



Triple Entendre: Furniture Music, Muzak, Muzak-Plus

By Herve Vanel



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Triple Entendre discusses the rise and spread of background music in contexts as diverse as office workplaces, shopping malls, and musical performance. Hervé Vanel examines background music in several guises, including Erik Satie's "Furniture Music" of the late 1910s and early 1920s, which first demonstrated the idea of a music not meant to be listened to, and the Muzak Corporation's commercialized ambient music that became a predominant feature of modern life in the 1940s. Vanel's discussion culminates in the creative response of the composer John Cage to the pervasiveness and power of background music in contemporary society. By examining the subterranean connections existing between these three formulations of a singular idea, Triple Entendre analyzes and challenges the crucial boundary that separates an artistic concept from its actual implementation in life.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This wonderfully provocative book places the tradition of 'background music' or 'environmental music' such as Muzak into a distinctly modern perspective. A sharp interdisciplinary study that makes connections between the popular and the avant-garde."

--Tim J. Anderson, author of [Making Easy Listening: Material Culture and Postwar American Recording](#)

"If you have any interest in the relation between what is and what is not, (what is/is not music, creativity, but much more than that), if the boundaries between theory and public practice are too rigid for you (or too fuzzy to see) or if you don't know much about music but know what you like, then you will greatly profit from reading this book, as your surprised and delighted reviewer did."--*Leonardo Reviews*

About the Author

Hervé Vanel teaches art history at The American University of Paris and is the editor of [Francis Bacon, Entretiens](#).

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