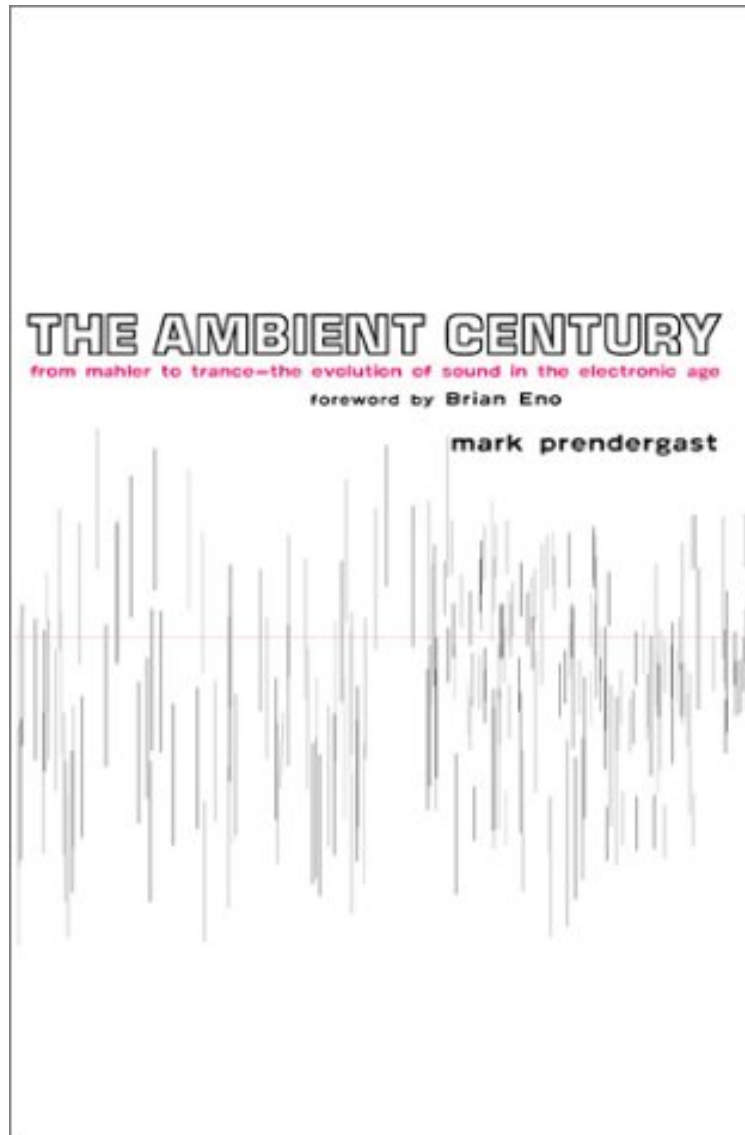


The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance: The Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age

Mark Prendergast

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Mark Prendergast : The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance: The Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance: The Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age:

10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Encyclopedic, Insightful, yet inaccurate.By Joshua HumphriesThe "family tree" of 20th Century music that Prendergast draws is deep in thought, yet lacking correctness on the minutiae.

These failings leave the reader at times frustrated with these inaccuracies. Hopefully, a second edition can be drafted to allow the mistakes to be corrected. It seems that they slipped through the cracks, simply because the book is so encyclopedic, that tiny (yet important) facts get left either unsaid, or misstated. Intellectually, it's a masterpiece meal, but unfortunately, the detail and factual wine's been kept next to the oven, and the bread is burnt. Fortunately for the book, its breath of fresh air in insight makes up for this. If the facts were fixed this book would be off the scale. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An unfocused encyclopedic reference on a theme that's never defined. By Christopher Culver Mark Prendergast's *THE AMBIENT CENTURY* is an encyclopedia of the biggest names in "ambient music", a style that's never defined, but which might be a) music that the author digs, and b) music that the author doesn't like so much but which lends respectability to later figures. Prendergast starts off all the way at the beginning of 1900s with innovative classical music figures such as Debussy, Mahler, and Ravel. There is little that these figures have in common with what came later, but Prendergast seems like he has to start early and so comes up with these guys. His inclusion of Schoenberg and the other Viennese composers is just crazy, since most of the minimalists (who have a better claim to be the inspiration of techno, house, and drum bass in the 80s and 90s) were trying as hard as possible *not* to write like that. Ditto for the inclusion of Pierre Boulez, although his friend Stockhausen merits inclusion. Passing over the rock era (I'm not competent to comment much on this genre), I must take issue with his treatment of electronic music, which is somewhat US-centric. Sasha is presented as a minor figure that didn't achieve much until 1999, when his Ibiza compilation came out, when he had really be earning praise since 1990 (when the British press was calling him "The Man Like God"). The book then says that Sasha left the U.K. entirely for Australia, which is simply false. Frequent collaborator John Digweed is called "The James Brown of DJing", leading me to suspect that the author has never seen Digweed live. This is a really disappointing and often-wrong book, and a bit of an odd duck because, expect for the "coolness" of it all, the people mentioned here have little in common. If you are interested in innovative classical music in the 20th century, try Griffith's *MODERN MUSIC AND AFTER: Directions Since 1940* (Oxford University Press, 1995). Similarly, those interested in electronic music would do well to find a more focused guide. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not because it's a great work, but because it's a pleasant one. By Molly Millions I've read this book many times over. Not because it's a great work, but because it's a pleasant one. Though constructed (sometimes with a heavy hand) as a more-or-less narrative history of 20th century music that Prendergast found notable at the time, it comes off more as an encyclopaedic reference on an idiosyncratic list of artists, lumped together around a seed of whatever makes "ambient" music what it is (the exact definition, as others have mentioned, remains nebulous - is it too many whole tone scales? atonal electronic texture? compositional styles emphasizing timbre over tonality? the fact that it sounds good playing in airport lounges? who knows). That doesn't devalue the work, and when I first got the book in 2001 (my freshman year of college) it helped fill in a lot of gaps in my playlist. It's not an academic reference. It's not particularly good criticism. It's not incredibly accurate history... but it's readable and engaging, and responsible for both broadening my own tastes and introducing me to a lot of new music.

A comprehensive and absorbing look at the music of the twentieth century, with an introduction by Brian Eno. The 20th Century saw two revolutionary changes in music. First music was deconstructed from its previously strict form, moving from formal constraints to more accessible melodies. Second, the way in which music was generated radically changed as new electronic equipment inspired experiments with sound divorced from traditional acoustic instruments. More and more, innovative musical ideas became intertwined with technological change. Multi-track recording, editing, and improved microphones allowed for quieter, experimental elements to gain prominence. And with the advent of digital synthesizers, new music could be made by anyone and sound like almost anything. *The Ambient Century* is the definitive chronicle of a century of musical change. It reveals the drift from composers to non-musicians, from the single note to the sample. Encyclopedic, yet with a strong narrative, *The Ambient Century* covers hundreds of artists, including such diverse artists as Gustav Mahler (the pioneer of modern music), Phillip Glass, New Order, and Moby. Lively, compelling, and authoritative-and boasting an unmatched discography. *The Ambient Century* is a treat for music lovers of all kinds.

From Publishers Weekly Just as anything evolves when its setting changes, 20th-century music mutated as it moved beyond the confines of concert halls and into listeners' everyday environs. Thanks to car stereos, headphones, even computers, people now move within their own soundtracks. In this chronology of compositional innovations, Prendergast, an internationally published music writer, details the widening of sonic possibilities with advancements in recording, amplification and electronic instruments, and with the creative talents of hundreds of bold, brilliant composers. He credits Mahler with first evoking the hypnotic "ambient experience of landscape and emotion," kicking off the century of "repetitive conceptual music." Prendergast describes how, after a four-day fast, the sound of a single piano tone proved revelatory for Karlheinz Stockhausen; how sitarist Ravi Shankar influenced everyone from minimalist Philip Glass to the Beatles; how Donna Summer "merged Germanicity with black music's long history"; and how scores of house and techno artists have "moved the focus of the music away from its creators towards the

listener." Organized by artist, the book provides suggested "Listenings" for each one, as well as a list of the "Essential 100 Recordings," which recommends ambient guru John Cage's "In a Landscape," megastar Bowie's absorbing "Low" and Goldie's "Timeless," a debut that brought ambient jungle/drum and bass into the mainstream. Talking Heads' producer Brian Eno, a maverick whose own music heavily influenced New Age and ambient house music, gives the book his stamp of approval in his foreword. Bw photos. Agent, Simon Trewin of Drury House, London. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Here, Irish music critic Prendergast makes an admirable and largely successful attempt to build bridges between the worlds of contemporary classical and rock music. But as the author never clearly defines or describes the term ambient, the reader is left to infer the connections among composers and genres. Prendergast divides his subject into four large sections: "The Electronic Landscape," "Minimalism, Brian Eno, and the New Simplicity," "Ambience in the Rock Era," and "House, Techno, and Twenty-First Century Ambience." The first is the most problematic section, as many of the observations here are simplistic and the listening lists too quirky and subjective to be useful. Prendergast is on much surer footing in the three subsequent sections, however. The text is packed with a wealth of detailed information and cogent observations on minimalist composers, rock personalities, technological innovations, and movers and shakers in the various worlds of contemporary music. Prendergast has an astonishing grasp of the global scene in popular music and writes with authority and conviction. Despite its flaws, this is an important addition to libraries with holdings in cultural and popular studies. DLarry Lipkis, Moravian Coll. Bethlehem, PA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Mark Prendergast, born in Dublin, has written about classical music and rock for newspapers, journals, and magazines worldwide. Now resident in London, his *Ambient Century* is the culmination of two decades listening with 'all gates open'. Brian Eno is a celebrated and innovative musician, producer, composer, and visual artist. He has produced albums for such legendary musical artists as U2, Talking Heads, and David Bowie, as well as recorded and played along with the Velvet Underground, John Cale, and Television. His solo experiments in the albums *Music For Films* and *Music for Airports*, among others, have established him as a pioneer of ambient music. Brian Eno remains true to his passion for ever-shifting musical styles and experimentation.