



Echo and Reverb: Fabricating Space in Popular Music Recording, 1900-1960 (Music/Culture)

Peter Doyle

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Echo and Reverb is the first history of acoustically imagined space in popular music recording. The book documents how acoustic effects—reverberation, room ambience, and echo—have been used in recordings since the 1920s to create virtual sonic architectures and landscapes. Author Peter Doyle traces the development of these acoustically-created worlds from the ancient Greek myth of Echo and Narcissus to the dramatic acoustic architectures of the medieval cathedral, the grand concert halls of the 19th century, and those created by the humble parlor phonograph of the early 20th century, and finally, the revolutionary age of rock 'n' roll.

Citing recordings ranging from Gene Austin's 'My Blue Heaven' to Elvis Presley's 'Mystery Train,' Doyle illustrates how non-musical sound constructs, with all their rich and contradictory baggage, became a central feature of recorded music. The book traces various imagined worlds created with synthetic echo and reverb—the heroic landscapes of the cowboy west, the twilight shores of south sea islands, the uncanny alleys of dark cityscapes, the weird mindspaces of horror movies, the private and collective spaces of teen experience, and the funky juke-joints of the mind.

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