate Radio Stations of Flatbush, Brooklyn

David Goren

'A lot of these stations, especially the Haitian stations, they have such an extensive music library that a song will come on the radio and all of a sudden my mom is like, 'Oh my God! Your grandma used to have this record and she played it every Saturday!' says Joan Martinez, a young Haitian-American born in the US and a former program host on some of the unlicensed Kreyol language stations. "Now she's transported back to being on the island, with the big radio that's a piece of furniture in the living room. People are chatting, little drinks are flowing about, my grandmother milling about in a gorgeous dress. It's kind of like that whole nostalgia era that unfortunately was probably lost because of the political turmoil in Haiti. So it's harkening back to a good time, to a simpler time, a better time, a more carefree era." . . . [**Click here to read the full post!]**

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6). "One Scream is All it Takes: Voice Activated Personal Safety, Audio Surveillance, and Gender Violence

María Edurne Zuazu

Just a few days ago, London Metro Police Officer Wayne Couzens pled guilty to the rape and murder of Sarah Everard by**,** a 33-year-old woman he abducted while she walked home from a friend's house. Since the news broke of her disappearance in March 2021, the UK has been going through a moment of national "soul-searching." The national reckoning has included a range of discussions–about casual and spectacular misogynistic violence, about a victim-blaming criminal justice system that fails to address said violence–and responses, including a vigil in south London that was met with aggressive policing, that has itself entered into and furthered the UK's soul-searching. There has also been a surge in the installation of personal safety apps on mobile phones; *One Scream* (*OS*), "voice activated personal safety," is one of them. . .**[Click here to read the full post!]**

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5). Teaching Soundwalks in a Course on Gentrification, Black Music, and Corporate America

Rami Toubia Stucky

On May 5, 2018, the *C-ville Weekly*, a newspaper based out of Charlottesville, Virginia, published an article titled "Sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll: new apartment complex promises at least one of those." The headline referred to the complex being built at 600 West Main St. in Charlottesville. The complex has since been completed and studio bedrooms currently cost more than $1000 a month. As the *C-ville Weekly* headline shows, the developers were using the term and connotations of "rock 'n' roll" to sell exclusive – and in many ways unaffordable – housing.

After reading this headline, I began to develop an idea for a summer course at my institution, the University of Virginia (UVA). I ultimately titled that course "Black Music and Corporate America" which I offered online during the summer of 2021 (syllabus available for download via the link above). Although the course discussed varied content – from the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-gendered histories of rock and roll to the endorsement of conspicuous forms of consumption in hip hop – I wanted to spend one unit focusing on the interrelationship between music, corporate America, and gentrification. I strove to solidify this connection by assigning two related articles. The first article, by geographer and sociologist Brandi Thomson Summers, argues that black residents in Washington D.C. adopt go-go music as a form of reclamation aesthetics to combat their city's increasingly rampant gentrification. In the second article, ethnomusicologist Allie Martin conducts a soundwalk of D.C.'s Shaw District to forefront the experience of a black woman in the city and help displace white hearing as the default standard of interpreting sound (see *Sounding Out!*'s *Soundwalking While POC* series from Fall 2019). These two articles served as a foundation for one of the assignments the students had to complete in class: conducting a soundwalk of their own in which they had to walk around a field site of their

choosing and think critically about the sounds they were hearing. . .[Click here to read the full post!]

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4). **Archivism and Activism: Radio Haiti and the Accountability of Educational Institutions**

Laura Wagner

For four years, I spent forty hours a week in a cubicle in a converted tobacco warehouse with noise-cancelling headphones over my ears, listening to and describing the entire audio archive of Haiti's first independent radio station, Radio Haïti-Inter. Though my title was "project archivist," I am not an archivist by training. But I am compelled to compile, assemble, and preserve stories from lost people and lost worlds. Sound is more intimate than printed words or video. With sound, voices are inside your head, as close as another person can be. As I processed the Radio Haiti collection, I would forget that many of the voices I heard every day belonged to people I never knew in life. Sometimes in my dreams I would see the station's director, Jean Dominique, alive and laughing. . . [Click here to read the full post!]

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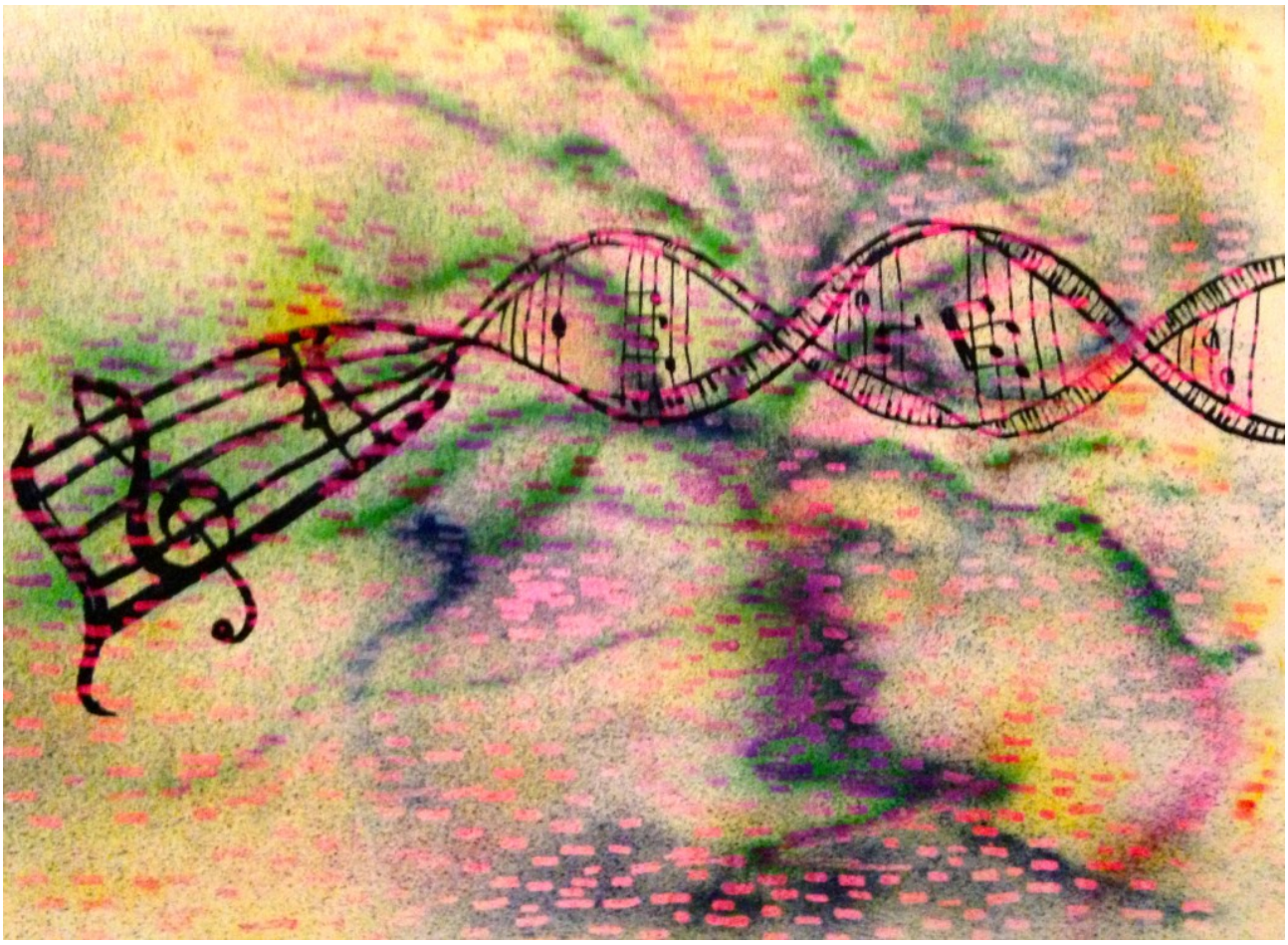

3).**Listen to yourself!: Spotify, Ancestry DNA, and the Fortunes of Race Science in the Twenty-First Century**

Alexander W. Cowan

If you could listen to your DNA, what would it sound like? A few answers, at random: In 1986, the biologist and amateur musician Susumo Ohno assigned pitches to the nucleotides that make up the DNA sequence of the protein immunoglobulin, and played them in order. The gene, to his surprise, sounded like Chopin.

With the advent of personalized DNA sequencing, a British composition studio will do one better, offering a bespoke three-minute suite based on your DNA's unique signature, recorded by professional soloists—for a 300GBP basic package; or 399GBP for a full orchestral arrangement.

But the most recent answer to this question comes from the genealogy website Ancestry.com, which in Fall 2018 partnered with Spotify to offer personalized playlists built from your DNA's regional makeup. For a comparatively meager $99 (and a small bottle's worth of saliva) you can now not only know your heritage, but, in the words of Ancestry executive Vineet Mehra, "experience" it. Music becomes you, and through music, you can become yourself. . . **[Click here to read the full post!]**

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2).**Sonic Lessons of the Covid-19 Soundscape**

Sarah Mayberry Scott

It's understandable to resist reading or thinking about Covid in late-2021, even as the Delta variant's new surges are making headlines around the world. Covid has surrounded and overwhelmed us for over a year, and many people's reluctance to engage meaningfully with it at this time is fueled by feelings of fatigue, mental exhaustion, and frustration. However, I urge in this post that we have a continued responsibility to sustain our sonic engagement and *listen* to what the Covid-19 soundscape teaches us.

Covid-19, as most of us now know now, is a virus caused by the coronavirus strain SARS-CoV-2. While the symptoms of Covid-19 are many and varied, one symptom seemed most vital and censorious—a nagging and persistent dry cough that became referred to as the "Covid cough" in everyday vernacular. The Covid cough became an intrusive and yet all too familiar presence in the Covid soundscape—an isolated acoustic environment that allows us to study its characteristics. For instance, investigations within the Covid soundscape have studied the noise annoyances of traffic, neighbors, and personal dwellings; have recorded the quieting of the usually bustling streets of New York City; have researched whale stress hormones linked to less noise pollution in our ocean waters; and have analyzed the reception and aural imagery of sirens. I seek to add to this research by bringing the sounds of the Covid body (or a body perceived to have Covid) into the larger soundscape conversation . . . **[Click here to read the full post!]**

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1).**A Day on the Dial in Cap Haïtien, Haiti**

Ian Coss

Fabrice Joseph is a mender, set up on a street corner in Cap Haïtien, Haiti's second largest city. He shows me a red plastic toolbox filled with supplies — thread, wires, scraps of fabric—which he can use to fix a jammed zipper or stitch up a torn backpack strap. I stop because he's cradling a radio set in his hands, tuned to the city's most popular station: Radio Venus.

We meet on a quiet day; Fabrice has been sitting on the stoop for five hours already with no work. Another day he's engrossed in assembling a large umbrella—the kind food vendors use for shade —but the radio is still on, now propped on a ledge just behind his head. He replaces the batteries almost weekly, because the radio is *always* on. In the morning Radio Venus plays news, Fabrice tells me, followed by music as the day heats up. Then in the afternoon he'll hear sports or perhaps a religious program, before the station returns to music in the evening.

This arc Fabrice describes is designed to follow the arc of his day. In this post, I trace that link: between the rhythms of radio programming and the rhythms of daily life, to show how formatting choices create a heightened sense of 'liveness' on Haiti's airwaves, with all content located in a specific moment: the present moment. . .**[Click here to read the full post!]**

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