



Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture

Paul D. Miller , Roy Christopher (Assistant Editor)

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The role of sound and digital media in an information-based society: artists--from Steve Reich and Pierre Boulez to Chuck D and Moby--describe their work. If *Rhythm Science* was about the flow of things, *Sound Unbound* is about the remix--how music, art, and literature have blurred the lines between what an artist can do and what a composer can create. In *Sound Unbound*, *Rhythm Science* author Paul Miller aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid asks artists to describe their work and compositional strategies in their own words. These are reports from the front lines on the role of sound and digital media in an information-based society. The topics are as diverse as the contributors: composer Steve Reich offers a memoir of his life with technology, from tape loops to video opera; Miller himself considers sampling and civilization; novelist Jonathan Lethem writes about appropriation and plagiarism; science fiction writer Bruce Sterling looks at dead media; Ron Eglash examines racial signifiers in electrical engineering; media activist Naeem Mohaiemen explores the influence of Islam on hip hop; rapper Chuck D contributes "Three Pieces"; musician Brian Eno explores the sound and history of bells; Hans Ulrich Obrist and Philippe Parreno interview composer-conductor Pierre Boulez; and much more. "Press 'play,'" Miller writes, "and this anthology says 'here goes.'"

The groundbreaking music that accompanies the book features Nam Jun Paik, the Dada Movement, John Cage, Sonic Youth, and many other examples of avant-garde music. Most of this content comes from the archives of Sub Rosa, a legendary record label that has been the benchmark for archival sounds since the beginnings of electronic music. To receive these free music files, readers may send an email to the address listed in the book.

Contributors

David Allenby, Pierre Boulez, Catherine Corman, Chuck D, Erik Davis, Scott De Lahunta, Manuel DeLanda, Cory Doctorow, Eveline Domnitch, Frances Dyson, Ron Eglash, Brian Eno, Dmitry Gelfand, Dick Hebidge, Lee Hirsch, Vijay Iyer, Ken Jordan, Douglas Kahn, Daphne Keller, Beryl Korot, Jaron Lanier, Joseph Lanza, Jonathan Lethem, Carlo McCormick, Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, Moby, Naeem Mohaiemen, Alondra Nelson, Keith and Mendi Obadike, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Pauline Oliveros, Philippe Parreno, Ibrahim Quaraishi, Steve Reich, Simon Reynolds, Scanner aka Robin Rimbaud, Nadine Robinson, Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR), Alex Steinweiss, Bruce Sterling, Lucy Walker, Saul Williams, Jeff E. Winner

Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture Details

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**Download and Read Free Online Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture Paul D. Miller
, Roy Christopher (Assistant Editor)**

From Reader Review Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture for online ebook

SeaOfSound says

Broad and thought provoking essays by iconoclastic authors/artists. "Who speaks through you?" - Paul Miller aka DJ Spooky

Marc Weidenbaum says

An anthology of articles on digital music and culture as well as a mix CD of 45 samples thereof. Put together by DJ Spooky, whose previous MIT publication, Rhythm Science, likewise paired book and music. The essays vary from overviews of specific areas (legal system in the age of sampling, network-based art ensembles) to reflections by musicians (Scanner on ghost images, Brian Eno on bells) to interviews (with Moby, Steve Reich and his wife/collaborator, Columbia Records's art director). The better writing makes the weaknesses in the lesser writing stand out, and the book could have used another strong edit pass (if we can't trust MIT to copyedit and to get the index right, whom can we?). The CD is excellent, with lots of spoken bits, from Gertrude Stein to William S. Burroughs, which makes an intelligent transition from the book; the CD isn't background music -- it is a text unto itself.

PS: I reviewed the book for Nature magazine. The web page says the full review requires payment to be read but in fact the full review appears on this page. The only thing behind the fee-wall is my author bio:

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/...>

Heather says

My life was too chaotic to read this at the time, but I hope to pick it up again at a later date. Cool included CD; wouldn't want to play it at a dance party, though.

(Found at DC Public-- Main just wandering the shelves)

Jamil says

DJ Spooky curated sequel to Rhythm Science. Just read the bits I was interested in (Erik Davis on Afrofuturism, Simon Reynolds on CCRU and Renegade Academia) and skimmed the rest. Some interesting bits. Comes with a CD (like Rhythm Science, built off samples from the Sub Rosa archives) that I haven't taken the time to listen to/digest yet.

Sean says

Kind of barely two stars. Took me forever to get through this. A smattering of interesting essays mixed in with pages and pages of poorly written, poorly argued, pseudo-intellectual bullshit so full of academic jargon, hip-hop lingo and incomprehensible defenses of bad art that one's brain is left begging for mercy.

Matt says

One of the best lectures I've ever seen was a talk at Yale by Paul D. Miller, a.k.a. DJ Spooky, on the art of the DJ and how it mirrored wider cultural trends. His analysis about living in a culture of signs and signifiers was nothing new, but he smartly argued that it was the DJ, the mix-tape artist, and all those who constructed their music out of samples (those bits of fragmented music from the past) that best represented this state of affairs. Indeed, the DJ creates his own music, but it's a music made by reconfiguring what came before - a music created from signs.

Sound Unbound is a collection of essays, edited by Miller, which further explore his interest in the intersection between sound, technology, and culture. Like any collection of essays, the quality is wildly uneven. Depressingly, the Miller's essays are some of the least interesting - he traded the clarity of his lecture for unnecessary obfuscation in his writing.

In general, I found the historical essays to be more interesting than the critical ones - such as Naeem Mohaiemen's "Fear of a Muslim Planet: Hip-Hop's Hidden History," which traces the history of the relationship between Hip-Hop and Islam, and Jeff Winner's "The World of Sound: A Division of Raymond Scott Enterprises," a biographical essay about an earlier electronic music pioneer.

The standout essay of the collection, though, by a wide margin, is Jonathan Lethem's "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism Mosaic" - which, at first flush, seems like a normal (and convincing) essay arguing against the state of current copyright law. He argues that over-protecting individual artworks limits creativity - that all great art is, in some way, responding directly to the art of the past. Convincing as it is, the brilliance of the essay comes in its extensive postscript - where he notes that virtually the whole essay was cobbled together from the work of other writers. Seamlessly integrating many, many works into a single work of art, Lethem's essay becomes a brilliant marriage of form and content - his most convincing argument, never explicitly stated, is that in a world of over-restricted IP control, a work of this particular brilliance can never be made.

keys says

I could of lived without some of the real heavy academic essays in this book. The history of electronic music, hip hop and sampling was great, I found it very interesting. Lots of artists and information that I had not read elsewhere.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

This book is probably better in theory than practice. It gathers essays from such a wide range of people that I'm not sure it successfully portrays any one thing. There are DJs, composers, current artists, classical conductors, authors, among others, all contributing to this idea of sampling digital music and culture. Some are academic, some are interview-based, and some are farther out there.

The best essay in the book is The Ecstasy of Influence by Jonathan Lethem, which can also be found in his own book of essays. Keep reading until the punch line.

"Copyright is an ongoing social negotiation, tenuously forged, endlessly revised, and imperfect in its every incarnation."

"Active reading is an impertinent raid on the literary preserve. Readers are like nomads, poaching their way across fields they do not own,"

-Jonathan Lethem

I also really enjoyed "Quantum Improvisation" by Pauline Oliveros. As always, Oliveros focuses on the possibilities. What will be the limitations of technology? She imagines a world where all her improvisational technology dreams could come true.

joshuaA says

Bookmarked at page 167. (Finished "Renegade Academia" then left off on pg 190.)

mali says

I tried to read this from the beginning, and soon gave up on that because the first essays are so bad - between Steve Reich's name-dropping of tracks and albums he's worked on, and DJ Spooky's rambling about FTP servers. Nothing made much sense. So I tried skipping around and sampling (ha) different essays. In the end, I couldn't find a single readable piece in this entire book. The combination of terrible writing and boring content was overwhelming. I had really been looking forward to reading this given the people included, but returned it to the library right away, sorely disappointed.

Oscar says

Interesting mix of essays that range from the profound to the generic but all of them stay on topic: What is our relationship to sound. Very recommended for any poet invested in orality and the audience.

Thomass says

Want to give it more stars but it was really hit or miss and I found myself reading just for the sake of trying to finish it instead of actually taking it in and absorbing anything positive. There are some great bits in there but all in all not enough.

John says

Some great articles/essays balanced by a few stinkers (did we really need an interview with Moby?) and unnecessary inclusions (the Steve Reich/Beryl Korot interview and the Brian Eno essay, both of which were just lifted from CD liner notes -- nice to have big names on the contributor list to help sell the book, but not when it's regurgitated material like this). Overall well worth the read if you're interested in sound, though.

Justin says

Like many essay collections, this one is hit or miss. But the misses outnumber the hits here.

Bleak Mouse says

Not so much awful as wildly uneven. Still, I enjoyed the CD and a few of the essays,
