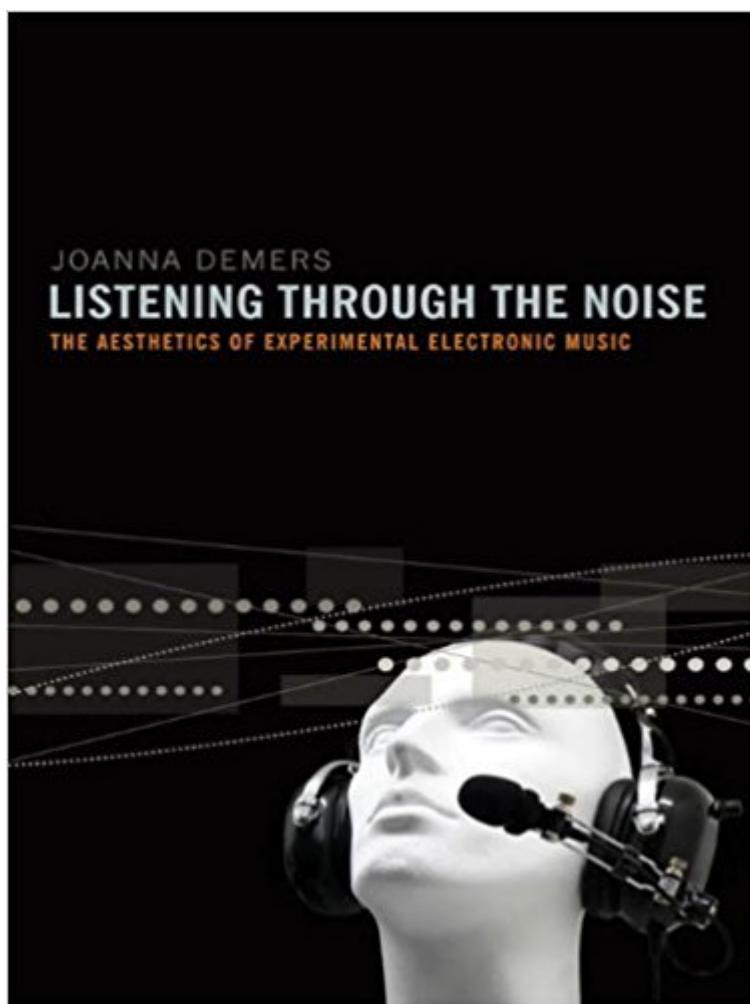


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Listening Through The Noise: The Aesthetics Of Experimental Electronic Music



Synopsis

Contemporary electronic music has splintered into numerous genres and subgenres, all of which share a concern with whether sound, in itself, bears meaning. Listening through the Noise considers how the experience of listening to electronic music constitutes a departure from the expectations that have long governed music listening in the West.

Book Information

File Size: 638 KB

Print Length: 220 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 019538766X

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (July 30, 2010)

Publication Date: July 30, 2010

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00532P4XS

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #322,130 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #10
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Customer Reviews

I came into this book fairly informed, so that perspective and baggage colors my impression of the book. It helps to know a bit about general 20th century music history, modern aesthetics, critical theory, and/or electronic music going into it. Demers' book is a great "connect the dots" sort of primer when dealing with this intersection of hi art, low art, philosophy and technology. In the current era, borders between academic, experimental, and popular musical styles are fluid - divisions between genres are often purely aesthetic, rather than a result of classical training or performance

venue. Although it leans toward the academy, the thrust of the book is to familiarize the reader with the various rationales underpinning electronic music composition, starting with the early days of sound collages and synthesized tones. My critiques of the book are that it's quite short, and the listening resources are limited and difficult to access. It felt like there was a lot of ground uncovered in regards to the aesthetics of systems-based (algorithmic) composition and human-machine interfacing. There's some discussion on the feedback loop between the technology and the music (i.e. how different synthesizers encourage particular ways of music creation, etc), but the bulk of the discussion was on the larger aesthetic ideas and the musical outcomes, rather than specifics on the craft and processes involved. I wish it had been longer and a bit more extensive. Additionally, this is the kind of study that necessitates a thorough listening guide, and there are often multiple musical references in a single paragraph. I found myself often reading with the internet and a music streaming service open. The included Oxford web music companion is a benefit, but is very limited in regards to the amount of music discussed, and didn't work on my mobile browser. I'd recommend starting or ending each chapter with a recommended listening list - Alex Ross did this with "The Rest is Noise" and it was very helpful. 2015 was an awesome year for genre-bending electronic music - Holly Herndon, Arca, Oneohtrix Point Never, and JLin all came out with some incredible work, and that's just what I'm personally familiar with. If you're looking for a deeper dive, or maybe you want some historical context to what you're finding on Fader, Fact or Pitchfork, this is a great place to start.

I really like this book - it opened a lot of horizons for me. I found myself at the end of the book with more questions than answers. But maybe that's what any great book does? I suspect some people are looking for some sort of affirmation of pop culture tastes - which is not at all a good reason to buy the book. If you're interested in a lucid, quick reading guide to understanding the role of music in society (electronic or otherwise) - buy the book. You won't regret it.

Much to think about in this penetrating, if at times self-consciously academic treatise. The polarity of aesthetic listening and frameless, non-identifying listening is a major theme. The author certainly introduced me to some music I might otherwise not found, and caused me to question certain aspects of my own work. Well worth reading, if you are involved in electronic music in any way.

Listening Through the Noise is an essential read for anybody who wishes to understand the appeal of electronic music (which includes musicians, fans, and critics). The air provides a framework for

intelligent discussion of the various genres she explores, and her conclusion is logical and accurate.

This is a nice book, Joanna Demers has a good and cultivated voice that takes you across the not so easy to map meanders of the electronica landscape.

There ought to be a penetrating and comprehensive study of the aesthetics of experimental electronic music, but this one isn't it. It's not bad -- as a rather formal, academically focused analysis and contextualization of some particular examples (I wouldn't even say "schools") of "experimental" electronic music. But any book that takes up this topic without mention of Morton Subotnick, Don Buchla, Pauline Oliveros, Musica Elettronica Viva, Patrick Gleeson's contributions to Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi band, Jimi Hendrix, Emerson Lake & Palmer, Mills College, George E. Lewis or contact mics is overlooking quite a bit of relevant material. Ms. Demers makes a lot of connections to philosophers with of various modernist and post-modern approaches outside the specific spheres of music, which bespeaks her interests, but not mine. Perhaps this is the way people who make experimental electronic music think about what they're doing. . .but if so, this book is clearly devoted to insider-thinking (good, if it made the point of such thinking clear to outsiders. It certainly isn't aimed at a general market, or most of the audiences for experimental or any other kind of electronic music.

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