

Taking Control of Sound to Rejoin the Crowd: The SoundPrint App



By Gregory Scott

Ever been frustrated when noise has interfered with your ability to enjoy time with a date, friends, family, or colleagues at a restaurant, café, or bar? Afraid your tinnitus will spike if you take a Zumba or spin class at the gym?

You aren't alone. These were some of the issues behind the creation of the SoundPrint app. As a person with hearing loss, I would search out quiet places around my city where I could converse and enjoy being out without ambient noise ruining my time. A few years back, I started compiling information on where the quiet venues were in New York City, and then I found that even my friends with normal hearing wanted my list, so – as an analyst and person interested in meaningful change – I launched the SoundPrint app in 2018.

The app is free, easy to use, and empowering for anyone concerned about sound in their environment. You can use SoundPrint to measure sound levels for listening safety or to find a quiet venue near you. The app also includes noise complaint and quiet recommendation features that

enable you to highlight high-noise places to be avoided and easy-listening locations to enjoy.

When you submit a complaint, SoundPrint reaches out to the loud venue directly, offers noise mitigation recommendations, and links venue managers with acoustic professionals who can help educate them and optimize the venue's sonic experience. A quiet recommendation allows us to promote the quiet venue by placing it on our curated Quiet Lists, which all app users can access.

Like other decibel readers, you can use SoundPrint to measure sound at any venue, including parks, offices, hospitals, retail stores, gyms, and schools, among others, to gauge your level of noise exposure.

Why Should You Use It?

Noise-induced hearing loss is a serious and rising public health issue from which 24 percent of adults experience. Noise is the most common environmental cause of hearing loss. Studies show that large numbers of adults in the United States are exposed to noise levels that exceed the recommended guidelines issued by both the National Institute

for Occupational Safety and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

For individuals who have a sensory disorder, such as hearing loss, tinnitus, hyperacusis, or autism, or for those who simply want to find a quieter venue or avoid noisy ones, sound measurements can help determine whether you will patronize a place. This sound-level information is hard to come by yet critical for many people.

Your Sound Measurements Matter

Today, the SoundPrint app is used by more than 100,000 people worldwide, mostly in the United States and Canada. It's also available and growing in usage in Europe and Australia.

Users have generated more than 120,000 SoundChecks for restaurants, gyms, cafés, outdoor spaces, and bars, and this data has led to:

- Creation of the Quiet List for various cities in the United States and abroad
- A nationwide noise database on recreational venues
- Use of sound readings to talk to staff and managers about noise problems



- The ability to reward restaurants that offer quiet spaces
- The ability to call out places that are too loud
- Data that can inform public officials on the danger of noise in public spaces

The app's extensive crowdsourced database also provides public health officials and researchers with evidence-based sound level data that they can use to help educate the public on the dangers of excessive noise levels, advocate for those with hearing loss and tinnitus, and work with venue managers to reduce loud noise at their venues.

Here is an example of how each person – each user of SoundPrint – contributes to changes that can promote hearing health for all of us: for the first time, one of SoundPrint's large-scale noise studies was used to establish the sound level of a major U.S. city (New York City), giving city officials a useful baseline for future hearing health endeavors. Our data revealed that NYC restaurants routinely approached noise levels

that required raising one's voice to be heard, and that, in some areas of the establishments, noise approached levels that could endanger the hearing health of patrons and employees. The figure for NYC bars revealed that 60 percent were dangerously loud.


Working Together for Change

SoundPrint's mission is to use data collected by the app to lead the effort in advocating for a quieter world. And change can only happen once data-based evidence is objectively gathered and disseminated. To that end, SoundPrint partners and shares data widely with public health officials and noise activists, including the World Hearing Forum, an affiliate of the World Health Organization, whose mission is to promote hearing loss prevention worldwide.

Data gathering is a critical part of SoundPrint's hearing health mission. The data that app users capture establishes a sound-level baseline of an area (i.e., a country, state, city, or neighborhood) or venue (i.e., a restaurant, café, gym, office, hospital, or movie theater). Public health officials can then use this data to determine whether a certain area or venue is safe or dangerous for hearing health.

Partnering for Greater Awareness

The American Tinnitus Association and SoundPrint are teaming up for Tinnitus Awareness Week – February

1–7, 2021 – to raise awareness about the SoundPrint app and its features aimed at preserving hearing health. It can be used as a tool for guarding against tinnitus spikes and noise-induced hearing loss, plus app users contribute noise data for research and can highlight venues that present either a safe or a dangerous hearing environment. 

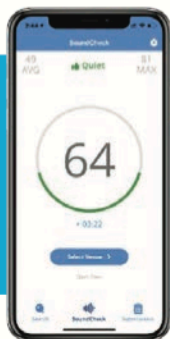
To learn more about the SoundPrint story, the app's measurement process, and how to download the app to your smartphone, visit the SoundPrint website: <https://www.soundprint.co/>

To read the NYC study, see <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=86590>



Gregory Scott is the founder of SoundPrint, a crowdsourcing app that empowers users to search for places based on how quiet or loud they are using the app's decibel meter. He is a frequent presenter and resource in the audiology and noise awareness communities. He has spoken at numerous conferences, including the Acoustical Society of America (ASA), the National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA), and the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). He lives in New York City.

WHAT THE SOUNDPRINT APP CAN DO FOR YOU

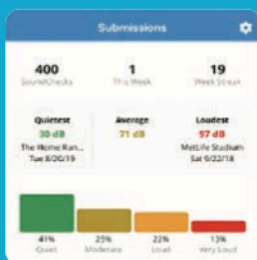


EMPOWERMENT

Use the SoundPrint decibel meter to take a SoundCheck and make sure your current environment is safe for hearing and manageable for tinnitus or hyperacusis.

HEARING HEALTH

Did you know? The 24-7 weighted decibel average should be 70 dBA or below. Exposure to loud noise puts individuals at risk of noise-induced hearing loss and tinnitus.

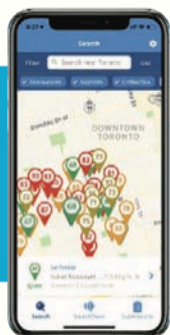


ADVOCACY

Contribute decibel data to support the hearing health mission. Based on your submissions, SoundPrint shares data with public health researchers and reaches out to venues to address noise or commend their quiet status.

TINNITUS MANAGEMENT

If you suspect a place is too noisy, either leave and submit a noise complaint on the app, or request that the manager mitigate the noise. Consult Quiet Lists to find reliably quieter venues for better self-care.



SEARCH & ACCESSIBILITY

Review the app's searchable database of previously measured venues. There are over 100K venues worldwide along with curated Quiet Lists!



www.soundprint.co

