



Being put on hold forever is bad enough, but why oh why do helplines insist on winding up callers with the worst selection of music ever, asks Wendy Brewer

There you are listening to an automated message asking you to push this button for that service and another button to speak to this department, and when you've finally reached the right contact you're forced to endure what seems like several hours of 80s rock, Bee Gees tunes or a painfully synthesised rendition of a classical piece.

Isn't it bad enough that we have to deal with automated help centres manned by staff on the other side of the world without making us listen to the worst series of songs imaginable? The only light relief we get is the occasional interruption from a disembodied digital voice telling us how important our call is and that we are now 760th in the queue.

Okay I'm exaggerating slightly, but surely it wouldn't be so hard for companies to include a few tune options: select one for hip hop, two for chart hits, three for golden oldies, for example. It's maddening enough that we have to ring the helpline in the first place, without winding us up to the point of distraction with muzak before we've even spoken to anyone. What's wrong with silence or the odd beep now and then to let you know you're still on the line?

Perhaps customer service staff should be forced to listen to their own helpline tunes before they speak to us. Maybe then they would understand why we're at boiling point by the time we finally get through. My advice: pump out some soothing jazz. ■

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Music to the ears

In the past months we asked *PC Advisor* readers to vote for the compressed music tracks they thought sounded best. Along with the hotly-anticipated results, we reveal how to encode audio files and which is the most suitable format to use.

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