

Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music

By S. Alexander Reed

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Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music By S. Alexander Reed

"Industrial" is a descriptor that fans and critics have applied to a remarkable variety of music: the oildrum pounding of Einstürzende Neubauten, the processed electronic groans of Throbbing Gristle, the drumloop clatter of Skinny Puppy, and the synthpop songcraft of VNV Nation, to name just a few. But the stylistic breadth and subcultural longevity of industrial music suggests that the common ground here might not be any one particular sound, but instead a network of ideologies. This book traces industrial music's attitudes and practices from their earliest articulations--a hundred years ago--through the genre's mid-1970s formation and its development up to the present and beyond.

Taking cues from radical intellectuals like Antonin Artaud, William S. Burroughs, and Guy Debord, industrial musicians sought to dismantle deep cultural assumptions so thoroughly normalized by media, government, and religion as to seem invisible. More extreme than punk, industrial music revolted against the very ideas of order and reason: it sought to strip away the brainwashing that was identity itself. It aspired to provoke, bewilder, and roar with independence. Of course, whether this revolution succeeded is another question...

Assimilate is the first serious study published on industrial music. Through incisive discussions of musicians, audiences, marketers, cities, and songs, this book traces industrial values, methods, and goals across forty years of technological, political, and artistic change. A scholarly musicologist and a longtime industrial musician, S. Alexander Reed provides deep insight not only into the genre's history but also into its ambiguous relationship with symbols of totalitarianism and evil. Voicing frank criticism and affection alike, this book reveals the challenging and sometimes inspiring ways that industrial music both responds to and shapes the world.

Assimilate is essential reading for anyone who has ever imagined limitless freedom, danced alone in the dark, or longed for more noise.

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Editorial Review

Review
Assimilate succeeds in providing an absorbing and extensive introduction to the industrial scene. Rob Upton, University of Nottingham, Music and Letters Well-written and impeccably researched, Assimilate is worth a look not only by music fans looking to learn about this industrial wall of sound, but also by scholars of pop culture wondering why the kids feel the way they do. Electric Review

About the Author

S. Alexander Reed is Assistant Professor of Music Theory at the University of Florida. He has published and presented research on vocal timbre, embodiment, postpunk music, and the recordings of Nine Inch Nails, Laurie Anderson, Rammstein, and Tori Amos. Reed has released five albums with his own gothic-industrial band, ThouShaltNot.

Users Review

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