



Road rage music: Beastie Boys dangerous, Coldplay soothing, Ken Elkinson sedating

By Joseph Rose, The Oregonian

Could listening to the Beastie Boys, The Prodigy and Kanye West in the car be a recipe for a road rage?

In a new study commissioned by UK commuting gadget retailer Halfords, drivers rated the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" as the top "blood pressure raising" track.

Other tracks likely to cause drivers to speed up or behave more aggressively included The Prodigy's "Firestarter" and Kanye West's "Stronger," the study found.

Drivers rated tracks by Coldplay, Vivaldi, Jack Johnson, Adele and Fleetwood Mac as "the most calming and soothing" behind the wheel.

It's hard to know if any of the respondents have heard Ken Elkinson's "Music for Commuting" box set, which landed on the Hard Drive desk a couple months ago.

I'm trying to bike to work more frequently these days. But between driving the kids to weekend activities and renting ZipCars for work, I've finally managed to listen to the three CD's on their appropriate days -- "Monday/Tuesday," "Wednesday/Thursday" and "Friday/Beyond."

Warning: If you're going to buy it, pack a can of Red Bull in the glove box. Elkinson's ethereal soundtrack to the daily commute is more appropriate for a visit to the massage therapist than a drive through the daily metal maelstrom.

What is that medical disorder called -- the one where people think they're living a movie? (Is there a name for it?) Well, this box set is a perfect complement. It reminded me of the cool, dark electronic hum of Vangelis' music for "Blade Runner."

Still, I admire the concept and multi-instrumentalist Elkinson's attempt at easing the mood of the commute.

"The goal was to help relax people on the roads, including myself," Elkinson said. "I am a super angry driver, and now that I have little kids - I needed something to help me on the roads so that I did not get us shot. Actually maybe that is a little dramatic, as I am more one of those people who keeps their anger inside the car."

Of course, Elkinson lives in Los Angeles not Portland. "On top of the usual texting and not following the handsfree cell phone law," he said. "I have seen people eating full meals, shaving with an electric razor, reading a book and putting on makeup all while driving."

He said the music has helped calm him. "From what I have been hearing from other people across the globe since the release," Elkinson said, "it has worked wonders for them as well."

Maybe I'll give the discs another shot the next time I feel my heartbeat climbing in traffic. Right now, I'm digging the new Fleet Foxes album on the drive.

For the record ... or CD ... or MP3 ... here are the complete results from the Halfords survey.

Top 5 Blood Pressure Raising Tracks:

1. Beastie Boys — "Sabotage"
2. The Prodigy — "Firestarter"
3. Papa Roach — "To Be Loved"
4. Kanye West — "Stronger"
5. Rachmaninoff — "Prelude In C Sharp Minor"

Top 5 Calming Tracks:

1. Vivaldi — "The Four Seasons"
2. Jack Johnson — "Breakdown"
3. Adele — "someone Like You"
4. Coldplay — "Yellow"
5. Fleetwood Mac — "Landslide"

Let's hope the guy stuck next to you on Interstate 5 tonight isn't listening to this Beastie Boys-The Prodigy mash up.