

Rodents sing in squeak harmony like opera stars to impress girls, study shows

Nessun dormouse

Mousic they love

- Cheese Release me
- Our Mouse
- Rat's The Way (I Like It)
- Careless Whisker
- Long and Winding Rodent
- Mice Mice Baby
- Le Squeak
- You Can't Scurry Love
- Mickey
- Mice Sweet Lord



by **TARIQ TAHIR**

MALE mice can learn to sing in harmony to impress the girls – just like opera's Three Tenors or a hit boyband.

When two of different types were put together in a cage with a female, they gradually learned to match the pitch of their songs, researchers discovered.

While mice won't be auditioning for a part on next year's X Factor, the discovery has catapulted the creatures to a new level of stardom in the animal kingdom.

They now share top billing with just a handful of species which can learn new tunes (old dogs definitely not included).

It means we may have more in common with the super-sopranos than we think.

'This is an exciting find, as direct fore-brain control over the vocal neurons may be one of the most critical aspects in the human evolution of speech,' said lead investigator Erich Jarvis, of Tulane University in Louisiana, US.

The study, which contradicts assumptions held for 60 years that mice have no vocal-learning ability at all, began by identifying neurons in their brains which light up when they sing.

The researchers then damaged the neurons and found it stopped the mice keeping their songs on pitch or repeating them as consistently – proving they are not just involuntary squeaks.

'This is a very important study with great findings,' said Kurt Hammer-schmidt, an expert in vocal communication at the German Primate Center, who was not involved in the research.

He said he was sceptical about the claim that mice could match their pitch but Mr Jarvis disagreed.

'Our results show that mice have all the features scientists associate with vocal learning,' he said.

Fur-fect pitch: A singing mouse. With a bit of rehearsal the rodents are able to match their songs, scientists found

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