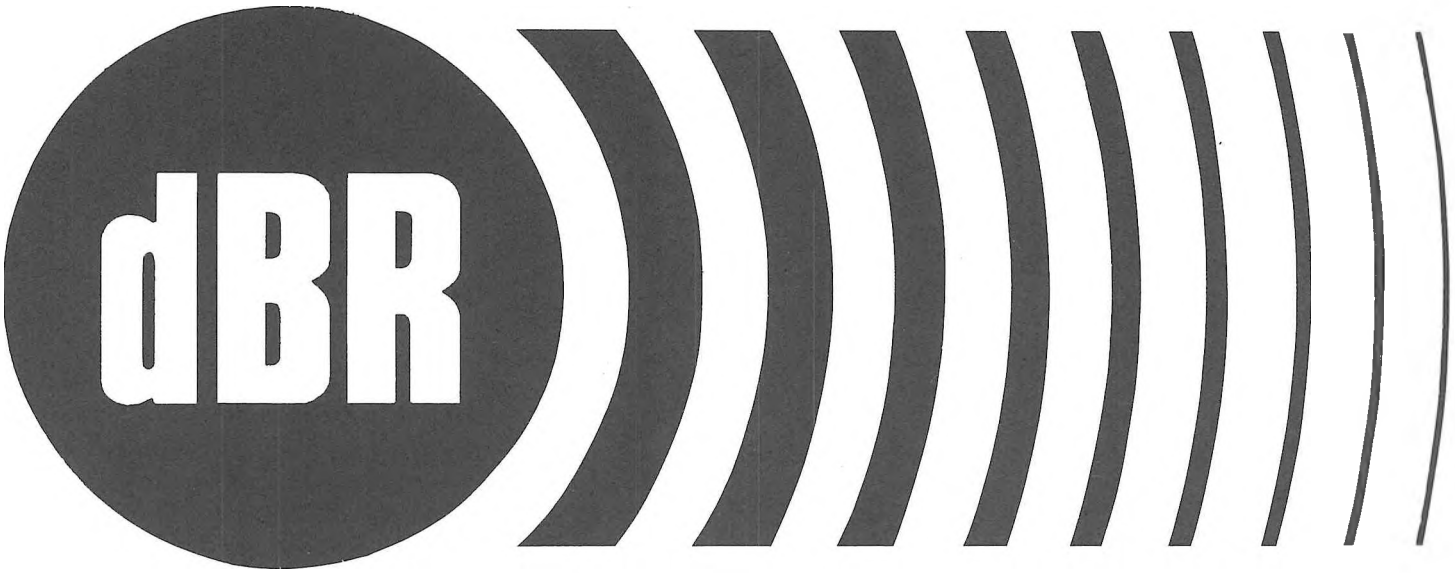
EDITORIAL

Parmi les mammifères, l'espèce humaine présente au moins une caractéristique particulière à l'égard de ses capacités auditives. En effet, son domaine des fréquences audibles est le plus bas. Les humains ont par ailleurs une sensiblilité auditive relativement grande, le seuil d'audidibilité à 3-4 kHz chez les jeunes adultes n'étant pas très éloigné de la limite absolue imposée par le bruit aléatoire généré par le mouvement brownien des particules d'air. A quel environnement sonore et pour quels comportements auditifs notre espèce est-elle donc adaptée? L'abaissement du spectre des sons audibles s'est vraisemblablement effectué au détriment du pouvoir de localisation des sources sonores, mais au profit de l'utilisation maximale des signaux qui ont constitué la parole. Par ailleurs, la gamme dynamique étendue de l'audition humaine lui confère le pouvoir de déceler des événements sonores à des distances très variées. Paradoxalement, l'espèce humaine est en train de créer un environnement qui limite la communication verbale et la profondeur du champ sonore. Le bruit de circulation des milieux urbains, tout comme la musique dite d'ambiance des lieux de rencontre, rend difficile la communication verbale quand il ne la décourage pas. Il constitue un fond sonore terne, sans nuance, dénué d'information. Le milieu de travail industriel endommage l'audition et l'usage d'appareils de protection isole les gens au plan sonore tout en brouillant les capacités de localisation. Quand donc l'espèce humaine se redonnera-t-elle des payasages sonores à sa mesure? Une question cruciale non seulement pour les acousticiens-es mais aussi pour toute la population des pays industrialisés...

Among mammals, the human specie displays at least one unique feature regarding its auditory capabilities. It has the lowest frequency range of sensitivity. Humans have a relatively high sentivity, the hearing threshold at 3-4 kHz being not very far from the absolute limit imposed by the random noise generated by the brownien motion of air particules. To what sound environment and for what auditory behavior our specie is therefore adapted? The lowering of the audible spectrum has probably evolved at the expanse of precision in sound localization, but to the benefit of making the most use of signals that constitute speech. The wide dynamic range of the human hearing allows the detection of sound events over a wide range of distances. Paradoxically, the human specie is creating an environment that limits verbal communication and the depth of the audible field. Traffic noise in cities, as well as the environmental music in meeting places, make it difficult to communicate verbally, or simply discourage conversation. It creates a meaningless acoustic background, devoid of nuances and information. The industrial work environment damages hearing and the use of protectors isolates people acoustically and blurs sound localization. When will the human specie give itself soundscapes adapted to its capabilities? A crucial question not only to acousticians but also to the whole population of industrialized countries...



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