

SHOULD I BUY MY DOG AN IPOD?

by: Ed Lettner of The Music Studio



It is generally believed that being affected by music is a distinctly human trait, but recent studies suggest that animals such as dogs may share our ability to experience music.

Dogs, and their relative the wolf, seem to be able to hear differences in pitch. Recordings of howling wolves provide evidence that each wolf in a pack will change the pitch of its howling when other wolves join the chorus to avoid being on the same note as another wolf. Dogs demonstrate this same instinctive tendency when howling with other dogs or with people who are singing. Interestingly, reed instruments such as clarinets and saxophones tend to cause dogs to howl the most, as do long notes held by a violinist or singer. This may be because for dogs these sounds are similar to a howl and they feel the need to join in.

Music also seems to affect a dog's mood and emotional state. A group of 50 dogs at an animal shelter were the subjects of a study done by Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland. These dogs were played different types of music and their reactions were recorded. Researchers found that when played classical music such as Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, the dogs were calm and often lay down. When played heavy metal music by bands such as Metallica, the dogs became agitated and started barking.

Other studies have demonstrated that playing the right kind of music for dogs reduces their levels of stress and anxiety, and may help to alleviate symptoms of depression too. Playing soft music for dogs also helps them get to sleep. Dogs associate certain music with comforting experiences, such as relaxing with their owner, which may be useful in helping dogs who suffer from separation anxiety.

So, if you can't find your iPod, maybe your dog has it.

Join The Music Studio and the Etobicoke Humane Society for a free bucket drumming workshop and charity benefit on Sunday, January 23 at 1:00 p.m. at The Assembly Hall. Register by contacting The Music Studio. Registration deadline is January 9.

Ed Lettner owns The Music Studio in Etobicoke which has offered music instruction since 1990. He is an honours graduate of the Humber College Institute of Technology music program. Ed and his dog Charlie often listen to music together. Sometimes Charlie lets Ed choose the music. For information about the programs at The Music Studio, please call 416-234-9268, email ed@themusicstudio.ca or visit www.themusicstudio.ca