

LISTENING TO NOISE IN KANSAI

It was late, and we were wandering up a side alley away from the light and clamor of the main market road that leads away from the station. I was woozy after several drinks of strong Okinawan liquor that Tabata Mitsuru and I had been drinking at an *uchiage*, a collective gathering of musicians after a performance. “I’m going to miss the last train,” I complained, as we headed farther into the darkness, away from the rumble of the trains. “Don’t worry about it,” mumbled Tabata, pointing to a tall hedge that ran along the wall of a nearby house, “I’ve slept back there a couple times when I missed the train . . . besides, we’re almost there, and we can hang out and listen all night. Unless it’s closed . . .” We stopped before the door of what looked like an abandoned storefront, its large window completely pasted over with record album jackets, their images so faded that only blurs of blue ink remained. Some peeled off the wall in shreds, like remnants of old posters from some long-past political campaign. The door, too, shed bits of old magazine pages as we swung it open to step inside. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I could see that the interior walls and ceiling were the same, covered with faded images and torn posters behind shelves cluttered with junk and bottles of Jinro *shôchû*, a Korean rice whiskey, marked

with the names of the regulars by whom they were claimed. A shadowy figure stood behind the counter—really just a barrier formed by the piles of seven-inch records he was playing—as he bent down to replace the needle on the turntable. The dark, distorted “psych” rock music of 1970s *angura* (underground) Japan blasted out into the room and filled it for the next five hours as we waited for the night to pass. Two tables were occupied, and the third was stacked to the ceiling with records, but a couple of stools jammed into the counter were free. Tabata shouted my name to the master, his name to me, pointed to one of the stools, grinned, and nodded his acceptance of the unspoken offer of drinks. We sat and were absorbed in the music.

Listening to recordings is the crucible of modern musical creativity, and its practice is filled with as much interpretable meaning as the sonic objects themselves. This is as true in Japan as anywhere; but in Japan, there are music *kissa*. Throughout the twentieth century, music cafés, or *kissaten*—which, in their modern form, are something like the place I visited with Tabata—have been special places where urban Japanese come to develop musical knowledge. The subterranean environment of these hidden spots for listening to new forms of music, especially the famous postwar *jazu* (jazz) *kissa*, helped Japanese learn how to be modern through the rapid importation of foreign media and technology. *Jazu-kissa*, as popular music scholars have described, were strongly focused on stylistic canonization, which produced a formalized mode of hyperattentive listening (Atkins 2001; Derschmidt 1998; Hosokawa 2007). Experimental or “free” spaces for listening, in contrast, reorganized local media consumption to create new forms.

This chapter describes the emergence of Noise as a postwar history of Japanese media reception. I compare the distinctive modes of listening in postwar *jazu-kissa* with those of a “free space” called Drugstore, which was central to Noise’s development in Kyoto in the 1980s. The two contexts of listening are in many ways quite different. The *jazu-kissa* became a powerful space of nostalgic canonization and specialized knowledge of foreign media; in Drugstore, reception turned into performance and the local production of original Noise. Japanese popular music is often read through the hegemonic impact of Western media that produces an endless chain of copycats and subjugated fans of imported musical forms. But here I show how localized listening can produce new creative performances and sites of intercultural participation. The remediations of Noise did not re-

main isolated in local reception but created a new sound from foreign musical materials. Listeners created unique performances and eventually put their own Noise into circulation.

Drugstore's clientele included many of the early Japanese Noise practitioners, whose reception of underground music planted the seeds of Noise in Kansai. From within their collections of strange, "wrong," and impossible-to-classify recordings, they imagined a category called Noise and began to produce it for themselves. Drugstore listeners coalesced into performing groups, as well as the label Alchemy Records, which represented the Osaka Noise scene in the 1990s. In what follows, I detail these early days of Noise to show how Osaka became a center of Noise's cultural production through transnational circulation, despite its marginality within Japan. In Japan, Osaka has always been out of the mainstream, but in the 1990s it became the emblematic city of the Japanese underground for a worldwide audience. Alchemy and other local labels forged a distribution network that bypassed Japan to circulate Kansai Noise overseas, where North American listeners renamed it "Japanoise."

Listening is essential to the complicated construction of musical knowledge in contemporary Japan. On one hand, hyperattention to foreign recordings articulates the cultural marginality of Japanese participation in transnational media. On the other hand, listening could also divert the imbalanced flow of imported music into a new form of Noise. I focus on the invention and performance of Noise in Kyoto and Osaka in the 1980s, but I do not claim that Noise is the product of this singular place and time. On the contrary, the story of Drugstore shows us that Noise's creative origins cannot be excavated from "behind the music," where the true story of a local scene waits to be finally revealed. Its experimental modes of listening constantly turn musical history back on itself, transforming distant sounds into new forms of Noise.

INSIDE THE JAZU-KISSA

Jazu-kissa is generally rendered in English as "jazz coffeehouse" or "jazz café," but this translation is not quite right. They are not much like European cafés; they are more insular underground establishments that exist on the border of public and private space. They serve more whiskey than coffee, and the self-selected customers—circles of friends, really—come to consume music recordings as much as beverages. *Jazu-kissa* are first

and foremost places to listen. Although the tiny spaces occasionally feature live musical performances and are open to anyone, they often feel like a private living room or even a secret society. Like other tiny *nomiya* (drinking spots) sequestered in the back streets of urban Japan, they can be difficult to find. This is especially true of *jazu-kissa*, which exhibit a subterranean ambience that marks these places as special listening sites for a specific subculture of music fans. Even the earliest music listening cafés in urban Japan were associated with radical social changes of modernity and were symbolic of public discourses about foreign culture.

Though cafés have been popular in Japan since the Meiji Restoration, *on-gaku* (music) *kissaten* (later colloquially shortened to *kissa*) originated in the 1920s with *meikyoku* *kissaten*, within which customers listened to Western classical music accompanied by female hostesses (Takahashi 1994). Miriam Silverberg describes the growing public presence of the Japanese café waitress as a symbol of the nation's emerging relationship with Western models of modern metropolitan life.¹ This shift was musically marked with the introduction of American jazz, which became the default music for the niche of music *kissaten* I describe here. By the mid-1930s there were forty thousand cafés throughout the nation, packed with crowds of sophisticated youth whose new social ideals were exemplified by the controversial jazz age social figures of the *moga* (modern girl) and *mobo* (modern boy) (Silverberg 1993:125). As such, *kissaten* have long been sites for Japanese cosmopolitans to experience the nation's emergent modernity. *Jazu-kissa* took this reception a step further, to introduce new listening practices that linked the unfamiliarity of foreign culture to the integration of sound reproduction technologies into everyday musical knowledge. Ongoing connections between Western music and social reform culminated in the postwar association of jazz with an emergent Japanese democracy, which became a powerful undercurrent in the flood of foreign media and technology flowing into postwar Japanese cities with the U.S. occupation forces (Atkins 2001).

The music played in *jazu-kissa* became increasingly specialized in the subterranean environments of the postwar intelligentsia.² Although they shared with earlier music cafés a refined, salon-like atmosphere of intellectual connoisseurship, *jazu-kissa* soon became the centers of a growing countercultural imaginary, incubating in the cloistered, slightly hedonistic insularity of these dimly lit, contemplative spaces of listening. In the 1960s, the *jazu-kissa* became a symbolic meeting ground for student radi-

cals, much like Greenwich Village folkhouses where progressive politics and music tastes were interwoven. Jazu-kissa became centers of alternative media distribution, hosting film screenings, lectures, and meetings. On rare occasions, they transformed themselves into performance venues for live music, sometimes ranging beyond jazz to rock and blues. Although a few jazu-kissa provided space for local performers, the majority focused exclusively on playing records, and by the mid-1970s this range had narrowed to a very specific set of imported jazz recordings.

Today, the handful of remaining jazu-kissa in Japanese cities seem nostalgically unchanged from these formative postwar decades. The music is bebop and later “out” jazz, the atmosphere is darkly poetic, and the format is still vinyl LP (almost exclusively imported releases by artists like Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Dave Brubeck, and also the “free jazz” of John Coltrane and Albert Ayler). A substantial surcharge on drinks ensures that the few seats in the tiny establishments are not occupied casually, but are for serious listening only. Silence is often mandatory, as listeners sit in rapt appreciation over their blend coffees and whiskeys; a new sound heard on each visit, a new piece of the giant puzzle of style. Jazu-kissa like Tokyo’s Shiramuren, a tiny shop crammed above a storefront in a run-down back alley in Shinjuku, still hold “concerts” each Sunday afternoon as listeners fill the seven stools along the bar, silently sipping whiskey as free jazz blasts from enormous monitor speakers a few feet above their heads.³ Such events epitomize the special kind of virtuosic listening that emerged alongside the industrial distribution of imported recordings in postwar Japan, aspects of which were later appropriated and altered in the experimental genre-breaking practices of Noise.

For Ôtomo Yoshihide, now an influential experimental guitarist and turntablist, the local jazu-kissa was at first an “ideal place to hang out and kill time while cutting class” in his hometown of Fukushima (Ôtomo 1995:4). It had been opened by a young Tokyoite, who moved north after burning out on the political and social quagmires of the city’s counter-cultural scene in the late 1960s. Meeting with this exile from the capital’s bohemian underground and listening to records together daily “opened a window into the cultural scene of Tokyo,” where Ôtomo has spent his adult life (Ôtomo 1995:4). His description of a typical 1970s jazu-kissa is particularly evocative of its cramped, media-filled environment: “2.5 by 6 meters of space. That and a pair of huge JBL or Altec speakers, a couple hundred jazz records and a bar counter were all that was necessary

to open your basic jazu-kissa. . . . Avant-garde jazz, manga [comic books], music and culture magazines, notebooks filled with the opinions of young leftists, concerts every one or two months, and 8 millimeter film shows” (Ôtomo 1995:4). The combination of carefully managed tastes and strictly maintained rules for listening made some jazu-kissa resemble counterculture *juku* (cram schools) for underground music, where social interaction was forbidden as records were played at incredible volumes. It was standard practice to play through an entire side of an LP at a time, so the course of an evening’s listening progressed in twenty-minute “lessons,” one following another, which introduced neophytes to narratives of style within the genre and sharpened the knowledge of experienced clients.

During the 1950s and early ’60s, foreign jazz records were not widely available in Japan outside of U.S. Army bases, and the typical way to acquire them was to import directly via international post, which was prohibitively expensive for individual fans.⁴ Listening collectively at a jazu-kissa was the only affordable way to become a knowledgeable fan of the latest music. Competition in seeking out new and different records became a matter of survival for the jazu-kissa in Japanese cities, because whichever one acquired the first copies of a recent release would draw the cutting-edge audience who needed to hear the newest sounds as soon as possible. Acquiring a functional knowledge of the jazz genre meant constantly keeping abreast of new releases, which could be a formidable task when important recordings were released on small and independent labels. Jazu-kissa owners began to search out private sources for supply, and some began to write to dealers in the United States, arranging for new releases to be shipped directly via airmail. Such arrangements helped build translocal U.S.–Japan chains of mail order and collection, developing early independent distribution routes and interpersonal relationships based on international exchange of recordings.

Listening attentively to recordings in jazu-kissa represented the best means for aspiring Japanese musicians to connect to the outer world of American jazz. Musicians would go to hear new and rare records, and sometimes they attempted to transcribe the solos as they listened for hours on end. The mandatory cup of coffee (or glass of whiskey), however, could be extremely expensive, so listeners would stay for as long as possible, making the most out of their opportunity to audition a rare LP, which might well be their only chance to do so. The atmosphere of some popular jazu-kissa could resemble a performerless concert hall, and in



3.1. Display of LP covers in *jazu-kissa*. Photo by the author.

the most hard-core *jazu-kissa*, listening in complete silence was standard practice. The careful, serious listenership of the *jazu-kissa* created a model for tightly focused, attentive Japanese audiences. But in the relatively small world of jazz fans in postwar Japan, the cultivation of live music performance, whether by local or foreign performers, did not follow directly from the appreciation of recordings. Rather, they curated a mediated knowledge of jazz by listening deeply into an exclusive repertoire of recordings that managed the music's local meanings and values.

A single *jazu-kissa* could exert a great amount of influence over the reception of a particular recording, and the opinion of its “master” (*masutā*) might make or break the local reputation of a foreign artist. The master usually owns and manages the *kissa*, and is often the only employee, serving drinks, small snacks, and most important, controlling the selection of music and talking with the clientele. *Jazu-kissa* masters are widely regarded as the pinnacle of expertise in the styles of music featured in their establishments, and they are often called on by critics and reviewers to cor-

roborate data. The authoritative character of the master is somewhat analogous to the position held by a teacher in Japanese society, and the behavior of the clientele is like that of students, who develop loyal and exclusive relationships with a single jazu-kissa and its master.⁵ The kind of silent, attentive listening practiced in the most conservative jazu-kissa carries the aura of an orally transmitted music lesson, in which a student learns a repertoire by hearing the teacher play and discuss each piece in hierarchical order.⁶ Jazu-kissa, then, were less often places to socialize than places to be “socialized, evangelized, and indoctrinated into the mental discipline of jazz appreciation, and to a deeper understanding of the music’s message and spirit” (Atkins 2001:4).

The social space of the jazu-kissa was also undoubtedly one of male privilege and prestige, which concentrates expertise in the figure of the master: as the gendered term implies, masters are almost always male.⁷ Gender divisions are common to consumer identifications with sound reproduction technology in Japan, and the discipline of listening takes place within a masculine social hierarchy.⁸ The master’s evaluations of specific recordings and opinions of a particular stylistic era or group of artists are widely reproduced among his clientele. The master is considered to be in total command of his record collection; requests are rarely made, except by extremely long-term customers. His carefully presented taste and knowledge place him in a fetishized, practically magical relationship with his records. The elevated aura of the master is well captured by Bill Minor’s remembrance of Hashimoto Tsuneo of Nagoya kissa Jazz Aster, “standing directly in front of a rack of LPs encased in transparent plastic covers, the room’s light—reflected on them—producing the effect of some sort of flickering, glistening halo surrounding his head” (Minor 2004:239). The underground authority of the jazu-kissa, then, is coded in this special mastery of a foreign musical genre through a unique local interpretation. The terrain of jazz is presented here as an “out” music that also reproduces very “inside” hierarchies of social control.

The master is also a host, and the art of creatively producing and shifting the mood with records is considered a consummate skill. Fukushima Tetsuo, owner of the famous Shibuya jazu-kissa Mary Jane, on learning that I had been a student of the composer Anthony Braxton, played Braxton records all night, dramatically and proudly relating the story of how he had put the famous saxophonist at ease during his stay in Japan in the early 1970s:

Braxton came in. I knew immediately who he was, of course. He sat down and I got him a drink—I was playing some Sonny Rollins. . . . I could tell he was uncomfortable with it, I could feel the tension from him—the music was inappropriate [chigau, lit. “It was wrong”]. I ran behind the bar, crouched down by the record shelves, searching—no, not that one—what could it be? And then—hm, I wonder . . . I found it. Lennie Tristano. As the Rollins side ended, I brought it up slowly—this was it. His face changed; there was a relaxed feeling. Later, when he left, he told me he hadn’t been comfortable in Japan until he came to this place.

Several aspects of Fukushima’s story inform us of the cultural links between emotional sensitivity and critical knowledge in the space of the music *kissa*. That he “immediately knew” Braxton is presented as important, if natural; but the real demonstration of the master’s mastery is represented by his ability to channel the correct music for his guest. Even without direct communication, Fukushima’s sensitivity, coupled with his skillful application of specific knowledge, allowed him to select a recording that provided his sensitive customer a contemplative listening space that was transcendent of both cultural boundaries and rival musicians.

This special space for listening could also be overwhelming: “the darkness, the tremendous volume of the music, the motionlessly listening guest, and the frequently strict and authoritarian master . . . all added to the impression that one entered a very special, almost religious room, a completely different world” (Derschmidt 1998:308). In a book of reminiscences of 1960s Tokyo *jazu-kissa*, Ôshima Yu describes entering a *kissa* in Kichijôji, a neighborhood in West Tokyo that remains a center for underground music: “I was seventeen, and I was shocked by the volume of the music. The huge speakers trembled, and even the chair I sat on trembled under the force of the sound waves. . . . I saw a bearded guy listening with closed eyes, and some other men quietly reading their books. To me, that dark and smoky room seemed rather unhealthy” (Adoribu-hen 1989).⁹ The darkness of the space, the unhealthy obsession with music, the overwhelming volume, the intellectual detachment contrasted with the total enclosure of the space of audition, where one “listened with closed eyes,” trembling with intensity and power—all of these emphasize the shock of the music’s newness and stress a complete absorption in disciplined listening that remains highly valued among Japanese underground music fans.¹⁰

The social mediation of Japanese listening resonated with an aura of discovery and surprise. But this crafted sensibility helped Japanese listeners reposition their place on the margins of modern music. A sense of extraordinary intensity was lovingly created in the 1960s *kissa* of underground urban Japan, dark corners that provide a space of total and overwhelming difference from the everyday world. The promise of an alternate musical experience within the flow of media—in which transcendent, isolated audition could connect almost telepathically to a global audience of deep listeners—became crucial for Japanese experimentalists oriented toward a transnational circulation.

How was this controlled, genre-focused listening remediated into an antigeneric Noise in Kansai's "free" spaces for listening in the 1980s? While *jazu-kissa* listeners tuned into the signal of a distant original jazz, experimental music listeners in Kyoto's Drugstore began to perform their own Noise. Before I return to this story, I briefly outline the historical influence of recordings on the conditions for musical reception in modern Japan. Recordings encouraged new modes of social performance and created new experiences of listening for an emerging mass culture in Japan. Because the technological centers of musical production were located overseas, recordings emplaced local knowledge in the context of transnational circulation. The original was always somewhere else and had to be brought into range.

THE PLACE OF RECORDED MUSIC IN MODERN JAPAN

The emphasis on recordings was not merely something that happened to Japan, something that made listening "modern" by virtue of technological reproduction. Rather, mediated listening itself was a crucial ground for the staging of Japanese cosmopolitanism. Japanese listeners were encouraged to substitute recordings for live music, and many important critics argued early on for the superiority of records as an alternative to musical performance. Despite their countercultural aura, *jazu-kissa* were engines of this postwar turn that privileged imported cultural materials.¹¹ In the context of foreign media, local music was separated from the broader norms of consumption. Attending a live performance was marked as a specialized and constrained musical experience, which stood in contrast to the seemingly universal musical standards of recorded media.¹² Privileged attention to recordings was in evidence among early modern Japanese publics

from the turn of the century and grew exponentially in the era between the wars. The gramophone made its first inroads with the establishment of the Victor Talking Machine Company in Yokohama in 1927, and expanded into a growing consumer market in the 1930s.¹³ For the emerging bourgeois consumer, the broader exposure to music recordings occurred at the same moment that Japan began to learn foreign popular music styles in earnest. Modern musical subjectivity meant developing new techniques for listening to foreign media.¹⁴

Early Japanese debates about recorded music show that the hegemony of Western musical styles had already established a distanced context of listening that could only be solved through increased attention to imported media. Hosokawa Shuhei and Matsuoka Hideaki, for example, historicize the problem of local musical authenticity by contrasting two between-the-wars-era music critics. Whereas Otaguro Motoo disdained the experience of listening to classical music recordings as superficial and “canned,” Nomura Araebisu suggested that noisy and distracting concert settings compromised the genuine listening experience, stating that a purer appreciation of “sound itself” was afforded by gramophone recordings. The argument for the superiority of technologically mediated listening was reinforced by Japan’s distance from Western centers of musical knowledge and creativity. Like other Japanese classical music fans in 1931, Nomura wondered whether “it was really better to listen to a live performance of a mediocre Japanese violinist or a superb recording of a virtuoso like Fritz Kreisler” (Hosokawa and Matsuoka 2004:154). Deep listening to an authentic imported recording helped Japanese audiences jump the gap between distant contexts of production and local sites of audition.

Japan emerged from World War II through hegemonic models of political and economic reform that increased public media consumption on a rapid scale. Japanese citizens were urged to embrace new communication technologies, especially radio and television, as part of the nation’s geopolitical realignment with the United States (Nakayama, Boulton, and Pecht 1999; Partner 1999).¹⁵ By the 1960s, Japan occupied a central space in the manufacture of media technologies such as transistor radios and tape recorders. But locally created music—whether in traditional genres or in the emergent realm of popular culture—was heavily undercirculated in comparison with imported music. Through their contingent participation in the advance of an uneven geopolitical sphere, postwar Japanese were massively overdeveloped as musical consumers. Whether the genre

was jazz, pop, or classical music, Japan was a nation that listened to new sounds from outside.

How did Noise spin out of this localized attention to foreign recordings? In the second half of this chapter, I describe the transformation of jazu-kissa listening practices in the small Kyoto free space Drugstore, which contributed to the initial naming of Noise and its early development as an original performance style. The idea of Noise encouraged Kansai performers to produce their own recordings, which fed back into transnational circulation as an emergent Japanese genre. Through its identification with localized productions in Osaka and Kyoto, Noise is often seen as an invention, *sui generis*, of Japanese authors. But in fact, the emergence of Noise performance was part of a remediation of foreign recordings. In this tiny space for listening, a nascent group of Noise practitioners gathered to listen to a mix of marginal, almost unclassifiable recordings drawn from Western experimental, free, and “progressive” psychedelic rock. By recontextualizing these recordings as the inspiration for a new genre of Noise, the clientele of Drugstore began to feed their own listening back into transnational circulation.

MAKING NOISE IN DRUGSTORE

In Japan’s major cities during the 1970s, music kissaten developed for a diverse variety of popular genres, especially rock and experimental music. Influenced by the growing *angura* (underground) theater groups and university cooperatives that flourished in Japanese urban bohemian life, informal and often short-lived “free” *kissa* sprang up spontaneously alongside alternative performance and art spaces. Like their counterparts in Europe and North America, the emphasis in the Japanese *angura* scenes was on action, self-definition, free expression, and personal independence.¹⁶ In the late 1960s and early 1970s, *jazu-kissa* housed a stream of radical student organizations, avant-garde performances, film screenings, and theater groups. Many significant moments in the history of underground music in Japan occurred in *jazu-kissa*, as artists like Takayanagi Masayuki and Abe Kaoru began to take improvisation into uncharted territory. As the activist counterculture became more diffuse in the 1970s, *jazu-kissa* began to represent an increasingly nostalgic mode of reception and slowly disengaged from local activity in favor of remote fandom. By the 1980s, many *jazu-kissa* had become musical “museums,” locked in memorialized

grooves of collection and recollection.¹⁷ As jazu-kissa gradually grew more codified within this historically oriented listening, experimental “free” (*furii*) kissa stressing creative participation fostered the growth of local performance networks.¹⁸

Free spaces for listening diverged significantly from the social standards of the jazu-kissa, and their clientele might not describe these places as kissa at all, or only with tongue firmly in cheek. Most were more like art spaces, squats, or social collectives than coffeehouses or bars. They were short-lived, antiauthoritarian, and loosely organized, with little of the strict regulation of the jazu-kissa. These spaces expanded the role of listening to new purposes and incorporated broader ranges of new musics. Free rock, progressive rock, and heavy music kissaten popped up around Kyoto and Osaka, such as *Niko-niko-tei* (Smile Shop), *Jam House*, and *Chigai-hôken* (Extraterritoriality). In these looser forms of kissa (where talking was encouraged), bands were formed, concerts were planned, and impromptu performances were enacted. Women exerted a much greater presence, and the role of the master was diffused as management duties were spread among a volunteer staff.

Throughout my fieldwork, Kansai musicians regularly referred back to one tiny yet influential Kyoto “free space” called Drugstore (figure 3.2), where many current performers met for the first time.¹⁹ Despite the fact that Drugstore only existed for a few years, operated on an almost random schedule, and had a maximum capacity of fewer than twenty people, it maintains a mythical status for Kansai’s Noise practitioners. A tiny room with no heat in winter and few amenities, the space was located at the western corner of the city in Nishijin, an old kimono-manufacturing district where rent was cheap. Almost all of the musicians who later came to define the Kansai Noise scene—and eventually represented its sounds internationally—met frequently at Drugstore to share their rare LPs, experiment with electronic sound and film equipment, and discuss music. The usual genre of choice was experimental *purogure* (progressive) rock, largely electronic and ambient groups from Germany and Britain (such as Guru Guru, Neu, Kraftwerk, and Tangerine Dream). However, Drugstore’s selection was eclectic and was not limited to *purogure*, but included any *henna* (strange) recording available, including hard rock, electronic music, and free improvisation from Europe. The strangeness of experimental music kissa did not end with the selection of strange music, but surfaced in new techniques for listening in which recordings were looped, played



3.2. Doorway to Drugstore,
1976. Photo by Hiroshige Jojo.

at different speeds, and sometimes mixed together in a sonic collage. At Drugstore, one didn't listen to "experimental music" per se; rather, one listened experimentally.

Drugstore was established in 1976 as a *kanpa* (short for *kanpaniya*; "campaign") shop, maintained by donations from customer-members that did not require an ordinary business license. The workers were all volunteers, many of whom were students at nearby universities such as Doshisha and Kyoto University. Mikawa Toshiji first encountered Drugstore after being directed there by record store clerks while searching for a rare German rock album (*UFO* by Guru Guru). "I heard there was a 'store' where you could actually listen to such rare albums," Mikawa remembered, but on finally arriving he was shocked at its extraordinary weirdness: "As you opened the unwelcoming door, the inside space was divided vertically, like a bunk bed, and the ceilings of both spaces were too low to even stand up straight. The space was covered with purple shag carpet . . . it was a pro-

foundly mysterious space. It was there that I was able to hear UFO for the first time; kids today cannot understand how impressed I was then . . . I encountered so many people in there who, to some degree, determined my future life” (Mikawa 1994).

Over time, the special atmosphere at Drugstore led the clientele to form a tight-knit social circle that produced a number of performance groups. Most were short-lived, but others formed the basis of a long-term music community and eventually fostered the transnational circulation of Noise recordings. Hiroshige Yoshiyuki (a.k.a. Jojo), a founding member of Hijo-kaidan (Emergency Stairway), started the influential Noise label Alchemy Records through friendships he made at Drugstore: “They played all kinds of stuff—progressive rock, experimental music, free jazz—but really loud. You could project films, or bring in your own records to play for your friends. I met all of the members of my first band Daigoretsu [Fifth Column], Mikawa [Toshiji], Nakajima [Akifumi], Ishibashi [Shôjirô] . . . and that’s where I met Hide and we formed Ultra Bidé.” Fujiwara “Bidé” Hide, leader of the influential early Noise band Ultra Bidé, first found Drugstore while he was still in high school, slowly discovering experimental rock through imported records. Fujiwara’s hunt for records led him throughout the city of Kyoto and eventually to Drugstore:

There was really only one small import record store. Jeugia, in Fujû-Daimaru department store at the corner of Shijô and Teramachi—I bought a lot of German rock, Velvet Underground, Captain Beefheart. It was pretty easy to get those records, but then I started getting into music that was harder to find, and there was no information, no fan-zines back then. I’d read the liner notes; Pink Floyd had a gig with Soft Machine. “Hm. Who’s Soft Machine?” Then go look for that record. When I found Drugstore, they had *all* the records like that—and it was all college students and older people, and some “cool” guys . . . I was like, “wow!” I was totally into it. That turned me into a real maniac [*maniakku*].²⁰

Fujiwara was Drugstore’s youngest and most outgoing customer, and he enthusiastically threw himself into the space as a second home, trading records with fellow customers and making connections throughout the city.

Ishibashi Shôjirô (currently one of Kansai’s main independent music promoters and owner of experimental label F.M.N. Sound Factory) was an

occasional staff member when Fujiwara suggested that Drugstore should host a live music performance mixed in with the usual listening sessions: “One day Bidé said, ‘let’s do a live here!’ so we set it up for him. But I think only about twelve people could fit inside once the group was set up, so it was really just us [the staff and musicians]. We would have solo saxophone stuff, free jazz, or electronic stuff—we couldn’t do a band really, with drums or anything like that. Most of the time the customers didn’t really care about what we were doing or anything. You know, no one would come just to hear us. We would just do sessions whenever we felt like it.”

Ishibashi told of an evening when the group based an experimental performance around a *nabe* meal, a hotpot dish in Japanese home cooking that evokes an intimate space of collective sociality. A *nabe* is cooked bit by bit by diners who gather around the boiling pot in a circle, slowly adding seafood, *mochi* (rice cakes), vegetables, and noodles and removing each piece when cooked. In this case, electronic music gear was attached to the hotpot, triggered by the actions of the diners as they ate to create a *denshi nabe* (electric, or in this sense, electronic, hotpot): “One night we came in and wired up our *nabe* pot to some synthesizers, so when you touched anything in the pot, it would set off sounds. Like, contact mics were put inside, just at the edge of feedback, so when you touched the food inside the pot—*Whaaaaaaaaa!* There were all these sounds going off all the time from the synthesizers as people added things to the *nabe*. Actually, thinking back on it now, it was pretty dangerous! That was our version of *sokkyō ongaku* [improvised music].” Eventually, these haphazard experiments crystallized in a more deliberate public performance of feedback. But in the initial stages, performance was loosely blended with listening, with sessions circling around a small group of the most interested customers that cultivated their creative sociality in spontaneous events like the *denshi nabe*.

Ishibashi, Fujiwara, and Hiroshige, along with Mikawa Toshiji, Takayama Kenichi, Nakamura Junko (who later married Hiroshige), Zushi Naoki, Hayashi Naoto, and others in the core of Drugstore patrons, began forming ensembles to perform in other spaces in Kyoto and Osaka, often bringing experimental actors and *butoh* dancers they had met in the space on stage as well. The group maintained Drugstore’s amateurish, improvisational spirit in their performances, appearing without fixed instrumentation or compositions—sometimes without even practicing in advance—and employing a changing cast of performers, most of whom had never played an instrument before. Hiroshige Jojo described an early gathering

called Daigoretsu (Fifth Column), a predecessor to his famed Noise band Hijokaidan, as a “secret team” that did not perform publicly but assembled together (“like ninjas”) to create something—anything, something different every time—then disperse. “Daigoretsu wasn’t a *group*, really; more of a space, or something. Hm, was it a group after all? We had ten or twelve members, and we played almost every day, but with no organization—just ‘Hi. Let’s play something.’ It was pure improvisation, but not just music. Any kind of action was okay. We would just play percussion, or make noise, or read poetry, or make a magazine—it was a very strange group. We had no live performances. It was just for us, just ‘at home.’ It was like a strange mythical team.” In addition to private experimental gatherings like Daigoretsu, the Drugstore clan began also to experiment with renaming the sounds they appreciated as Noise. Eventually, Hiroshige remembered, he learned to narrow the products of his improvisational actions down to Noise as well: “I decided to play Noise, like we played in Daigoretsu sometimes—but all the time.”

Although the name Noise eventually came to refer to their own sounds, the term was first developed in listening sessions at Drugstore. Before becoming a description for a specific genre, “Noise” was a general assignation for any off-the-map sounds; weird records, so extreme-sounding that they escaped generic categories of music. According to Ishibashi, the term was introduced by Hijokaidan member Mikawa Toshiji, who always referred to his favorite strange records as “Noise,” regardless of their original generic context: “It was Mikawa, really, who started using the term Noise to talk about all the henna records he was bringing into Drugstore. Whatever he liked, Whitehouse, Stockhausen, Nihilist Spasm Band; all of that was ‘Noise.’ So then Hijokaidan started and of course they were ‘Noise,’ too. So actually, they were influenced by some other noisy stuff, but Noise as a category was started by Hijokaidan, and then they started Alchemy [Hiroshige’s label].”

As both a catchall designation for difficult, hard-to-get recordings and a specific reference to the group’s creative output, the idea of Noise gathered uncategorizable sounds and located them in the ears of a single group of listeners. Drugstore’s listening gathered recordings from the margins of multiple musical genres—which had been named and organized somewhere else—and junked the previous categories to rename these sounds as Noise. Before the group had ever made Noise in performance, the sound of Noise had been remediated through their listening.

Drugstore's experimental listening stood as a deliberate rejection of the jazu-kissa's connoisseurship of historical expertise and repertoires of genre. Ishibashi insisted that in spite of its importance, Drugstore "was just a space . . . not like a jazu-kissa with a special history of the music, and sort of, how it was built bit by bit, and how it eventually became something. It [the music at Drugstore] didn't *become* anything, it just stayed *strange*." To "stay strange" required diverging from the genre-oriented, archival listening of the jazu-kissa, and also demanded the constant creation of new relationships between sounds. The Drugstore group began to add their own local Noise to the experimental blends of their record collections. Members brought in cassettes from isolated experimentalists from around Kansai, adding these tapes of underground Osaka and Kyoto artists to the mix. Drugstore began to attract occasional visitors from the influential Tokyo listening space Minor and other free spaces around Japan, and listeners started to branch out to program local performance events.²¹

One of the regular customers at Drugstore was the leader of the student *zenkyōtō* (all-campus joint struggle committee) at nearby Doshisha University.²² Through this connection to the student government, Fujiwara began to book shows at Doshisha and then at venues throughout Kansai, including Eggplant in Osaka and Taku Taku and Jittoku in Kyoto (both of which occupied abandoned sake breweries). Several shows took place in the legendary Seibu Kōdō, a large hall on the western grounds of Kyoto University that had been taken over during the student power movement of 1968. Seibu Kōdō had remained vaguely autonomous from the university since the protests and remained open to the public. By the mid-1970s, it was an important space for experimental theater, lectures on radical politics, and occasional performances by Kyoto's early experimental rock bands, especially politically minded rock groups such as Datetenryu, Zunō Keisatsu, and the controversial Hadaka no Rallizes.²³ By booking the emerging Noise bands into these venues with underground legends of free music like Haino Keiji, Fujiwara began to link the listeners at Drugstore into an existing local performance scene.²⁴

In 1980, Drugstore's circle of experimentalists released their first recordings, documented on the compilation LP *Dokkiri Rekōdo* (Shocking Record), collectively released by the musicians themselves. The record featured an early version of Fujiwara's Ultra Bidé, along with postpunk groups Henshin Kirin, Aunt Sally (featuring lead singer Phew), and Inu (featuring Machida Machizō, a.k.a. Machida Kō).²⁵ Hayashi Naoto, another Drug-

store listener, started Unbalance Records during the same year to release the sonically extreme Kansai compilation *Shūmatsu Shorijō* (Sewage Treatment Plant), as well as the first *Hijokaidan* LP. Because there was no other possibility of distribution, Hayashi and Hiroshige delivered the records and homemade cassettes to small independent record stores in Osaka and Tokyo by hand. They soon found this method too difficult, and the music was judged too harsh and extreme for most stores. But the label lasted long enough to hold an all-Kansai performance event called Unbalance Day at Loft in Shinjuku in 1981. *Hijokaidan* member Mikawa describes the Tokyo audience's reaction as "extreme culture shock": "[They] laughed with blank amazement at the sheer Kansai-ness of *Hijokaidan* . . . at the same time they were unable to look away, transfixed as though by some terrifying sight" (Mikawa 1992).

Hijokaidan added new elements of extreme performance to go along with their extreme sounds (figure 3.3). Members threw raw fish guts and garbage at the audience, destroyed equipment, and urinated and vomited on stage.²⁶ Drawing from the loose collective at Drugstore, *Hijokaidan* was composed of a large and flexible group of members, some making sounds, others doing actions. Their performances quickly became legendary, but the group was soon banned from most local performance spaces. Some within the group wanted to stay focused on the sound anyway. "As all kinds

3.3. *Hijokaidan*, circa 1979. Photo by Jibiki Yūichi.



of noxious pandemonium unfolded right in front of my eyes,” Mikawa remembered later, “it was often very difficult to concentrate on creating my sounds . . . inside I began to long to focus on creating pure Noise.”²⁷ In the face of this block on performances, Hijokaidan turned to recordings, which narrowed the group down to the more sonically oriented members. Over the next few months, they amassed a large collection of homemade recordings. The problem then became how to get them out.

FROM OSAKA ALCHEMY TO JAPAN OVERSEAS

With the help of Hayashi, Hiroshige started a new label, Alchemy Records, which eventually bypassed Tokyo to bring Noise to an international audience. Since the label’s founding in 1983, Alchemy’s success led overseas audiences to focus on the Kansai region, particularly Osaka, as the center of the Japanese Noise scene. But within Japan, Hiroshige explains, being located in Osaka was an enormous barrier to national distribution: “I started Alchemy because I just kept seeing Noise artists quit because they couldn’t get a record released. Kansai is strange, because almost all the media is in Tokyo, and Osaka is just not considered a place for culture. In Kansai, we can do new things, really good things, but it’s just impossible to become a success.” Historically, Osaka has been known as a mercantile city, with a salt-of-the-earth population known for hard work and thrift, an explosive sense of humor, a rough local dialect, and excessive eating and drinking. These regional characteristics of spontaneity and directness may have attracted North American listeners, who responded to the forthright Osaka style. Although Osaka is famous for its special cultural attributes, the Kansai region is politically and economically marginalized within Japan. Kansai’s popular music has been especially underrepresented. A few local independent labels had existed in the area during the early 1970s, including URC (Underground Records Club) started by Hayakawa Yoshio, the guitarist for the famed psychedelic band Jacks. But URC folded in the mid-1970s, and by the 1980s there were no local options for independent music production. Since the music industry was located in Tokyo, the only way to release Kansai acts was to start a new label that remediated local Noise for a transnational audience.

In 1983, after a brief stint in Tokyo running an unsuccessful video distribution company, Hiroshige decided that he had developed enough connections to start an independent music label in Kansai. Despite his connec-

tions with well-known Tokyo underground groups like the Stalin, Alchemy had little representation in Tokyo record stores. Hiroshige decided that even if Noise was ignored within Japan, it could find its way to a global listenership. “I decided to release all of the strange music from Kansai, and distribute it everywhere. I was into the idea of alchemy [renkinjutsu]: that you could make money from junk.²⁸ Our sound is junk, but we can record it, release CDs, and make money. That’s alchemy . . . something that’s not even art, something with no message. That’s also alchemy . . . the feeling we get from our junk.” To begin this transformation, Hiroshige had to reach beyond Tokyo, beyond Japan, to plug into a transnational network of listeners. Over the course of the next decade, Alchemy’s distribution to underground audiences in North America looped back into Japanese reception to create an Osaka “Noise boom” in the 1990s.

Because the cost of foreign distribution was extremely high, the North American circulation of Alchemy Records was necessarily limited to small numbers. U.S. distributors sold imported CDs for up to \$20 to retail stores, who marked the releases up to around \$25. A record by Hijokaidan might sell for the same price in both Japanese and North American stores, but the North American copy would not produce any profit for Alchemy. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, longtime employee Ōnishi Aya told me, Alchemy was forced to limit its overseas distribution, creating an imbalanced market for Japanese Noise: “We sell CDs for ¥2,800 here [in Japan], but we have to sell it for \$14 in America. That’s still considered too expensive, but we had to do it that way if we wanted to introduce the music to other countries, even though we didn’t make any money from it . . . we could never even do a run of 1,000 copies straight away, just press them a little at a time; maybe after a while, we might reach 1,000 and stop.” Alchemy provided free CDs to college radio stations and reviewers on request and managed to arrange some limited distribution to underground record stores in North America. By the mid-1990s, the North American audience had grown to the extent that Hiroshige could no longer manage the demand through mail-order correspondence. Alchemy and other small Kansai-based labels found it almost impossible to collect revenues from U.S.-based independent distributors, and they began to look for another way to distribute their releases in North America.

In 1994, Go Shoei began to consolidate the output of Kansai independent experimental labels in a small local distribution company called Japan Overseas, which distributed Alchemy’s releases to North American stores

in a quarterly catalog. At first, Go simply listed local recordings released by various local underground labels, emulating record dealers who circulated lists of “wanted” or “offered” rare records for sale. As interest grew, she began adding short, descriptive blurbs for each release, and soon overseas fans and record collectors began to write to request noncatalog items. The catalog quickly became the “Japan contact” for U.S. fans seeking obscure, undistributed Japanese releases. Japan Overseas also gave coherence to the North American view of the Osaka underground, since Go carried at least one record by each of the important local Kansai bands. Even though Japan Overseas was primarily a middleman for local Japanese labels, the catalog consolidated the category of “Japanoise” for North American reception. Go decided to simply make Japan Overseas into a label of her own, working directly with local groups and paying for the pressing herself. She arranged for her releases to be pressed at record and CD plants in the United States, which allowed her to sell Japan Overseas releases in North America for the same prices as domestic releases. Because Go priced her releases competitively, she was able to arrange for retail distribution in the United States with Forced Exposure, Revolver, Caroline, and other distributors.

Recordings by performers like Masonna, Solmania, and Monde Bruits began to appear on the shelves of North American independent record stores in the mid-1990s. For a growing group of Noise-focused listeners, every new release from Japan Overseas was another piece of the Japanoise puzzle. These recordings reverberated in the imaginations of American listeners as the “Osaka Noise scene,” just as the sounds of bebop had represented America for Japanese listeners in the postwar *jazu-kissa*. An English-language zine called *Exile Osaka*, written by Brooklyn expat Matt Kaufman, reported on the Kansai scene for North Americans. But *Exile Osaka* was widely read in Japan as well, and Kaufman eventually became an important local authority on Kansai Noise. Back in Japan, record stores began to carry more underground and local independent music, and niche stores in Osaka like Forever Records, Maru ka Batsu, Time Bomb, and King Kong featured sections on Kansai Noise. The “Kansai Chaos Guide” *G-Scope* captured the local scene with a monthly performance calendar, descriptions of new recordings, and details of Kansai bands’ overseas tours. Local livehouses like Fandango, Sun Hall, and Club Water began to fill up with enthusiastic young audiences for Noise shows.

A handful of Drugstore-like places for listening popped up as well. In 1995, an all-Noise “bar” opened on the third floor of an office building in



3.4. Yamazaki “Maso” Takushi (Masonna) in Alchemy Music Store, Shinsaibashi, Osaka. Photo by the author.

south Osaka. Bar Noise fit around ten customers at a time in a small room that blasted Noise recordings over the stereo (and even served a “Noise cocktail” that, according to critic Higashiseto Satoru, “tasted so bad that you could never finish it”). The ersatz “Noise kissa” hosted only a few performances during the year of its existence, but Bar Noise became legendary through Japan Overseas’ issue of a compilation CD called *Bar Noise Full Volume Live Vol. 1*. At the end of the 1990s, Alchemy Records opened a retail outlet dedicated to selling Noise and experimental music in Shinsaibashi, managed by Yamazaki “Maso” Takushi (a.k.a. Masonna; figure 3.4). Customers lingered over the racks in the tiny shop, listening as Yamazaki mixed new Alchemy releases with rare records of Japanese psych or new recordings from Noise artists around the world.

LISTENING IN

I have foregrounded the story of Drugstore to stress the creative work of listening in creating new forms of music, and the role of recorded circulations in reframing musical knowledge. The practices of reception initiated by the jazu-kissa spread out into new social interpretations, which ranged

from conservative sound-preserving institutions to genre-destabilizing experimental performances. While both jazu- and free kissa emphasized the interpretive power of listening, each produced different relationships to musical history. Jazu-kissa did not begin as socially conservative institutions. Eventually, desire for the pure original signal of jazz tuned out the possibility of local productivity, in favor of a historical canon whose boundaries lay somewhere else. Drugstore, on the other hand, reframed the stakes—and the possibilities—of listening by gathering Noise from the fringes of foreign media. But because it is constituted in circulation, the history of Noise can always be turned back on itself in new contexts of interpretation.

Hiroshige does not insist that Drugstore and Alchemy represent the only sources of Noise or that Noise is strictly a product of Japanese authorship. However, he points out an important divergence between Japanese and North American discoveries of Noise. Because they encountered Japanese records already named as Noise, he argues, North Americans simply reinforced this received category through their listening: “[At Drugstore], our experience was totally different. We heard a lot of different kinds of music, we learned a lot from records, and we didn’t know about something called ‘Noise.’ But after the 1980s, they [Americans] knew about ‘Noise’ from us. We didn’t know about Noise music, so we made the first Noise music. If you know that there is such a thing as ‘Noise’ when you’re making it, well—that’s different, isn’t it?”²⁹ Hiroshige’s bold claim that all Americans heard about Noise from Alchemy Records is unquestionably hyperbolic. But he points to something basic about the spirit of listening that continues to drive Noise beyond its own categorization. It is the desire to push experimentations with sound and performance beyond the canonization of musical genre, which remediates recorded music away from fixed histories and into the creative reinventions of feedback.

Like history itself, the interpretive practice of listening is always balanced on a tipping point. On one side of the edge, musical identities disappear altogether in endless revisions and appropriations; on the other, they are sealed in the conservative nostalgia of canon formation. Although Drugstore may have served as the crucible for one important group’s experimentations, its story should not be taken as the definitive origin myth of Noise. When Drugstore closed in the early 1980s, it had only been open a few years, operating with a loose schedule and a varied clientele. The tiny spot was only one among many places where the idea of Noise was

dreamed up and put into circulation. But a powerful sound bubbled out of this local circle of listeners, gathered around the nabe pot in an unheated room in winter. Only after this alchemical transformation—which turned recordings into performances, and then back into more recordings—could they bring their own Noise into the world.

and “alternative” internationalization from the earlier embrace of democratic modernity in jazz.

- 2 Most Japanese writing on jazu-kissa fixes its historical center in the 1960s. Much of the existing literature consists of anecdotal memories by generational representatives (Adoribu 1989 and Soejima 2002, among others).
- 3 The institutional strictness of silent listening in jazu-kissa is legendary. Atkins cites a sign listing the “house rules” of one Shibuya kissa: “Welcome. This is a powerful listening space. Please ‘dig’ your jazz. We ask that you observe silence while the music is playing” (Atkins 2001:4).
- 4 A similar cost differential between imported and domestic media influenced film’s reception in Japan. Japanese theaters often increased entrance fees for imported films to cover the higher rental costs, a move that gave American film a higher prestige but limited its audience (Freiberg 1987).
- 5 Compounding the exclusivity of the relationship between a kissa and its clientele is the “bottle keep” system, where a large sum is paid for a personal bottle of liquor, which is then marked with the customer’s name and kept behind the bar. This makes the relationship between customer and master more homey and comfortable, eliminating the need for the awkward direct exchange of money and allowing the customer to treat his friends without overtly paying for their drinks.
- 6 Japanese instrumental learning is traditionally organized within hierarchical “guilds” called *iemoto*, which maintain a historical lineage of forms and styles through oral transmission in a familial organizational structure. Linda Fujie notes that the social conditions of the *iemoto* system “not only transmit knowledge; they also control quality,” regulating the number of individuals licensed to perform, teach, or otherwise represent their music in society at large (Fujie 1996:386).
- 7 However, during their 1960s heyday, jazu-kissa were centers of bohemian progressivism on all fronts, and so were briefly aligned with nascent feminist politics in spite of their ultimately male-dominated social frame. There have been several famous jazu-kissas run by couples, one or two female musicians, and women have occasionally (though rarely in the authoritative and authorial role of masters) become famous and influential participants in Japanese jazz circles. Compared to postwar jazu-kissa, female participation expanded exponentially in later free kissa, and women are distinctly present as listeners and performers in most experimental music events in Japan.
- 8 The male identification with sound technology is typical elsewhere in the world, especially in the United States, where “hi-fi” culture became a common masculine household project (Keightly 1996; Taylor 2001). But there are specific precedents for gendering sound aesthetics in the Japanese language as well. Inoue Miyako describes how women’s vocal character and language use have been monitored,

contained, and marginalized by male practices of listening, which have reduced the sounds of progressive female speech styles—and modern female sociality more generally—to nonreferential “unpleasant” sounds (Inoue 2003).

- 9 This passage is cited in a slightly different translation in Derschmidt (1998:308). Ōshima’s reminiscence is drawn from a collected volume featuring several authors nostalgically memorializing their student days spent in endless listening sessions in *jazu-kissa* (Adoribu 1989). The *obi* (belt-cover) of the book describes the contents with the following sentimentally self-deprecating blurb, which can only be understood as a generational invocation of *senpai-kōhai* context (literally “senior-junior”; a reciprocal social institution of elder-younger power relations and mentorship), meant to mark the ownership of subcultural jazz cool: “To the young jazz fans: We, the retread middle aged members of the baby-boom generation [*dankai no sedai*, ‘mass’ or ‘cluster’ generation], want you to know that in the past there were days in our youth when we were excited by going to *jazu-kissa*.” The reaction to the generational curation of jazz motivated younger artists to move toward experimental genres. Experimentalist Kudo Tori—who visits *jazu-kissa* frequently enough to think about having his grave marked “He loved coffee shops”—complains that “all the current critics have become totally middle-aged, and it feels like they’re just enjoying some communication while waiting for their lives to end.”
- 10 The special sense of atmosphere created by this listening behavior is regularly noted by touring musicians, who describe Japanese audiences as especially serious. Critic Sasaki Atsushi has described this hyperattentive listening style as “clarified listening” (*mimi wo sumasu*), which he identifies in the careful audition associated with the recent Tokyo-based *onkyō* genre (Sasaki 2001). See also Plourde (2008) on “disciplined listening” in Japanese experimental music audiences.
- 11 As I describe in chapter 2, the weight given to recordings influenced the terms for concert performance used among popular music fans; a concertgoer attends a *raibu*, from the English word “live,” and small concert spaces have come to be called *raibuhaisu* (livehouses).
- 12 The Japanese conflation of recordings and live music is perhaps most transparently illustrated by the now-global practice of karaoke (literally, “empty orchestra”). Charles Keil has described karaoke as a “mediated-but-live” experience, in which unchanging recordings highlight the singular efforts and distinct expressions of an individual performer, as the singer sings along with a prerecorded tape (Keil 1994). Noting how Japanese have fluidly assimilated electronic media into their everyday lives, Keil suggests that karaoke represents a special cultural adaptation to mediated music, through which mechanical processes of reproduction are “humanized,” or “personalized” in a new mode of performing-listening. Rey Chow further notes that the crux of karaoke affect is the continued presence of a distinct individual human voice in the context of mass mediation.

- The karaoke machine “liberates” the singer from the objective requirements of musical skill but turns their listenership into a creative performance: “One is literally performing as a listener, with all the ‘defects’ that a performer is not supposed to have” (Chow 1993).
- 13 The Japanese JVC corporation, for instance, was formed out of the Yokohama subsidiary of the Victor Company, breaking ties with RCA-Victor at the outbreak of World War II.
 - 14 Modern listening was being transformed around the world through what Jonathan Sterne calls “audile techniques” that linked the rise of urban bourgeois society to sound reproduction technologies (Sterne 2003). Sterne argues that modern listeners’ critical aesthetic judgments about sound were transformed before recordings, with turn-of-the-century developments in medical science and communication technologies, specifically the inventions of the stethoscope and the telegraph. Jonathan Crary shows that a similar process of increased observation and attention to seeing created a “productive and manageable subjectivity” of modern visuality, which regulated its subjects through “purified aesthetic perception” (Crary 1990).
 - 15 Immediately following the end of the war, U.S. forces issued orders for four million radio sets, and by 1948 Japanese factories were already producing a volume of 800,000 radios per year for the domestic market (Nakayama, Boulton, and Pect 1999:29). The rapid reintroduction of radio in postwar Japan was abetted by occupation demands that the Japanese populace receive “educational” broadcasts that carried information about the nation’s reconstruction efforts and also American popular music. The eventual miniaturization of transistor technology in the decade following the occupation allowed Japan to begin major exports of radios in the 1960s, triggering the “economic miracle” (managed through imbalanced trade agreements with the United States) that brought the nation to an economic par with Western industrial nations.
 - 16 The *angura* moment of Japan in the late 1960s and 1970s produced influential aesthetic movements and lasting stylistic innovations in several different areas of popular culture, centered in Tokyo’s Shinjuku district and exemplified by the underground theater of Terayama Shuji and the Tokyo Kid Brothers troupe; the new performance/dance style of Ankoku Butoh; the experimental films of Iimura Takahiko, Matsumoto Toshio, and the Image Forum collective; the art movements of Gutai and High Red Center; and the “free” music of Takayanagi Masayuki, Abe Kaoru, Kosugi Takehisa, Haino Keiji, and others, all of which were often presented together in multimedia events that conjoined sociopolitical and aesthetic goals. See Goodman (1999) for an interesting introduction to the poster artwork of *angura* theatre, Ridgely (2011) on Terayama’s role in the counterculture, Munroe (1994) on postwar avant-garde art, and Klein (1988) on Butoh performance.
 - 17 See Murai (2002) and Derschmidt (1998) for further commentary on the jazu-

- kissa's decline into traditionalism in the 1980s and 1990s, and Molasky (2005) for a rebuttal of the nostalgic myths that accrues to histories of 1960s jazu-kissa. However, some Japanese critics continue to argue for the potential of jazz as a flexible source of innovation, despite the recent encroachment of totalizing genre histories. Soejima Teruto argues that "free jazz" should not be seen as the last subgenre in a historical line and that "genuine jazz has no goal. It's music that keeps changing, permanently" (Soejima 2002:77).
- 18 Ironically, the term *free* here is derived from the 1960s African American counter-cultural music "free jazz," but was quickly negotiated away from this social history to become "free music." Although there has been an active free jazz scene in Japan—Soejima (2002) attempts a detailed history—"free" here implies a broader freedom from all existing idiomatic musical and social structures and was concurrently employed in generic constructions such as "free rock" and "free improvisation." These naming discourses were crucial to the cultural decontextualization of improvisation in the ideological projects of experimental music (Lewis 2004; Novak 2010a).
 - 19 Drugstore was especially crucial in the lives of Hiroshige Jojo and Junko, as the backdrop for the friendship that led to their marriage and the founding of their important Noise group Hijokaidan.
 - 20 The word *maniakku* is borrowed from English and is commonly used to refer to an obsessive fan. Maniakku is slightly more forgiving than the related Japanese term *otaku*, which translates as "geek" or "junkie," and often bears a darker connotation of antisocial fetishism. The coexistence of the English and Japanese terms to describe two different states of fandom in a single media consumption reflects a split in popular cultural identity in Japan, in which media is classified into native and foreign contexts of origin (e.g., *yôgaku* as a term for all foreign music; *hōgaku* for Japanese).
 - 21 Minor, which evolved in the bohemian West Tokyo neighborhood of Kichijoji from a jazu-kissa to a free performance space, was pivotal in providing cross-genre "sound workshops" and starting the careers of underground legends Mukai Chie, Shiraishi Tamio, Kudo Tori, and others during its brief life from 1978 to 1980 (documented on the 1980 compilation *Aikyoku Jinmin Juji Gekijo*) (Cummings 2009).
 - 22 Zenkyôtô was formed as a national federation of student self-government, similar to Students for a Democratic Society on U.S. campuses, which became crucial in the 1968 student uprising (Marotti 2009; Steinhoff 1984). In the 1970s, zenkyôtô had a less formalized agenda and a more fluid membership, organizing public musical and theatrical events as well as mobilizing political action.
 - 23 Rallizes (a.k.a. Les Rallizes Denudes) had a vast influence in the Kansai underground, particularly in their excessively loud stage volume. The group was nationally controversial for reasons beyond their music. Though the band had become famous by playing at the 1969 Barricades A Go-Go concert (accompanied by a

massive student demonstration and occupation of Kyoto University), the group was blacklisted for several years after member Wakabayashi became involved in the actions of the radical communist group Sekigun, or Red Army, and participated in the 1970 Yodo-gô hijacking, when the fringe group infamously seized a jet airliner and took its passengers to North Korea. See Cope (2007) for a brief English-language summary of the event and its relevance for Rallizes.

- 24 Although his music and performance range beyond what is commonly identified as Noise, Haino Keiji's influence, within local histories of Japanese experimental music and in formations of Noise, cannot be understated. Haino's first band, Lost Aaraaf, and his later famed improvised rock band Fushitsusha were heavily influential; he often performs solo shows and collaborates with others as well. Much of Haino's recorded material is available on the Tokyo-based label P.S.F.
- 25 While Inu was among the most well-known punk groups in Kansai, Machida eventually became more famous for his novels, winning the Akutagawa Prize in 2000 for *Kiregire* and the Tanizaki Prize in 2005 for *Kokuhaku*.
- 26 Kosakai Fumio, later Mikawa's partner in Incapacitants, recalled the inspired chaos of seeing Hijokaidan at Keio University in 1981: "Within the first five minutes a fight broke out between the convulsing, rampaging members of the group and the venue's soundmen who were trying to stop them. An organ flew through the air and landed in the audience, smashing into pieces. Jojo Hiroshige suddenly appeared with a fire extinguisher and as he struggled with the venue staff, the extinguisher fell to the ground and began spurting out foam" (Kosakai 2009).
- 27 Mikawa (2009). Mikawa began Incapacitants as a solo recording project immediately following this period and did not perform live for several years.
- 28 In discussing the idea of alchemy, Hiroshige uses the Japanese term *renkinjutsu* for the magical process of transforming objects from one state to another, while the label name is rendered in English.
- 29 *Sore wa chotto chigau ne?* This phrase could also be interpreted as "that's sort of getting it wrong, isn't it?"

4. GENRE NOISE

- 1 Kahn (1999) points out that the Italian futurist Luigi Russolo, inventor of the *intonarumori* Noise instruments, contested Helmholtz's identification of noise sounds with nonperiodic waveforms. Russolo believed it was the continuity of noise that distinguished it from music, as well as the rich timbres of mechanical noises produced in modern life.
- 2 Noise components contribute many of the defining aural cues for the recognition of musical sounds. Without the "attack transients" at the beginning of a tone, listeners cannot identify the difference between one instrument and another (Russo and Warner 2004:49).
- 3 Though the group names itself "Nihilist," its members deny any meaningful as-