A GUIDE TO THE

MUSEUM OF PORTABLE SOUND

PHYSICAL OBJECTS COLLECTION

All object photographs & notes by John Kannenberg.

Items in the Physical Objects Collection are available for view by our visitors.

Please request any physical objects you would like to inspect when arranging your visit.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

DONATIONS ARE WELCOME.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 1

**Sony Walkman WM-11D**

Japan, 1985

Four years after Sony released the original Walkman portable cassette player, they released the WM-11D, a fairly standard model whose only standout feature was its ability to ‘auto-stop’ playing a tape when it was finished. It originally retailed for US$35.

**Please note:**
The Museum’s copy of this object is broken and does not function. Please be aware of this if you request to examine this object in person.

*We apologise for any inconvenience caused.*

PHYSICAL OBJECT 2

**The First Compact Disc**

Philips Classics

Japan, 1980

The first commercially available Compact Disc was released by Philips Classics in 1980. The original recording for the album was made in 1979. In a ceremony to launch the beginning of the manufacture of the disc, musician Claudio Arrau was invited to the factory to press the ‘start’ button on the machinery.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 3

**Sharp Minidisc Recorder**
France, 1990

As the Compact Disc format became the standard for music distribution, usage of other formats such as the LP record and the audio cassette rapidly – but as we have seen recently, temporarily – faded away. In an attempt to fill the gap left by the ‘death’ of the audio cassette, the MiniDisc format was launched in 1992 – a tiny recordable compact disc that was capable of making digital recordings that was also easily re-recordable, unlike the confusing CD-R and CD-RW formats. Only about half the size of a standard CD, the MiniDisc was nonetheless capable of storing the same amount of CD-quality audio. The MiniDisc never caught on with mainstream listening audiences; however, it was briefly embraced by field recordists as an alternative to the bulkier DAT (Digital Audio Tape). Once MP3 players began to capture the market, demand for the MiniDisc slowly faded, until all production of them was shut down for good in 2013.
At 160GB in capacity, the iPod Classic was a way for a listener to carry their entire audio collection with them wherever they went. Unfortunately, as times have changed along with business models, the emphasis on ownership of music has been eroded until streaming audio has replaced it; in order to stream audio, you need a data transfer connection, either WiFi or mobile phone data. This means that portable listening is gradually shifting over to mobile phones, leaving standalone audio devices like the iPod looking a bit old fashioned.

The mobile phone that houses The Museum of Portable Sound also happens to be an object in the Museum’s collection – which means that when you visit the Museum, not only are you holding an entire museum in your hand, but you’re also holding a single object from its collections – frankly, we find this to be a fascinating paradox! Add to this the fact that you can also listen to this iPhone’s electromagnetic field as one of the permanent collection objects (see page 55, Object 3), and things go from paradoxical to downright metaphysical. No need to make a special request to inspect this item, it’s always available whenever you visit The Museum of Portable Sound!
PHYSICAL OBJECT 6

AM/FM Radio
Ukraine, 1988

Kate Yonova-Doing, the donor of this piece to our collections: ‘I wanted to tell you that my 85 year old grandma is donating her radio (made 1988 in Ukraine, still working) to the Museum of Portable Sound. It was her best friend for the last 27 years and is one of my favourite objects at home. With its help my musical culture was formed from classical music to alternative and modern composed etc...[S]he saved it from going to the trash, and I [brought] it to London, [where] she hopes it will find a happy new home in your museum.’

PHYSICAL OBJECT 7

FM3 Buddha Machine v.2
China, 2008

A self-contained portable sound machine, the Buddha Machine was created by the band FM3 and intended as a pre-loaded loop-playing device. Each Buddha Machine came with a built-in speaker, a combined power switch and volume control wheel, and a chip containing nine pre-recorded sound loops created by the band. Our object is the second version of the Machine that was released in 2008, and which added a pitch control in addition to the nine new loops contained on its chip.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 8

Disposable Earbuds
Portugal, 2016

When traveling on the Alfa train line in Portugal, it is possible to obtain a free set of disposable earbuds for listening to the on-board entertainment. Our earbuds were obtained on a train travelling from Lisbon to Algarve.

Please note:
The Museum intends to keep these earbuds mint in package, so if requesting to inspect them, we will not allow you to open the package.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

PHYSICAL OBJECT 9

Olympus Pearlcorder S711
Tokyo, 1990s

Olympus created the Microcassette format in 1969. The format was primarily used for recording voice, and became a standard for dictaphone machines. Its variable speed allowed for recording up to three hours on a single 90-minute microcassette. Later models of the S711 were available in ‘champagne gold’ or blue, and had a slightly more swooping, tapered design. The Museum’s S711 came with an opened microcassette still inside; we have yet to listen to its contents.
The Microcassette has proven to be a stalwart recording format, particularly due to its longstanding use as the primary format of dictation machines. While some Microcassettes are still available for purchase, Olympus and other producers discontinued their manufacture in the hopes that customers would switch to digital recorders.

Please note:
The Museum intends to keep this object mint in package, so if requesting to inspect it, we will not allow you to unwrap it.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Bias in magnetic tape refers to a magnetic signal applied to the tape as it is being recorded; the higher the bias signal, the higher the sound quality, particularly in the high end of the recorded signal. High bias cassette tapes exhibit much less ‘tape hiss’ than normal bias tapes do. These two normal bias tapes were manufactured by Maxell (Shropshire) and Emtec (Germany).

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PHYSICAL OBJECT 12

**Impega CD-RW 650MB**
Switzerland, pre-2010

Swiss office products brand Impega was a significant presence on the European recordable media market before it was acquired by Lyreco, who replaced the Impega branding with its own name in 2010.

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PHYSICAL OBJECT 13

**HHB DAT65 Digital Audio Tape**
Toronto, Date Unknown

Initially released by Sony in 1987, Digital Audio Tape was initially intended to be a replacement for magnetic audio tape. Instead of recording an analogue signal, DAT tape stored its recorded information digitally at CD quality or higher. Its high fidelity was to be its death warrant, as the recording industry helped block DAT’s implementation as a widespread audio tape replacement due to fears of consumers being able to make perfect copies of Compact Discs. DAT tape became a niche product for musicians and field recordists, but its quirky combination of digital recordings with analogue retrieval proved unwieldy upon the widespread adoption of recordable CDs.

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PHYSICAL OBJECT 14

Sony MZ-R30 Minidisc Walkman
Japan, 1996

The Sony MZ-R30 Minidisc Walkman was released in 1996, featuring one major innovation which set it apart from its competition: a vertical-scrolling ‘jog wheel’ which aided in entering track information in the recorder’s tiny LCD interface screen much easier than other Minidisc recorder interfaces. This model also featured an expansion slot for a remote control as well as an extra battery pack (shown in the photo above).

Please note:
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PHYSICAL OBJECT 15

Nature Observing-Recording & Playback Dish
China, 2007

Intended primarily for bird-watching (although that may have been a ruse to get around the morally grey area of selling surveillance toys), this all-in-one handheld spy kit includes a parabolic dish for amplifying distant sounds and a ‘monocular’ for viewing birds and other things one might listen to at a distance. A built-in digital recorder allows the capture of 12 seconds of audio, and a frequency adjustment dial helps to eliminate background hiss. The need to punch a sizable hole through the parabolic dish in order to accommodate the viewfinder might possibly adversely affect the dish’s functionality. Each unit comes with a pair of headphones; unfortunately, the Museum’s specimen does not include the original headphones, but does include the instruction manual and original box.
In 1996, Sony released a designer series of Walkmans in the UK, the YPPY series. Featuring fashionable designs that were intended to change seasonally, the YPPY series was a commercial failure due to its high price point and low quality. The YP-ER20 featured a presciently pre-iMac see-through plastic casing that slid out of a metal protective container for access to the cassette.

Please note:
The Museum’s specimen includes the original box, interior packaging, manuals, and earbuds for this item.

This ultra-portable, miniature musical box was acquired in May 2017 at a tourist shop in Warsaw, Poland. At the time, shops throughout the Warsaw Old Town carried a variety of these tiny musical boxes, each containing one pop culture-related tune. Some of the tunes were classic rock, such as the ‘Led Zeppelin’ model which played a snippet of Stairway to Heaven; popular folk songs like Hava Nagila; and film soundtrack pieces such as Zorba the Greek. The musical box acquired for the Museum of Portable Sound’s collection plays an approximation of the main title theme from the 1977 film Star Wars.
Stereophile Magazine, September 1990.

PHYSICAL OBJECT 18

Stereophile Magazine
United States
September 1990

Donated to our collection by American collector Persephone Jones, the September 1990 issue of Stereophile Magazine is a treasure trove of portable sound advertising and analogue-versus-digital editorial content.

Please note:
This item is particularly fragile, and will fall apart if its spine is opened too far. Patrons are asked to therefore take extra care when handling this item.

Soundlab Lightweight Orange Stereo Headphones
London, March 2017

PHYSICAL OBJECT 19

These headphones, obviously produced as a nostalgia-induced cash-grab soon after old school orange headphones looked vaguely cool again due to their prominent product placement within 2014’s Guardians of the Galaxy film, are, to be blunt, quite simply atrocious – even for the ridiculously low price of £1.99 per pair. We acquired two pair for our collection: one to use, and one to store unopened. The pair that we used failed to function on its first try; immediately upon plugging them in, we were forced to wriggle the plug around inside the jack in order to obtain a signal out of both channels, and even then it only worked sporadically. However, they do function well enough for hipster photoshoots. Do yourself a favour and don’t even bother requesting to see these, seriously, because they don’t even look all that great.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 20

*Say the sound 4c*
A Ladybird Book
Loughborough, UK, 1965

This is the third volume in a set of books written by William Murray intended to teach preschool children the basics of *phonics*: a method for teaching the correspondence between the sounds that make up English words (called *phonemes*) and their written letter counterparts (called *graphemes*). This volume culminates in a bizarre bonfire ritual at a farm wherein an adult couple, Peter and Jane, conscript two small children and a dog named Pat to help in the construction of a massive outdoor fire for the benefit of the adults using tree branches and what appear to be boxes of gelignite. While the fire blazes, the adults force the children and dog to watch, insisting that there will be no danger. Though some of the children ask questions that reveal their obvious discomfort at what appears to be abuse if not outright law-breaking, we are expected to believe that 'All the children like the big fire' (p. 46).

PHYSICAL OBJECT 21

*Kikkerland Mini Karaoke Microphone*
Kikkerland Design, Inc.
New York, USA, 2017

As a piece of artwork, this mini karaoke microphone is exquisite: it is truly miniature, more suitable for use by an action figure than a human being. Its small size does not, however, prohibit it from utopian intentions; as it boldly states on the reverse side of the package, 'Karaoke for the people!' Intended for use with a specific downloadable app, we dread the day that its tethering to such an ephemeral mode of operation causes it to no longer be functional. However, we intend to continue celebrating its status as an aesthetic masterpiece.

Please Note:
As of this writing, this object has not yet been tested by Museum of Portable Sound Laboratories. We therefore can not vouch for its functionality, and thus apologise for any inconvenience caused.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 22

**Sony WM-AF54 Sports Walkman**
Japan, 1989

This fully operational Sports Walkman is, sadly, missing the AM/FM radio tuner plate that indicates the numbers on the radio band, but it is in otherwise pristine condition. This iconic late entry into the cassette-based Walkman line was featured in a scene from the 1990 film *Pretty Woman* – a scene which was also featured in our temporary exhibition *Portable Sound In Cinema 1979-2000* (see page 169).

PHYSICAL OBJECT 23

**Sony 90 Minute High Fidelity Normal Bias Audio Cassette**

With its bright red, gigantic ‘HF’ logo attempting to fool consumers into thinking this cassette was high quality, this otherwise unassuming 90 minute cassette tape produced by Sony is, in fact, of relatively low pedigree in the home audio tape food chain; indeed, its packaging’s bold claim of ‘high fidelity’ is immediately undercut by its disclosure that it is, in fact, Normal Bias – a cassette type known for hissing louder than a Louisana grass snake.
This book, donated by Board Member Matthew Sansom, was produced in Canada for a somewhat arbitrary ‘centennial’ of recorded sound in 1977. It was intended to be shelved with one’s record collection, as it was printed to nearly the same size as a 12” 33 1/3 LP record. The inside front cover and splash page show off the table of contents and the book’s production credits. It also thanks every major record label in the music industry of the time; it appears to be a publication intended to promote the recording industry as a whole, even while several of the major labels have purchased full-page ads inside the book to declare themselves the ‘best’ or the ‘future’ of recorded sound. The book features a number of two-page spreads which highlight many graphic design trends of 1977, and includes a feature on the Canadian inventor of AM radio, Reginald Aubrey Fessenden.
Acquired by the Museum on an outing to Barcelona’s Park Güell, the location of the house of famous Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi, this water whistle mimics a bird call when it is filled with a sufficient amount of water and blown through.

On a trip to Brighton, UK in November 2013, this object was acquired from a wandering bird call salesman. The sound of this bird call can be heard in our Rituals and Events gallery.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 28


The Lenin Museum in Tampere, Finland, is housed in the building where Lenin met Stalin for the first time, and the Soviet Union was born; it is also the only museum dedicated to Lenin in the European Union. Acquired in the Lenin Museum’s gift shop, this tiny music box plays *The Internationale*, a 19th Century anthem of the socialist movement.

PHYSICAL OBJECT 27

Chopin Muzeum Multimedia Access Card
Warszawa, Poland
December 2017

During a visit to Warszawa’s Chopin Muzeum in December 2017, visitors were provided with an access card. These cards were used by museum visitors to swipe sensors placed throughout the galleries, which then activated sounds and videos to accompany the physical objects on display. Cards were to be handed back into a collection box at the end of each visit, not only to recycle the cards but to also collect statistics of multimedia use.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 29

**Vintage Stylophone**
Dubreq Studios, London
1969

Invented in 1967 by Brian Jarvis of Dubreq Studios, London, the Stylophone is a handheld synthesizer that is played with an attached stylus used to complete electrical circuits on the device’s ‘keyboard’, which then produces the corresponding synthesized tones. The device caught on with pop musicians including David Bowie (who can be heard using a stylophone on his song *Space Oddity*, 1969) and Kraftwerk (*Pocket Calculator*, 1981). Now located in Hastings, East Sussex, Dubreq are once again manufacturing the Stylophone and other Stylophone products, wrapped in 50th anniversary packaging. Dubreq reached out to the Museum of Portable Sound and generously donated this original release antique Stylophone in 2018.
Miniature bell acquired in Amsterdam, 2011.

This tiny bell, about the size of a thimble, was acquired in Amsterdam on the front steps of the Temporary Stedelijk Museum in May 2011 during the Do It! Hear It! event, a day of talks and performances throughout the museum devoted to sound and listening. The bells were given to attendees to be used during a collective performance.

Miniature Bell
Do It! Hear It!
Temporary Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam, Netherlands
April 2011

This tiny bell, about the size of a thimble, was acquired in Amsterdam on the front steps of the Temporary Stedelijk Museum in May 2011 during the Do It! Hear It! event, a day of talks and performances throughout the museum devoted to sound and listening. The bells were given to attendees to be used during a collective performance.

Christof Migone’s Record Release is a conceptual art project that involves the artist giving away enough industrial vinyl pellets to equal the amount that are usually melted down to create a single 12” LP record. The artist gives each pellet (seen above next to a British pound coin for scale) to a recipient along with a certificate of authenticity. The reverse of the certificate (see below) provides details and context about the project.

Christof Migone
Record Release (2012, no. 6007)
Hyde Park, London
July 2018

Sound artist Christof Migone's Record Release is a conceptual art project that involves the artist giving away enough industrial vinyl pellets to equal the amount that are usually melted down to create a single 12” LP record. The artist gives each pellet (seen above next to a British pound coin for scale) to a recipient along with a certificate of authenticity. The reverse of the certificate (see below) provides details and context about the project.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 32

**Kenotaphion 2CD set**
Charrm/Locus+, Newcastle, UK 2001

Compiled by artist Jonty Semper, Kenotaphion is a 2-CD release of every Armistice Day and Remembrance Day two-minute silence broadcast by the BBC from the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London each year from 1929–2000. The two minutes of silence is a tradition followed throughout the British Commonwealth, where two minutes of silence is observed on the 11th hour of the 11th day of November to remember those who fought and died in World War I (which originally inspired the ritual), World War II, and other armed conflicts. The silences are rarely silent, as they take place in the heart of London, and the recordings often include sounds of traffic, rain, thunder, coughing, and occasionally the voice of a BBC commentator who narrates the silence.

PHYSICAL OBJECT 33

**Vintage Stylophone Beatbox**
Dubreq Studios, Sussex 2003

Although Dubreq, the company that produced the original Stylophone, ceased operation in the early 1980s, the son of the original owner resurrected the company in 2003. One of the new products they produced was the Stylophone Beatbox, a pocket drum machine with a circular keyboard, played with a stylus much like the original Stylophone. The Beatbox can capture and play loops of sequences input on its keyboard, and also includes an input jack to allow beats to be constructed over existing pieces of music. Dubreq once again donated this original Beatbox, housed in new packaging, to the Museum of Portable Sound in 2018.
PHYSICAL OBJECT 34

VF141 Christian Marclay Live 3
White Cube, The Vinyl Factory
London, UK
February 2015

This single-sided vinyl record was produced as part of artist Christian Marclay’s 2015 solo exhibition at the White Cube gallery in Bermondsey, London. It contains two live recordings of pieces performed at the White Cube: Composition by John Butcher (feedbacking glasses, violin, cello, clarinets, percussion) and Good Liquor Caused my Heart for to Sing (performed by John Butcher and the London Sinfonietta on Sunday 1 February 2015). The pieces were commissioned by Marclay, and the record was produced and manufactured inside the White Cube by the Vinyl Factory, whose portable record manufacturing shop remained inside the White Cube for the duration of the exhibition. This particular LP was given to our Director and Chief Curator in exchange for his live performances of two Fluxus scores by Yoko Ono and Mieko Shiomi, which took place in the gallery as part of Marclay’s exhibition.

PHYSICAL OBJECT 35

Susan Philipsz
You Are Here monograph
Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, Köln
2014

You Are Not Alone documents ten sound installations by Susan Philipsz, the first artist working with sound to win the prestigious Turner Prize in 2010. The book presents research materials, song lyrics, essays, and photographic documentation of the ten installations, which were located in ten distinct geographical regions. This copy was acquired by the Museum at a discount book sale on the ground floor of Central Saint Martins, an art college in London.