Noise Making: The Rise of the Noisician in Malaysia

Muhamad Hafifi bin Mokhtar
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris
e-mail: hafififmsp@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper considers the existence, culture and politics of an emergent Malaysian 'Noise Scene' through an exploration of the history of Noise in the twentieth century both in Malaysia and beyond, the views of several local practitioners, the author's own experience of the noise scene, and a survey of Noise supporters to expand our understanding in ways that reflect the Malaysian Noise Scene. Prepared by a practicing 'Noisician', an autoethnographic or 'insider-outsider' stance is used in searching for answers to the research questions. The focus of this paper is on the perspectives, practice, politics and relationship to Malaysian culture of the local performers and their supporters. In preparing this research, the author made several assumptions about the current Noise Scene, but found that these were challenged by the results, with the outcomes shedding new knowledge for the author himself.

Keywords Noise, music philosophy, auto-ethnographic, music performance, music and society

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this paper is to highlight the existence, culture and politics of the 'Noise Scene' by exploring the history of noise in the twentieth century in both Malaysia and the world, the views of several local practitioners, the author's own experience of the Noise scene, and a survey of Noise supporters to expand our understanding in ways that reflect the Malaysian Noise Scene.

In Malaysia, Noise performers (noisicians) are currently all amateur performers - that is they do not perform daily or derive their living from performance. Noisicians use a wide variety of individual techniques in their performances and this paper describes some of the techniques of the performers. Also, a comparison to the Noise scene in countries such as Japan is drawn.

In undertaking this research, the author seeks to: (i) investigate the Malaysian Noise Scene; (ii) observe the artists involved in the Malaysian Noise Scene; (iii) evaluate the culture of the Malaysian Noise Scene; and (iv) evaluate the politics of the Malaysian Noise Scene.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, several stances were used to observe Noise – as performer, audience member and researcher. These stances, 'outsider' and 'insider' researcher, offer a range of answers and understandings for the research. The research, therefore, moves between an auto-ethnographic mode and other stances indicated within the text by the use of the third and first person respectively. Dwyer and Buckle (2009), explained the 'insider' and the 'outsider':

> Sometimes I wrote myself into my research, and other times I did not ... I sometimes shared experiences, opinions, and perspectives with my participants, and at other times I did not ... As a qualitative researcher I do not think being an insider makes me a better or worse researcher; it just makes me a different type of researcher ... issue of the researcher as an outsider or an insider to the group studied is an important one ... because they find themselves studying a group to which they are not a member ... my membership status in relation to the participants did not seem to affect the interviews negatively, it raised an important point that must be considered in all research endeavours with participants ... [in] group based on shared experience, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and so on (p.56, 57).

The advantage provided by multiple perspectives in this research is that triangulating the stances with other research instruments would strengthen the analysis of the data and draw meaningful conclusions. As Jensen (2011) points out:

> The status of the social researcher as 'outsider' and 'insider' is neither static nor one dimensional ... As a social researcher you may initially be an outsider to a particular group, but as you spend more time with them, you become more of an insider (p.150).

To fulfil the research objectives, multiple research instruments have been incorporated, such as interviews, survey, observation/experience and the author's Noise art practice.

INTERVIEWS AND SURVEY

Structured interviews allow a focus on a selected group of Malaysian Noise performers. This process was preferred because structured-interviews offer the ability to cover a lot of ground regarding the performers' practices. These questions survey the performer's background, their views on their art, their performing methods, their reasons for using Noise as a medium, and their political, social or cultural views. The practice of arts and research has similar superficial elements at a process level. Art and Arts practices are intricate processes with their own intrinsic validation, often including the specific outcome of some type of artefact. Research has different prerogatives and validations, as Strand (1998), cited in Schippers and Flenady (2010), in Caduff, Siegenthaler and Walchli (2010) observes:

> ... Two concepts are common to the definitions of research [...] firstly; they all describe research as an "original investigation". Secondly, it must explicitly aim to increase humanity's "stock of knowledge". [The] research process which must be conducted in conjunction with others such as summary, analysis and reflection (p. 80-82).

An arts practice, without significant and triangulated reflection, cannot be validly constructed as research. In conducting the research component of this project, the author has ensured there is exterior reflection as defined by Schippers and Flenady. In this section, the data that had been collected from the survey, interviews and the author's own observations and personal experience are discussed.

The survey is in two parts. Part A (five questions) considers the respondent's demography. Part B (15 questions) explores their view of the Noise scene in Malaysia. The survey questions were sent to a total of 30 respondents. Twenty responses were received, and results are analysed and interpreted in the Noise Scene in Malaysia below.

OBSERVATION/EXPERIENCE

Observations pertaining to the experiences of Noisicians and audiences are based on the author's personal experience of Noise performances and the culture of the Noise Scene where the author has been present, and through informal conversations at these performances. This experience has helped develop an understanding of the philosophy and attitude of the performers and listeners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the background to the concepts, techniques and history which have led to the existence of this musical genre, and will contextualise Noise as a musical art form. In doing so it asks: what is noise?; seeks an explanation of noise in music; noise performance techniques are placed in a wider musical context; and finally the author explores the international Noise Music Scene.The philosophical meanings of Noise including some definitions and perspectives on its aesthetic are part of this review. The role of noise in music and music in noise considers musical aspects of noise, and its usage in twentieth century music. Aspects of making and performing noise, including tools and techniques are discussed, alongside differing views of Noise. Finally, the author considers noise performance within and beyond Malaysia, specifically considering the 'Japan – noise' phenomena.

Music, as described by Merriam (1964), is defined by its temporal quality, and may be categorised into 10 types of functions. Among these are to provide a medium for emotional expression and evoke aesthetic gratification. Noise music emotionally affects both listener and performers placing Noise performance as a musical genre.

WHAT IS NOISE?

Sound is a type of wave that changes according to the air pressure occurring within the frequency range from 20 Hz to 20 kHz, which is the usual human perceptible range. In addition to frequency, there are other characteristics to sound that permit the detection of dynamic and timbre qualities of sound. Noise is a type of sound, being generated when frequencies which are not compatible with each other are grouped, resulting in a sound that is unfocussed in pitch (Berg & Stork, 2005). Noise emerges from four types of production: vibration of surfaces, aerodynamic, or hydrodynamic sources, and the acceleration of objects. A vibrating surface sets the air around it in motion, thereby becoming the means of generating the noise (Anderson & Bratos-Anderson, 1993). Noise is, therefore, shown to be a type of sound containing musical elements such as pitch, dynamic and timbre. It is further defined by frequencies colliding with each other, creating strong dissonance. The author has identified sources of noise as created by surface vibrations, by disturbance in air-flow, by the disturbance in the flow of liquid and the movements of an object. This is a scientific description of noise. However, noise is sometimes seen as something else, or from different perspectives.

PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF NOISE

As stated in the previous section, Noise can be described scientifically and with a variety of meanings. Understanding its philosophical and aesthetic qualities help place Noise in an expressive paradigm.
Noise can be accepted and re-imagined as time. Hegarty (2012) writes:

> "As noise is not autonomous, but occurs through being perceived, defined, legislated for and against ... it has led to the philosophical insight about its working ... not just 'there' in space, it is also 'there' in time (p.15)".

Hegarty (2012) also observes that "Noise does not disrupt clock time; it brings clock time out as in its full reality" (Hegarty, 2012, p.15). Hegarty expands this argument noting that the bond between noise and time is duration. Philosophically, this is because duration also depends on listeners' reactions to certain situations that dictate this perception of how fast or slow time passes. This perception is determined not only by the sound, but in the material quality of the sound (Hegarty, 2012). Massumi observes

> 'Noise' may also be associated with art and language … One of it is understanding noise as an 'anti-signal'. Signals are structured and come with clarity ... noise ... is understood to be as disorganised and unstructured as possible ... philosophically, noise may carry the opposite of the meaning of signals that we usually understand ... a disturbance and interference that originates outside the signals but intercepts and disturbs them ... [A] language or signals: a cipher and a way of sending encoded versions of signals (Massumi, 2012, p.40).

Noise is also recognised as being able to induce feelings and emotions a listener. This gives 'noise' an artistic, expressive potential initially articulated by Luigi Russolo in 1913, a potential prominently exploited in some modern, Western art, often associated with the portrayal of fear. Noise as a fear-inducing medium is observed by Lockwood (2012): 'We may conceive of noise in terms of epidemiology and affective contagion. A viral fear effect activated by sound waves bypasses cognitive functions, prompting visceral and chemical reactions' (p.74). Noise can also be associated with an innovative paradigm. Malaspina (2012) states, "the analogy between noise, as a musical strategy, and the phenomenal of noise in other discipline, appears to trigger the idea of a paradigm of innovation" (p.58).

In this context, noise is also expected to become the base of the idea of artistic innovation. According to Anderson and Bratos (1993), change can be found in 'noise' (change of paradigm) therefore it is continually dynamic – with dissonant interactions and outcomes from the clash of timbre and pitch. Noise is also continually evolutionary, particularly in its interactions between cultures, and the methodical discipline of physical science. But, important within this paper is the notion of noise as a paradigm being paired with the influence of innovative principles (Malaspina, 2012).

NOISE IN MUSIC / MUSIC IN NOISE – A BRIEF HISTORY

The Art of Noises, Luigi Russolo (1913) is a manifesto which argues that the evolution of music should include aspects reflecting the industrial environment dominating contemporary Western Europe. To achieve this, Russolo insisted that the noisy environments of machines and industries be included within music using sound qualities that reflect the industrial age. Later in the twentieth century, progressive composers, particularly John Cage, adopted Russolo's principles. Cage, employed electroacoustic and acousmatic music using synthesisers and radios to imitate the sound of the environmental noises, while Russolo created devices and was more interested by industrial sounds of the machineries. Cage incorporated twentieth century industrial inventions that were available to him, such as radios as tone generators in his works such as *Imaginary Landscape for 12 Radios* (1951). In the early 1950s, the advent of the tape recorder made it possible for composers to use noise as Russolo envisioned. The *Musique concrete* composers produced noise by recording ordinary sounds then transforming them using techniques including splitting, accelerating, overturning and looping the recorded sounds. Today, performers including *Throbbing Gristle*, fuse rock with industrial sounds by manipulating the sound of machines such as power tools in the album *Abandoned Factory* (1991). Japanese artist *Toshiya Tsunoda* recorded the noise of hollow and lifeless materials by the vibrations that pass through piezoelectric material on its surface. Such approaches were predicted by Russolo who argued that the world has no silence due to industrial and technological advances, now made real by Tsunoda in his works (Christensen, 2009).

Today, composers are free to compose with any elements that they want including previously unaccepted and unwelcome sounds into music, creating new

aesthetic values. Such Noise appears in a composition as a result of electronically generated environmental sounds such as thunder, hisses and blips. Noise is also produced by, but not limited to, various techniques of vocal manipulation, described by Kamien (2011) as where composers: use a … variety of sounds … including many that were once considered undesirable noise. … [They achieve] what Edgard Varese called "the liberation of sound"... the right to make music with any and all sounds (Kamien, 2011, p.545).

Historically, Noise music is divided into the eras 1910s to 1960s, when Noise was recognised and used aesthetically. Toward the end of this first era, from the 1950s to the 1960s, Noise was solidified through the emergence of *electroacoustic* music. The late 1960s to 1970s brought a new era in Noise music with the use of conventional instruments, such as guitar, and emergent instruments such as electronic oscillators being used to create Noise. Between the late 1970s to early 1980s, Noise music became a movement which reflected the musical expression and revolt against the musical norms of society. This era was also when the industrial music initiated by *Throbbing Gristle* emerged (Tham, 2013, p.257).

In describing the aesthetic development of Noise, performers from different disciplines of noise have been identified. Such people are among the earliest pioneers in this art and belong to a scene which groups them with similar artists and audiences who share their views and interests.

NOISE AS ART IN JAPAN AND MALAYSIA

Any discussion of Noise Music should describe the artists involved in the movement or 'scene', and characteristics of their supporters or fans. This is important since a 'scene' involves the symbiotic elements between the artists and their audiences.

Prominent performers in Japan include *Merzbow, Hijokaidan*, *Incapacitants* and *Masonna*. As early as the 1970s, recordings of Noise were found in the works of *Masayuki Takayanagi* particularly the piece entitled *Les Rallizes Desnudes* (1975). Noise music in Japan evolved as a genre during the 1990s with the rise of performers who approached noise performance with different disciplines and techniques. This made the noise scene in Japan appear to involve any music which included sound from any origin. Importantly for this study, artists such as *Keiji Haino* and *Chie Mukai* have also used traditional Japanese music as a noise source (Hegarty, 2007, p.133).

Japanese performers incorporated source material such as 'metallic sounds', combined with electronic and analogue effects, pedals, samplers, and playback devices. Contrary to the conventional function providing sound effects in conventional music, in Noise, their use may be interpreted as a gestural action, and subsequently become identifiable characteristics of what may be called a 'Japan-Noise' Scene. This peaked in the 1990s and now includes residual, original sounds. Japanese Noise music is sometimes structured, yet at other times, flexible, with no musical structures at all, except perhaps for that achieved by controlling high-level amplitude. Contrary to music that offers calm, noise creates a basis for sound to

exist, and will be discussed in the (ii) philosophical meaning of noise (Hegarty, 2007, p.134).

As a Noisician, my own and other performances have led me to understand that Noise is usually created in one of three ways: analogue; digital; or a combination of both. Analogue techniques normally exploit the properties of effects pedals such as distortion, overdrive, flanger, reverb, amongst others, in performing Noise. The digital approach uses digital electronic instruments such as synthesiser and software, but this approach is yet to be experienced by me. The final approach is the combination of using both analogue and digital techniques. This is usually done by using pedals, synthesisers and digital samplers. The effects pedal choices made in my performances incorporate distortion and feed-back as the principal means of manipulating the sounds for noise. I have always been mesmerised by noise and its expressive potential. From my own journals:

> My first experience of noise, musically, is from the feedback that I created when approaching a guitar amplifier with the pickup facing the speaker in the amplifier. The magnetic pickup and the magnet in the speaker had produced the feed-backing noise, which is a nuisance and should be avoided. When I grow in age and musically, the feedback noise of the guitar had been prevalence in the music that I listened to (10 July, 2015).

From there, I realised that noise, which was initially unwanted by me at first, could be used in aesthetic ways in the creation of music. As Hegarty (2007) wrote:

> Noise is not the same as noises. Noises are sound until further qualified (e.g. as unpleasant noises, loud noises, and so on), but noise is already that qualification; it is already a judgement that noise is occurring (p.15).

I continued delving deeper, and discovered a name, John Cage. Inspired by the discovery of Cage's work and his philosophy on music:

> I had discovered Cage from 20th century Western music class. I had realised the avant-garde movement that had been associated with him is being carry out by people that think alike. I had read his interview in Duckworth (1999) on his inspiration on writing noise as a musical element (10 July, 2015).

I was particularly interested in an interview where Cage explains his experience and inspiration when using noise.

> ... He (Galka Scheyer) had started me on a path of exploration of the world around me which has never been stopped - of hitting and scratching and scraping and rubbing everything, with anything I can get my hands on...(Cage, in Duckworth, 1999).

Gradually, I become more and more interested in the Noise performances of Merzbow. His style of music and that of his countrymen have been dubbed 'Japan-Noise' (Hegarty, 2007). I observed:

> … in the past five years, I had realised that there is a movement of performers creating noise, as an art form, not necessarily in a 'musical method'. These performers seem to depend on the use of non-musical 'instruments'. Performers, such as *Merzbow*, a Japanese performer, a pseudonym for Masami Akita, depend heavily on the use of electronics – mixers, analogue synthesizers and guitar pedals. This combination of tools had created feedback and wall of noise and includes fine manipulations of Noise (15 July, 2015).

My own interest continued to develop, and I came to realise that, in addition to international noise performance, noise performances also occurred in Malaysia. In my journal I note:

> During my studying years as an undergraduate, I had attended several small shows, or gigs. From a few of these gigs, I had watched a similar performance of controlled noise manipulation by the use of guitar, specifically the manipulation of pickup, and an array of pedals. This performer calls himself *Jerk Kerouac*, a word play from Jack Kerouac. During those years, I was fascinated by his method but not yet understanding the aesthetic underpinning of the performances. His performances demonstrated the reality that there were similar performers, especially when I saw a flyer and videos for a show in *Findars*, a performing arts centre in Kuala Lumpur where Jerk Kerouac had performed. From this, I realised that Noise is alive and being performed in Malaysia. There are a number of regional shows organised in Ipoh, Perak. The performers are usually touring experimental Noisicians, with the exception of *Krosot*, a duo with one of them whom lives near Ipoh, and *Space Gambus Experiment*, a collective with no permanent members who live around Ipoh (20 July, 2015).

These revelations raised questions to which I felt I had to find answers. These questions became a motivation for writing this paper as:

> I thought to myself, is there really a scene for Noise performers in Malaysia? Are there more performers such as *Jerk Kerouac*, *Space Gambus Experiment* and *Krosot*? Are they accepted in the local music circuits? (20 July, 2015).

THE NOISE SCENE IN MALAYSIA

Interviews

The author sent interview questions to three recognised Malaysian Noisicians known by their stage names as: Jerk Kerouac (Azzief) and Krosot (Mack) and Neuphoric Euphoria. Responses were received from only two of these noisicians: Jerk Kerouac (Azzief) and Krosot (Mack). Eight questions were divided into four categories:

1. Main Argument
    i)   Do you believe there is a noise scene in Malaysia?

2.   Performers Background
      i)   How did you start as a performer of Noise?
      ii)   What had influenced you into performing Noise?

3.   Methods
      i)   What are the methods and material that you had influenced you in
              any way? Why?

4.   Philosophical
      i)   Do you yourself with specific arts or political movements?
      ii)   What do you think you noise represents?
      iii)   What do you want to express through your music?

Main Argument: Do you believe there is a Noise scene in Malaysia?

The answer to this question would help to verify the existence of a Noise scene in Malaysia. The performers responded differently, yet there is a similarity between their answers. Jerk Kerouac (Azzief) said that he believed there is 'scene' but it is not focused on Noise itself. He explained that:

> There is, to some extent. Maybe not a noise scene *per se*, but there's definitely an avant-garde and experimental music fringe, mostly centered around FINDARS and events such as the KL Experimental Film, Video & Music Festival. There admittedly isn't a huge amount of performers, with most gigs featuring a regular cast of performers and even audience. Occasionally some shows draw relatively big crowds of maybe 30 to 40 people, although attendances, from my experience, are often below 20, with single-digit attendances not uncommon. It's not big, not necessarily vibrant, but it is there. Whether this is a problem of promotion, appeal or just a surfeit of leisure and entertainment choices in the Klang Valley/Malaysia, I'm not sure (Azzief, pers. comm., 17 August, 2015).

Mack of *Krosot* believes there is a Noise movement in the country. Although, defining it as a scene, should be left to the audience. In his own words:

> It gets back to how/what you define as 'scene'. Personally, I do believe there's a noise movement here in Malaysia. It was small but getting bigger proven by numbers of shows getting organised and seeing how touring band had put one or two local venue in their tour list (Mack, pers. comm., 22 August, 2015).

These responses suggest there is a Noise movement in Malaysia as a part of a larger experimental music scene or a movement that may or not have its own scene. Both however agree on one thing: Noise is alive and is being performed in Malaysia.

Performers' Background

To understand the inspiration that drew these performers into Noise performance and their musical philosophy in performance, interviews were conducted, including questions regarding the background of the performers.

Azzief said that he started doing Noise in 2000, but not the harsh noise for which he later became known. Reflecting on his early years, "I started out just randomly clicking and making some crazy noise-gabber-grind stuff in software for a year or so, which is I guess where it all started" (Azzief, pers. comm., 17 August, 2015). He also explained that he made Noise having being inspired by Japanese harsh Noise performers. He continued:

> I continued to make noise/noisy electronic music off and on from then until now, with a number of less-noisy diversions (including trying my hand at trance music). My first start at "proper" noise in the Japanese harsh noise style was probably in late 2008 or sometime in 2009; I can't remember clearly now (Azzief, pers. comm., 17 August, 2015).

Mack's response to this question was that he began making Noise as early as 1996 or 1997, when he was first exposed to the genre via a compilation in the form of audio cassette. In explaining his earlier years, he had said:

> With help from a computer and software, I manipulated Noise. It was in the early days, later, with the joining force of my buddy, Maddy, we mostly use pedal and some homemade equipments (Mack, pers. comm, 22 August, 2015).

Both performers are self-taught and the responses indicate that they both began their performance practice using 'trial and error' processes before achieving the Noise that they wanted.

a)   What influenced you to perform Noise?

This question explores influences that inspired the performers. Azzief responded that as a Noise performer, he was inspired by different genres of music; by listening to other music, he became more receptive to Noise and other noisy music. However, his real motivation is the enjoyment in performance. He wrote:

> My exposure to digital hardcore, metal and punk definitely made me receptive to noise and noisy music. I can't say whether there's any other thing that influenced me to make noise other than the fact that I enjoy noise and wanted to get in on the noise action that everyone was doing. (Azzief, pers. comm., 17 August, 2015)

Mack offers a simpler explanation about the inspiration that led him to become a Noise performer. His group, *Krosot,* in his own words, "People around us inspired the most" (Mack, pers. comm., 22 August, 2015). The inspiration and influence for both musicians were borderless. Azzief began making Noise because he was influenced by other acts Other, such as Mack and Krosot started because of their societal influences. This corresponds to my own performance experience, being

influenced by artists such as *Merzbow* and *Jerk Kerouac*. Nevertheless, other genres and artists such as Isis, Infest, and Minor Threat also influenced me. My performance practice is usually a reflection of everyday situations that inspires me to shape my Noise in a specific way.

Methods used in performances

In this category, the questions were shaped to delve into the way Noise performers created their art.

a) What are the methods and materials that you used in your arts?
b) Can you give examples of other performers who influenced you in any way? Why?

Both performers explained that to some extent they self-built their own equipment. Both also sometime use both analogue and digital equipment in their Noise performances. Azzief said:

> I tend to stick to "analogue" methods of making noise. Contact microphones (piezo elements), often attached to self-made shaker boxes (Hammond project enclosures filled with objects such as ball bearings and a bullet casing) and general metal junk. Almost always run through a distortion pedal or two and some modulation effects, maybe delay or reverb, sometimes a ring modulator, sometimes an envelope filter. I also sometimes use synths, often a Flower Electronics Little Boy Blue. For more drone-based work I often combine the Little Boy Blue with an Arturia Microbrute monosynth. And almost everything I've recorded over the past two years or so is recorded on a Tascam four-track tape recorder for maximum tape scuzz (Azzief, pers.comm.,17 August, 2015).

Mack responded that:

> … during the earlier formation, we mostly use computer and software, but now days, mainly pedal and some homemade equipment. We try to minimize the use of pedal, instead, try to build our own equipment. It was a painstaking but we do our best. (Mack, pers. comm., 22 August, 2015)

From these answers, we may conclude that both performers use both analogue and digital media to create and recreate their desired Noise, and that both artists build their own equipment. The answer to the second question would help to explain their musical influences, and would help to discover whether they copied or borrowed ideas from other Noisicians. Mack says his music is not consciously influenced by other Noisicians. Azzief's response confirmed my long held thought, that he is influenced by acts from the Japanese Noise scene. He also mentioned a number of performers from the American Noise scene. He said:

> (I am influenced by) The usual big Japanese names: Merzbow, Incapacitants, Masonna, K2, Monde Bruits… why? Because these guys are

the "canon" of Noise, so to speak, and almost everyone starts there. I'm also pretty influenced by the dirtier, cassette-fidelity sounds of American harsh noise artists such as Macronympha, OVMN and so on, as well as the more recent Swedish noise/power electronics scene (Azzief, interview, 17 August, 2015).

Azzief confirmed that the Japanese Noise scene, with a mixture of American Noise scene and other musical genre, influences him. While *Krosot*'s influences were not explicitly revealed, their style is suggestive of the Japanese Noise scene, with a distinctive droning Noise characterising their music.

Philosophies

Their answers would relate these performers to any philosophical ethos or understanding of the performers. There were three questions being asked in this category, each intended to delve into the performers' philosophy.

i)   Do you associate yourself with specific arts or political movements?

Azzief answered that he does not associate with any movements by choice and slowly disengaged with the arts or political movements. He explained that he does not have a specific message for his noise, and does not bother to include his arts within any particular movement. In his own words, he explained:

... since I don't really have a message with my noise, why bother associating myself/my work with a movement anyway? If it ends up linked to something, so be it, but I don't clamor to do it myself (Azzief, pers. comm., 17 August, 2015).

Krosot do not consciously associate their art with any movement, arts or politics. In Mack's words, "I just do what I want to do and I don't associate myself with any art or political movement" (Mack, pers.com, 22 August, 2015). They chose to stay away from any arts or political movements for their own reasons due to disdain and desertion. As a performer, I view Noise as a form of protest, which uses unwanted sounds to create something, although the outcome is not pretty or achieving catharsis values. It is a protest against the 'perfect' music or mass obsession on technicality or difficulty of a piece.

ii)   What do you think your noise represents?

The intention of this question, is to see discover if the musicians had answers regarding the semiotics of their noise. Both had interesting answers that are relevant and could be related, in the author's opinion, to other music. Mack observed that their Noise is a representation of their opinions. When being asked what their opinion is, he explained that:

> In our noise, we tend to express ourselves. It is our expression towards certain things. *(Author: Is it self-expression?)* It is more towards collective expression since *Krosot* is a duo that manipulates the instruments to create noise (Mack, pers.comm., 22 August, 2015).

Azzief explained that he does not view his Noise semantically as a representation. He told the author that his art is a form of his love and interest. In his own words, "… nothing much, just the worship of loud sound, distortion pedals and the textural and granular qualities of static and amplified and distorted objects" (Azzief, interview, 17 August, 2015).

Both answers correspond to other musicians' responses. For example, an acquaintance of the author said that he played traditional music because of his love of that music, rather than the form of ritualistic practice people normally associated with traditional music.

iii)   What do you want to express through your music?

This question aims to determine if the performers wish to convey messages through their Noise. Both artists seemed to dislike the idea of expressing or associating other meanings to their Noise. Mack said it is a form of self-expression; a personal view presented to listeners. Whether a listener relates to it or not, is a matter of opinion. It is similar for Azzief, who asserts that his noise portrays:

> Nothing much. Maybe anger and frustration, to some extent, as well as some sort of existential angst, but the thing about noise, to me, is that it's a form of music that is exclusive, that doesn't try and bring listeners in, that doesn't welcome listeners. So I don't try and express anything beyond what I said in the answer to the previous question: pure worship of loud sound and the granular texture of noise. No statement, no meaning. Just noise. (Azzief, pers. com., 17 August, 2015)

Both of these performers associate their Noise with their views and expressions. As a performer, the author tries to shape the Noise according to his preference and emotion.

SURVEY

Part A

The first question asks the age range of the respondents (Table 1). The responses show that listeners of Noise are drawn mostly from the group aged 30 and above, with a few from different age groups. This can be useful in keeping track of the audiences of the Malaysian Noise scene.

Table 1 Correspondents' Response for Question 1

Age	Number of Answers	Percentage
18 – 20	0	0
21 – 23	0	0
24 – 26	4	20
26 – 29	3	15
30 and above	13	65

The next question asks the respondents' locality in order to track whether there is a concentration of noise enthusiasts in certain locations (Table 2). It shows that most respondents came from, or live in the Central Zone. This is not surprising as most Noise shows are centred and focused in the Central Zone. Nevertheless, there is still a sizeable audience in other zones attending live performances; it can be said that interest in Noise is not based on territorial boundaries.

Table 2 Correspondents' Responses for Question 2

Locality	Number of Answers	Percentage
Northern Zone (Kedah, Perlis)	1	5
West Zone (Pulau Pinang, Perak)	2	10
East Coast Zone (Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang)	3	15
Central Zone (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Putrajaya)	13	65
Southern Zone (Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor)	0	0
Eastern Zone (Sabah, Sarawak)	1	5

The third question is about political views. The majority of the respondents hold anarchy as their political view. The number of respondents who hate politics is almost equal to those who adopt anarchist views. However, no respondents answered that they are pro-government (see Table 3). This indicates that the audience is not shaped by a common political view.

Table 3 Correspondents' Responses for Question 3

Political Views	Number of Answers	Percentage
Never think of it	1	5
Anarchist	9	45
Pro-Government	0	0
Pro-Opposition	2	10
Hate Politics	8	40

There is a common perception that Noise performance is associated with the use of both illicit and licit recreational drugs. The next questions explore if there is alink between Noise with such usage (Table 4 & 5); in order to evaluate whether alcohol and illicit drugs are common in the scene and accepted by the listeners as a culture in the scene. Though present, it cannot be defined as a dominant presence in Noise scenes – either within audience or performers.

Table 4 Correspondents' Responses for Question 4

Consumed Alcohol	Number of Answers	Percentage
Yes	7	35
No	13	65

Table 5 Correspondents' Responses for Question 5

Consumed Drugs	Number of Answers	Percentage
Yes	5	25
No	15	75

The answers in Part A demonstrate that Noise listeners are people from various backgrounds, with largely non-establishment political views, but are not significant users of drugs – either licit and illicit.

Part B

In this section, respondents' views were sought on the Noise scene, and culture. In this section, questions were answered using a Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The first question asked whether the respondents agree that there is a 'Noise scene' in Malaysia. The response validates the claim made by the author regarding a Malaysian 'Noise scene' (see Table 6). The percentage of respondents who agreed was 80% ('Strongly Agree' and 'Agree') that there is a Noise scene in Malaysia. However, the survey only asks if they are agreeing with the statement and not about their personal views of what constitutes a Noise scene.

Table 6 Correspondents' Responses for Question 1

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	4	20
4	7	35
5	9	45

Question two is consistent with the author's view that Malaysian noise performers produce recordings of their performances (see Table 7). From the survey, 50% answered 'Strongly Agree' with the statement; 40% 'Agree' and 10 % were not sure. Considering a vast number of respondents answered 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' indicated that in the Malaysian Noise scene the performers produced recorded materials as CDs MP3s and videos.

Table 7 Correspondents' Responses for Question 2

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	2	10
4	8	40
5	10	50

Question three considers listeners' attendance at live performances. It explores if local noise performers attract noise enthusiasts to their shows (see Table 8). Seventy per cent of the respondents 'Strongly Agree' that they had seen a Noise performance live; 25% of the respondents answered 'Agree' and 5% answered 'Not Sure'. The responses allow one to conclude that Noise music is performed in Malaysia, and validating its existence.

Table 8 Correspondents' Responses for Question 3

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	1	5
4	5	25
5	14	70

Questions four and five explore local support for Malaysian noise performers through purchases of recordings and if there are different purchasing trends between the international (Table 9) and local performers (Table 10). The answers suggest that there is little difference between local and international recordings. The origin of recordings bought in Malaysia does not show a specific preference for local or international artists. The responses also indicate there are

about equal numbers of supporters who listen to Noise without purchasing recordings from Noise performers.

Table 9 Correspondents' Responses for Question 4

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	2	10
3	0	0
4	8	40
5	10	50

Table 10 Correspondents' Responses for Question 5

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	2	10
3	1	5
4	8	40
5	9	45

Questions six and seven are framed to explore the presence, or otherwise of a culture of using recreational substances by consumers of Noise. The questions ask about both alcohol use (see Table 11) and the regular use of recreational drugs (see Table 12). Responses suggest the majority of the listeners involved in this survey do not associate Noise with alcohol consumption (65%) or illicit drug usage (60%). A little surprisingly to the author, only 15% of them responded that using both substances can help with the enjoyment of Noise.

Table 11 Correspondents' Responses for Question 6

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	13	65
2	2	10
3	2	10
4	3	15
5	0	0

Table 12 Correspondents' Responses for Question 7

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	12	60
2	2	10
3	3	15
4	3	15
5	0	0

The next three questions explore the respondents' attitudes and awareness of philosophical and ethical underpinnings of the noise scene. Question 8 attempts to identify a common political persuasion amongst listeners (Table 13). The majority of respondents selected 'Not Sure' and 'Agree'. While the responses are contradictory, it suggests that some do not consider Noise as a political statement while other listeners do see Noise as something political.

Table 13 Correspondents' Responses for Question 8

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	3	15
2	1	5
3	7	35
4	7	35
5	2	10

The ninth question considers the respondents' perception of noise performers towards commercialisation or consumerism (Table 14). The responses indicate that 85% of the respondents chose to 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' that Noise is something that is 'anti-commercialisation'. In combination with the responses of other questions in this sub-section (questions 7-9) supports the assessment that audiences and performers in the Noise Scene have substantially anti-establishment political attitudes

Table 14 Correspondents' Responses for Question 9

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	1	5
2	0	0
3	2	10
4	10	50
5	7	35

Question 10 asks whether noise performers in Malaysia use home-made equipment as a significant part of their music. It dictates the extent to which the performers are in charge of their productions (Table 15), rather than commercial interests.

Table 15 Correspondent's Responses for Question 10

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	2	10
4	10	50
5	8	40

Respondents agreed that the artists have a 'Do it yourself' attitude to instrument making in Noise. The number of persons agreeing with the statement is a total of 18 people who collectively chose 'Agree' (10) and 'Strongly Agree' (8). By adding together these respondents, we find a total number of 90 % of the listeners agree with the attitude. Such a high percentage suggests that this 'do it yourself' approach to instruments and performance may be said to be characteristics of the Malaysian Noise music.

Questions 11 to 15 would verify whether the respondents understand the performance techniques used to produce Noise music. These questions are also intended to determine the extent of self-built equipment (Table 16) and if "Noise can be performed with sound manipulation equipment such as [commercial] pedals and mixers" (Table 17 & Table 18), if artists are creating digital Noise music using computer software" (see Table 10) and whether "Noise can be performed with the combination of analogue and digital equipment (see Table 20). The answers may be interpreted to reflect the extent to which local performers use these techniques, and whether the audience respondents are aware of it. The range of responses suggests that Noise listeners in Malaysia are knowledgeable concerning Noise performance and creation.

Table 16 Correspondents' Responses for Question 11

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	1	5
3	5	25
4	5	25
5	9	45

Table 17 Correspondents' Responses for Question 12

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	1	5
4	8	40
5	11	55

Table 18 Correspondents' Responses for Question 13

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	8	40
5	12	60

Table 19 Correspondents' Responses for Question 14

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	2	10
4	8	40
5	10	50

Table 20 Correspondents' Responses for Question 15

Answer	Number of Answers	Percentage
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	1	5
4	8	40
5	11	55

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is evident there is a Noise movement with discrete, specialised performers in Malaysia. Though small, it stands within other local alternative and experimental music scenes. *Krosot* and *Jerk Kerouac* are both artists involved with the Malaysian Noise movement. This scene does not have strict rules of cultural identity or political messages, with supporters drawn range from all ages and preferences. Noise performers do not associate their Noise and musical scene as political, which was unexpected because 45% of the Noise enthusiasts that took the survey agreed that, fundamentally, Noise is a form of protest. The listeners also showed that even though a percentage of them drink alcohol and use illicit drugs, taking these substances is not necessary in order to enjoy Noise.

For future research, a thorough investigation of how Noise is performed could be proposed. It would provide highly detailed information about how the Noise performance is musically shaped. A second suggestion is to determine if reception of masses on the Noise that is being performed by the local Noise performers. The Leigh Landy reception of contemporary music could be a valuable

instrument in this determination. Such research, would all audience reactions and understanding on Noise to be evaluated.

REFERENCES

Anderson, J. S., & Bratos-Anderson, M. (1993). *Noise: Its measurement, analysis, rating, and control*. Brookfield, VT: Avebury Technical.

Berg, R. E., & Stork, D. G. (2005). *The physics of sound* (3rd Edition.). New Delhi, Pearson Education India.

Christensen, R. C. (2009). The art of noise after futurism. *Nordic Net-Work Of Avant-Garde Studies*. Retrieved from http://www.avantgardenet.eu/HAC/studentpapers/christensen_art_of_noise.pdf, 2009.

Duckworth, W. (1999). *Talking music: Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and five generations of American experimental composers*. Massachusetts, Da Capo Press.

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being An insider-outsider. *Qualitative Research. International Journal Of Qualitative Methods*, *8* (1), 54-63.

Hegarty, P. (2007). *Noise music: A History*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Hegarty, P. (2012). A chronic condition: Noise and time. In Goddard, M., Halligan, B., & Hegarty, P. (Eds.). *Reverberations: The philosophy, aesthetics and politics of noise*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Jensen, J. S. (2011). Revisiting the insider-outsider debate: Dismantling a pseudo-problem in the study of religion. *Method & theory in the study of religion*, *23*(1), 29-47.

Kamien, R. (2011). *Music: An appreciation (7th Brief Ed.)*.New York, NY: Mcgraw-Hill.

Lockwood, D. (2012). Mongrel vibrations: H. P. Lovecraft's Weird Ecology of Noise. In Goddard, M., Halligan, B., & Hegarty, P. (Eds.). *Reverberations: The philosophy, aesthetics and politics of noise*. New York, Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Malaspina, C. (2012). The Noise paradigm. In Goddard, M., Halligan, B., & Hegarty, P. (Eds.). *Reverberations: The philosophy, aesthetics and politics of Noise*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Massumi, B. (2012). Floating the social: An electronic art of noise. In Goddard, M., Halligan, B., & Hegarty, P. (Eds.). *Reverberations: The philosophy, aesthetics and politics of noise*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Merriam, A. P. (1964). *The anthropology of music*. Illinois Northwestern University Press.

Schippers, H., & Flenady, L., (2010) Beauty Or brain. In Caduff, C., Siegenthaler, F., & Waclhli, T., (2012) *Art and artistic research*. Zurich, Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG.

Tham, J., (2013). Noise as music: Is there a historical continuum? From historical roots to Industrial Music. In Goddard, M., Halligan, B., & Spelman, N. (Eds.). (2013). *Resonances: Noise and contemporary music*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

BIOGRAPHY

Muhamad Hafifi bin Mokhtar is currently furthering studies in a Master of Music degree with a specialisation in Music Technology at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. He has always been interested in various philosophical views on music. Growing up listening to various alternative music, he opened his ears to music that is new and obscure, at least, to the

local society. He is currently researching the possibilities of using traditional music and musical instruments, particularly in Wayang Kulit, to produce Noise music with the help of analogue and digital methods. He is also a performer of Noise under the pseudonym of *ankbktnoisescape* and has released several recordings. He employs a more analogue approach in his music, influenced by Japanese and local performers, outside of his study interests.
Email: hafififmsp@gmail.com