

Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound

By Tara Rodgers



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Pink Noises brings together twenty-four interviews with women in electronic music and sound cultures, including club and radio DJs, remixers, composers, improvisers, instrument builders, and installation and performance artists. The collection is an extension of Pinknoises.com, the critically-acclaimed website founded by musician and scholar Tara Rodgers in 2000 to promote women in electronic music and make information about music production more accessible to women and girls. That site featured interviews that Rodgers conducted with women artists, exploring their personal histories, their creative methods, and the roles of gender in their work. This book offers new and lengthier interviews, a critical introduction, and resources for further research and technological engagement.

Contemporary electronic music practices are illuminated through the stories of women artists of different generations and cultural backgrounds. They include the creators of ambient soundscapes, "performance novels," sound sculptures, and custom software, as well as the developer of the Deep Listening philosophy and the founders of the Liquid Sound Lounge radio show and the monthly Basement Bhangra parties in New York. These and many other artists open up about topics such as their conflicted relationships to formal music training and mainstream media representations of women in electronic music. They discuss using sound to work creatively with structures of time and space, and voice and language; challenge distinctions of nature and culture; question norms of technological practice; and balance their needs for productive solitude with collaboration and community. Whether designing and building modular synthesizers with analog circuits or performing with a wearable apparatus that translates muscle movements into electronic sound, these artists expand notions of who and what counts in matters of invention, production, and noisemaking. Pink Noises is a powerful testimony to the presence and vitality of women in electronic music cultures, and to the relevance of sound to feminist concerns.

Interviewees: Maria Chavez, Beth Coleman (M. Singe), Antye Greie (AGF), Jeannie Hopper, Bevin Kelley (Blevin Blectum), Christina Kubisch, Le Tigre, Annea Lockwood, Giulia Loli (DJ Mutamassik), Rekha Malhotra (DJ Rekha), Riz Maslen (Neotropic), Kaffe Matthews, Susan Morabito, Ikue Mori, Pauline Oliveros, Pamela Z, Chantal Passamonte (Mira Calix), Maggi Payne, Eliane Radigue, Jessica Rylan, Carla Scaletti, Laetitia Sonami, Bev Stanton (Arthur Loves Plastic), Keiko Uenishi (o.blaat)

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Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound By Tara Rodgers Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #462511 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Duke University Press Books
- Published on: 2010-03-23
- Released on: 2010-03-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x .84" w x 5.75" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 336 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"[Rodgers] conducted thoughtful, detailed interviews with a wide range of artists.... Even when I don't much care for the artist Rodgers is talking to ... the discussion is lively and interesting.... Rodgers clearly understands many disparate modes of music making, and sounds equally authoritative whether she's talking about elaborate programming schemes, the language of analog synthesizers, or record buying." - Peter Margasak, *Chicago Reader*

"One of the best music books of 2010, Tara Rodgers's *Pink Noises*, gave an accessible window into what looks to be many years of research into gender, identity and electronic music. . . ." - Frances Morgan, *The Quietus*

"*Pink Noises* is an extremely well informed, informative and inspiring discussion of some of the most crucial aspects and developments in electronic music. The innovators and actors behind these developments happen to be women and *Pink Noises* thereby highlights the astounding male centeredness in standard accounts and representation in electronic music." - Anna Gavanas, *Dancecult*

"[A] vitally needed book, and it really is wonderful to read so many women talking passionately about the subject." - Emily Manuel, *Bitch*

"*Pink Noises* touches upon nearly every aspect of female involvement in the evolution of electronic music and sound. . . . This book would be worthwhile if only for its excellent, clearly written glossary of essential terms and its basic primer on the history of the speed-of-light changes of a mega-industry and tools that most westerners use—in our current climate of relatively affordable consumerism: (if not necessarily civilization)—on a virtually daily basis and that we take for granted." - Deborah Frost, *Women's Review of Books*

"Pink Noises is an original and important contribution to discourse in

electronic music, musicology, and gender studies. Rodgers's unique background as both electronic musician and scholar allows her to ask incisive questions about both creative process and cultural situation. And the introductory essay is nothing less than groundbreaking in its attempt to birth an alternate historiography for electronic music and to theorize the language and systems of electronic music." - Betsey Biggs, *Women & Music*

"Pink Noises is a breath of fresh air when you look at how many electronic music books are about more of the same: boys with toys. From the Middle Eastern–inflected electronica of DJ Mutamassik, to the Punjabi rhythms of DJ Rekha, to the academix of Pamela Z and Pauline Oliveros, Tara Rodgers's examination of women as central figures in the creative processes of twenty-first-century art and music is a must-read for

anyone who cares about the future of music in our hyper-connected and hyper-post-everything contemporary life."—Paul D. Miller, aka DJ Spooky

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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Tara Rodgers (Analog Tara) is an independent writer, composer, and musician, and the founder of

Pinknoises.com, a website devoted to women DJs, electronic musicians, and sound artists. Her electronic compositions have been released on several recordings and exhibited at venues including the Eyebeam Museum in New York City and the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art in Toronto. She has received the New Genre Composition Prize from the International Alliance of Women in Music and a 2006 Frog Peak Experimental Music Award. Rodgers has an MFA in electronic music from Mills College. She is a Ph.D. candidate in communication studies at McGill University.

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