



Every Song Ever: Twenty Ways to Listen in an Age of Musical Plenty

Ben Ratliff

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What is music in the age of the cloud? Today, we can listen to nearly anything, at any time. It is possible to flit instantly across genres and generations, from 1980s Detroit techno to 1890s Viennese neo-romanticism. This new age of listening brings with it astonishing new possibilities--as well as dangers.

In *Every Song Ever*, the veteran *New York Times* music critic Ben Ratliff reimagines the very idea of music appreciation for our times. In the age of the cloud, the genre of the recording and the intention of the composer matter less and less. Instead, we can savor our own listening experience more directly, taking stock of qualities like repetition, speed, density, or loudness. The result is a new mode of listening that can lead to unexpected connections. When we listen for slowness, we may detect surprising affinities between the drone metal of Sunn O))), the mixtape manipulations of DJ Screw, and the final works of Shostakovich. And if we listen for more elusive qualities like closeness, we might notice how the tight harmonies of bluegrass vocals illuminate the virtuosic synchrony of John Coltrane's quartet. Encompassing the sounds of five continents and several centuries, Ratliff's book is a definitive field guide to our musical habitat, and a foundation for the new aesthetics our age demands.

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