



SOFT SERVE

Charting the aural promise of ice cream truck music

By Daniel Tannehill Neely



n the spring of 1999, I was a graduate student in

ethnomusicology living in Brooklyn's Boerum Hill neighborhood. That semester, in addition to my regular coursework, I had been working hard to prepare for our program's ritual exam called "The Comps," which would earn me my master's degree and qualify me for doctoral study. Its preparation was an all-encompassing experience, and the emotional release caused by taking it left me exhausted. I spent the following two weeks eating, watching as much television as I could stand, and wondering what those jingle-playing ice cream trucks passing by outside were doing disturbing my loafing. They were annoying, these trucks, simultaneously compelling and repelling me with their relentless signature tune played over and over...and over again...straight through their routes, day in and day out.