

# The guardian

## Careless whisker: Universal to release album for cats

**Mark Brown** Arts correspondent

David Teie from University of Maryland creates Music for Cats featuring purring, suckling noises and cello to calm felines

David Teie and friend. Teie said: 'As a matter of fact I'm allergic to cats.'

They are a particularly tough audience – picky, moody, often impossible to please – but cats represent an untapped music market, according to one of the world's biggest record labels.

Universal Music has announced it will be the first major label to release an album that is not for human consumption – although, until cats get bank accounts, humans will have to pay for it.

David Teie, an American cellist and music researcher based at the University of Maryland, has created Music for Cats, saying it is an “absolutely serious” undertaking . He said: “It is the biggest challenge with this, people think it is silly. But I think it is the way the brain works . If I look at a door and say that's a fish, you are going to say that's a door. Everybody knows what music is – and animals are not included. If you really look into it, what's silly is the idea that only one species could have music available for it.”

The music features purring and suckling noises, as well as Teie on his cello accompanied by players from the US National Symphony Orchestra. It is aimed at calming and bringing pleasure to cats, rather than getting them excited.

Teie produced the album after first studying whether music could be created for cotton-top tamarin monkeys. Those experiments were so successful that he decided to widen them. “There are not very many cotton-top tamarin owners out there so we decided if we were to go out and spread the word, spread the music, we should go with a species we hang around with a lot,” he said

Dogs were ruled out because there are so many variations in the breeds. “I was worried about having to write terrier music and labrador music and so on – it would have slowed things up,” Teie said.

So cats were chosen and it has proved successful, with studies showing the recordings are most effective for cats who can be neurotic or nervous or may have been abused in the past.

Wary cat owners who couldn't recall their pet ever enjoying or reacting to music should be aware they were playing them the wrong melodies, said Teie. "There have been many studies done and they basically all came up dry because animals don't give two hoots about our music and they really shouldn't," he said.

The original music for cats was self-produced after a whirlwind Kickstarter campaign quickly attracted pledges of nearly \$250,000. That caught the eye of Universal, which promptly signed Teie up.

Teie admitted he had gone through emotions familiar to many musicians ploughing an independent furrow. "I was very excited about it at first, then not excited about it ... was I signing my life away to somebody else? Now that it is all done I'm very excited again," he said.

Teie plays his compositions for Crumbs and Whiskers. Photograph: The Washington Post/Getty Images

The album will be released in all territories on 28 October, and given that there are 9.2 million cats in the UK alone, Universal believes there is an enormous untapped market. A spokesperson said the label was "thrilled to be part of this world-first project" and predicted "Music For" albums could follow for dogs and horses.

Teie said he hoped that the more animal music became available, the more it would be accepted. "I am hoping that in a hundred years from now people will have to be taught that music was once only for humans," he said.

If that happens then people may remember Teie as the true pioneer. But his research has not always been easy. "As a matter of fact I'm allergic to cats," he said. "I've grown from being an admirer to a genuine cat lover now, but I'm still allergic."