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Subject: A note for people with hearing damage  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sat, 04 Aug 2012 16:14:36 GMT  
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Sometimes, I get an email or forum post about what to do to make sound better, and the way it is worded makes me wonder if the writer has tinnitus or some other hearing problem. My reply usually ignores the possibility of hearing damage and addresses only sound quality and the things that will improve it.

But it does occur to me that maybe I should make mention of the fact that if you think you might have hearing damage, visit your doctor and protect your ears! If your ears hurt when listening or afterwards, refrain from turning the volume up and get the advice of a doctor.

For the person with potential hearing loss, intelligibility is probably more important than sound quality. Do whatever you need to do to make dialog understandable, even if that means sacrificing tonal balance or even overall sound quality. You may want to turn up the midrange and turn down the bass and treble.

If you have a home theater with a center channel speaker, you might turn it up louder than the L/R mains and surrounds. If you don't have a center channel, you might want to switch to stereo mode and forgo the surround sound entirely. The stereo mix of many movies puts more dialog content in the L/R channels than phantom center mode does.

Temporary tinnitus is normal after loud sounds, even for people with perfect hearing. However, it does indicate your hearing is being damaged, so refrain from things that cause it. After a period of time around loud sounds, it is normal for people to experience a persistent ringing sound and sometimes mild pain. This is temporary tinnitus, and it usually goes away after several minutes.

Examples of things that cause temporary tinnitus are loud concerts, motorcycle rides without a helmet, highway travel in a convertible car with the top down, using loud power machinery or loud exhaust like at a race track, gunshots and other explosions, etc. All these things cause temporary tinnitus in most people.

However, if you get this same ringing sensation after listening to sounds at moderate volume levels - if you seem more sensitive to sound level than others - then you may have a hearing problem and you should visit the doctor and seek their advice. Until then, keep the volume level down.

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Subject: Re: A note for people with hearing damage  
Posted by [Shane](#) on Fri, 31 Aug 2012 02:29:05 GMT  
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Good advice Wayne.

I will also add that wearing a helmet can actually increase the noise levels as the sound the air makes when rushing by can actually be amplified by the helmet surfaces. Most advocates of helmet usage also recommend wearing earplugs as well. I have done this on and off and can say that it makes a tremendous difference.

I know quite a few people who run loud pipes on their motorcycles that have substantial hearing loss because of it. Sounding cool is not worth it in my experience. The "loud pipes saves lives" argument IMO is not valid. Wearing brightly colored clothing has been more effective for me. They don't see you if you have the black pirate outfit on.

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Subject: Re: A note for people with hearing damage  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Fri, 31 Aug 2012 04:06:16 GMT  
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For me, the loudest thing on a motorcycle ride is the wind noise at high speed. The turbulence makes a sound that is deafening, so much that I can barely hear someone riding right beside me even when yelling.

I always expect drivers to not see me, and so I ride as though I were invisible. I try to anticipate their moves, and pretty much just stay away. They'll stop, turn, lose debris, whatever. So I expect the unexpected at all times.

But where road dangers are concerned, wildlife trumps traffic, especially in the country. Even the most unexpected traffic is way more predictable than deer are, especially in the fall. Critters seem to love jumping up out of a ravine right in my path. So that's the one thing I fear the most.

A night ride out away from the city is the most fun and peaceful, but it's also where the wildlife is. I scan the countryside as I ride, but there are lots of blind spots, like ravines at the side of the road and dense trees, bushes or crops.

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