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## Coming Event: Squeaks on a Chalkboard

The highlight of the 162nd Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America, in San Diego, will almost certainly be the session about the psychoacoustics of chalkboard squeaking. It builds on the work of 2006 Ig Nobel Prize (in acoustics) winners D. Lynn Halpern, Randolph Blake and James Hillenbrand, who in 1986 published the study "Psychoacoustics of a Chilling Sound." The new session is:



### Psychoacoustics of chalkboard squeaking

**Session:** Thursday Afternoon, Nov 03, Time: 3:15

**Authors:** Christoph Reuter (Musicological Inst., Univ. of Vienna, Vienna, Austria) and Michael Oehler (Univ. of Cologne, Cologne, Germany)

**Abstract:** "At least since 1975 the "pleasantness" of a sound is discussed from many different angles (Ely 1975; Aures 1984; Halpern et al. 1986; Vaschillo 2003; Neumann & Waters 2006; Cox 2008), but often chalkboard squeaking or scratching a chalkboard with finger nails tops the list of unpleasant sounds. The aim of the presented study is to detect specific parts of the sounds that make chalkboard squeaking particularly unpleasant... Basically the study is a replication of Halpern et al. (1986), whose methods were extended by several sophisticated sound analysis and re-synthesis techniques and the measurement of some electro-physiological parameters (heart rate and skin resistance) during listening.... Almost all stimuli were rated more unpleasant if the subjects knew about the nature of the sounds."

(Thanks to investigator Mark Hurst for alerting us to the meeting.)

BONUS: *Science Now* reports about this research:

...The ratings also changed depending on what the listeners thought the sounds were. If they thought a sound came from a musical composition, they rated it as less unpleasant than if they knew it actually was fingernails on a chalkboard. But their skin conductivity changed consistently even when they thought the chalkboard sound was from music and rated it as less unpleasant....

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The 2011 Ceremony

Posted by Marc Abrahams on Monday, October 31st, 2011 at 12:02 am under Arts and science, Ig Nobel, News about research.