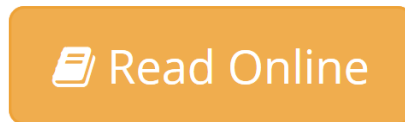


Japanese: Music at the Edge of Circulation (Sign, Storage, Transmission)

By David Novak



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Noise, an underground music made through an amalgam of feedback, distortion, and electronic effects, first emerged as a genre in the 1980s, circulating on cassette tapes traded between fans in Japan, Europe, and North America. With its cultivated obscurity, ear-shattering sound, and over-the-top performances, Noise has captured the imagination of a small but passionate transnational audience.

For its scattered listeners, Noise always seems to be new and to come from somewhere else: in North America, it was called "Japanoise." But does Noise really belong to Japan? Is it even music at all? And why has Noise become such a compelling metaphor for the complexities of globalization and participatory media at the turn of the millennium?

In *Japanoise*, David Novak draws on more than a decade of research in Japan and the United States to trace the "cultural feedback" that generates and sustains Noise. He provides a rich ethnographic account of live performances, the circulation of recordings, and the lives and creative practices of musicians and listeners. He explores the technologies of Noise and the productive distortions of its networks. Capturing the textures of feedback—its sonic and cultural layers and vibrations—Novak describes musical circulation through sound and listening, recording and performance, international exchange, and the social interpretations of media.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #658654 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-05-13
- Released on: 2013-05-13
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"David Novak goes inside the Noise scene and presents an astounding perspective: historically astute, inspired, and completely shell-shocked."
(Thurston Moore, *Sonic Youth*)

"Edgy, compelling, and sharply insightful, this is the definitive book on 'Japanese.' Drawing on his personal involvement in Noise scenes across two continents and over two decades, David Novak takes readers into the experience of Noise: its production and performance through apparatus of wires, pedals, amplifiers, and tape loops, through its intensity on the stage and in one's ears and body."
(Anne Allison, author of *Precarious Japan*)

"This is a striking book: theoretically exciting, aesthetically intriguing, and well crafted. *Japanese* is an extreme case study of modern musical subjectivity that demonstrates how core cultural ideas are formed on the fringe. David Novak's treatment of circulation as embedded in the creative process will shift the debate in ethnomusicology, popular music studies, and global media studies."
(Louise Meintjes, author of *Sound of Africa! Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio*)

"While *Japanese* gives a fantastically detailed account of Noise's history and evolution, it is also interesting to see it framed as a true representative of what has come to be known as 'Cool Japan.' As the government promotes sugary sweet pop acts that cause toothaches abroad, the grassroots noise scene (OK, it might be causing earaches) is making real progress in keeping Japan cool."
(Shaun McKenna *Japan Times*)

"Novak's contribution to sound studies is to encourage us to deal with the fragmented complexity of sonic environments and contexts, especially those where noise plays a crucial part. . . . What sets Novak's book apart . . . is how his ethnographic approach allows him to approach Noise music from both the macro-perspective of its historical context and the micro-lens of his personal relationship to it."

(Seth Mulliken *Sounding Out! blog*)

"The major strength of Novak's book lies in its ability to describe the goings on at various gigs in both Japan and the United States in such a way that the reader is able to sense something of what it must have been like to be there, just enough, perhaps, to wish that s/he had actually been there. For a reader such as this reviewer, indeed, there is much envy-inducing material here. In this respect, Novak's book is very much in the David Toop school of writing, and as such there are many passages that provide the reader with truly engaging, fascinating and beautifully written accounts of some musical events the like of which will never be heard again."
(Greg Hainge *Asian Studies Review*)

"Novak succeeds in highlighting the cultural implications of Noise in ways that productively broaden scholarly inquiries about music and culture. This book is an invaluable, groundbreaking contribution for ethnomusicology that is applicable to scholars across disciplines with interests in transnationalism, technology, and globalization."

(Nana Kaneko *Ethnomusicology Review*)

“This is a thought-provoking book that is well written and researched, and it made me reflect on not just Noise as experimental music that pushes the boundaries of aesthetics and physical listening but also on listening to a variety of sounds in daily life, on our relationship to technology and our ability to shape sound through it, and on the collaborative connections and blurred identities that exist among artists, distributors, and consumers.”

(Carolyn S. Stevens *American Ethnologist*)

"Novak's mesmerizing writing style achieves the impressive (almost magical, it seemed to me) feat of depicting the art without confining it to narrative. Indeed, the manner in which Novak's beautifully fragmented depictions of heterogeneous ethnographic 'scenes' tie together in a cohesive sort of chaos seemed intended to evoke Noise itself."

(Scott W. Aalgaard *Journal of Asian Studies* 2015-11-01)

"*Japanese*, on one hand, delineates Noise's historical resonance with *musique concrète*, post-war jazz, experimental rock and Dada happenings, to name just a few orienting styles. On the other, it encourages and provides a template for approaching challenging music with sensitivity to its form as well as its cultural logic. The book thus astutely addresses not only scholars but students at a variety of levels."

(Benjamin Tausig *Ethnomusicology Forum* 2016-09-01)

About the Author

David Novak is Assistant Professor of Music at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joan Stauffer:

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Myron Mendez:

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