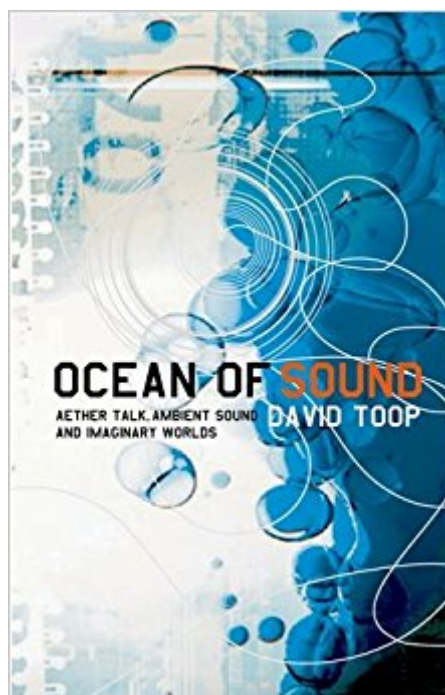


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# Ocean Of Sound



## Synopsis

Ocean of Sound begins in 1889 at the Paris Exposition when Debussy first heard Javanese music performed. A culture absorbed in perfume, light and ambient sound developed in response to the intangibility of 20th century communications. David Toop traces the evolution of this culture, through Erik Satie to the Velvet Underground; Miles Davis to Jimi Hendrix. David Toop, who lives in London, is a writer, musician and recording artist. His other books are Rap Attack 3 and Exotica.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A member of a radical editorial collective on the cutting edge of British music criticism in the 1970s, later a critic for more standard papers, including the Times, David Toop's second book covers a vast expanse of music. His tour-de-force survey describes a dissonant and invigorating clash of music and noise from western classical to Javanese gamelan, from Claude Debussy to Miles Davis to Brian Eno, from disco to techno to ambient. He discusses the changes in our sound world caused by the global reach of radio and recordings, and shows himself a rigorous pluralist, open to all styles and forms, but unafraid to offer robust criticism in any musical sphere. --This text refers to the Digital edition.

Ethereal, ambient sound is a passion in certain circles in England and the U.S. Toop traces the

twentieth-century history of music that "could be characterised [sic] as drifting or simply existing in stasis rather than developing in any dramatic fashion." For Toop, the lineage of such music includes Javanese pulsation, the recording-studio-as-instrument excursions of Jamaican dub pioneer Lee "Scratch" Perry and Beach Boy Brian Wilson, John Cage's Zen composition theories, and a plethora of jazz players, most notably Sun Ra and Miles Davis. Toop argues that these disparate influences are incorporated in the work of such contemporary "techno" musicians and DJs as Aphex Twin and the Orb. Toop does not use recordings as his only references but, like the wandering music he describes, touches on science fiction, semiotic theory, and his own travels in this expansive treatise. He incorporates all these subjects into a clear and direct book that may appeal even to readers whose listening preferences are more conventional. Aaron Cohen --This text refers to the Digital edition.

I love David Toop and any work he's involved in. From music to academic writing, this guy knows his stuff. He's very well versed in music and has done his research thoroughly you can tell.. He has a unique way of explaining sound and its magic, definitely grab any books he's written on the subject of sound.

Nice overview of music that falls thru the cracks-great chapter on the Ambient scene in England in the nineties.

As an eager but somewhat overwhelmed newcomer to the world of ambient music, I've found this overview to be informative & invaluable. It's constructed like many ambient pieces: layers of information & exotica that overlap, shade into one another, and in many ways recreate in prose the experience of the music. Yet at the same time, there's a clarity & focus to the writing, which becomes apparent as the reader flows from one topic to the next. By the end, I'd not only gained some real knowledge & understanding, I'd been given some excellent starting points for further exploration. An exemplary volume, highly recommended!

David Toop is both a musician and writer, having done ambient music, dub music with the likes of Prince Far I, and of course numerous written articles on ambient and experimental aspects of popular music. I'd have to say that this book is perhaps one of the definitive studies on this musical genre, covering the aesthetics, listening practice, concepts, influences, directions, and so on of this growing musical field in a very inclusive and insightful style. This is perhaps one of the best written

companions to everything ambient, as well as influences on ambient music from as far afield as Sun Ra and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Anyone interested in knowing more...either in scope, or deeper within...on ambient should obtain a copy of this book.

Incredible in many ways, Toop's book attempts to trace a quiet revolution in twentieth century music. One cannot deny the impressive breadth of his knowledge, from Stockhausen to Miles all the way to Future Sound of London and their ilk. His writing is quite often beautiful, if occasionally one feels like he is writing too many words to actually say anything. Ultimately, however, I leave the book feeling a bit underwhelmed. Ironically, it is the book's very eclecticism that works against it. I personally did not see the connections between, say, the music of Kraftwerk and Toop's (admittedly fascinating) discussion of the sound of the jungle. These digressions ultimately make the book useless as a survey. Of course, I doubt that it was meant to be so, but Toop fails to make the kinds of connections that have given books by Greil Marcus and others a fascinating unity. Perhaps, though, this is the point. Much like the ambient music that serves as the centerpoint of the book, this book simply floats by, not asking you to make any conclusions. It is probably best read in bits, before bed or in the bathroom, where the individual moments of brilliance can be better appreciated. Very ambient, indeed.

I love to read about music, but there are so few good music writers it seems. This book approaches the development of incidental, ambient, experimental, avant garde, and world musics in a way that mimics the music itself - with random bursts of observations, anecdotes, interviews, and just plain bizarre missives. I encourage anyone with a sense of adventure and an open mind to grab a copy. There is a similarly-titled double CD which came out to accompany the book, but I can't see it on . It is as eclectic as the book and features a lot of the artists interviewed and mentioned - Sun Ra, Aphex Twin, and others. I have played the CD to death and would recommend it. You gotta respect a compilation that puts The Beach Boys right next to African Headcharge, or My Bloody Valentine next to Brian Eno - and makes it work so well. The book also features a list of albums and artists in the appendix, which I found useful as a way of doing further research. Another book in a similar vein is Kodwo Eshun's "More Brilliant Than The Sun", though it focuses solely on the innovators in electronic music.

If you like ambient, or....atmospheric music of any sort you should give this book a chance as it a nice erudite survey of the various genres and musicians that are linked to..or been influenced by

ambient music. It is not a linear survey thru time, but rather this book reminds me of a map which Toop rolls around visiting here and there with a few jumps now and then as he discusses how in the last 100 years "music has reflected the world back to itself and to its listeners". The writing is enjoyable, and full of poetry, such that I kept finding myself underlining odd bits and pieces every few pages and I wound up compiling them for myself for future reference. There is also a nice bibliography and discography at the end of the book.

Written by a practitioner, this book on ambient music, and the place of sound itself in the history of music, should be read by anyone who has an interest in the nature of human's relationship with sound, as well as by people interested in the history of ambient music. I loved it, and have recommended it repeatedly.

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