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Exposure to music and noise induced hearing loss (NIHL): Among professional pop/rock/jazz musicians

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Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) has been extensively studied in industrial work environments. With the advent of new technologies, loud music has been increasingly affecting listeners outside of the industrial setting. Most research on the effects of music and hearing loss has focused on classical musicians. The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between the amount of experience a professional pop/rock/jazz musician has and objective and subjective variables of the musician's hearing loss. This study also examined professional pop/rock/jazz musicians' use of hearing protection devices in relation to the extent of their exposure to amplified music. Forty-four pop/rock/jazz musicians were interviewed using the Pop/Rock/Jazz Musician's Questionnaire (PRJMQ) in order to obtain self-reported symptoms of tinnitus and hyperacusis. Forty-two of the subjects were also tested for air-conduction hearing thresholds in the frequency range of 1-8 kHz. Results show that professional pop/rock/jazz musicians' extent of exposure to amplified music was related to both objective and subjective variables of hearing loss. Greater musical experience was positively linked to higher hearing thresholds in the frequency range of 3-6 kHz and to the subjective symptom of tinnitus. Weekly hours playing were found to have a greater effect on hearing loss in comparison to years playing. Use of hearing protection was not linked to the extent of exposure to amplified music. It is recommended that further research be conducted with a larger sample, in order to gain a greater understanding of the detrimental effects of hours playing over years playing.

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