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## **Ambient Music**

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### **Abstract**

Ambient music, alongside related forms such as chill out, muzak and easy listening, fulfills a very particular function, providing moments of stillness in a constantly moving world. This chapter explores the relationships of ambient music to religion and new age concepts of spirituality. It asks how this music has been used by religion, and how it has used religion, examining religion and popular music from the perspective of this genre and musical style. This involves exploring the nature of ambient music, beginning with its prehistory in a range of religious traditions that focus on meditation, ecstatic states and stillness. The study traces the development of ambient music, addressing the integration of mysticism and spirituality, Eastern religious thinking within 1960s counter-culture, experimental art music traditions and minimalism, with reference to the term new age, and reflecting a post-secular search for meaning. Discussion of European electronic music focused on soundscape and a sense of space further investigates the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of ambient music. The emergence and definition of the term ambient music is discussed, along with its popularization in the nineties, following the Orb and KLF into the electronic dance music culture (EDMC) and electronica of club chill out rooms. The religious and spiritual role of ambient music illustrates a re-enchantment of daily lives, an everyday spirituality of sacralized popular culture that breaks down separations between sacred and secular.

### **Key Words**

ambient music; chill out; religion; spirituality; ecstasy

### **Introduction**

Ambient music, alongside related forms such as chill out, muzak and easy listening, occupies a generous quantity of real estate in the few record stores that still exist in the twenty first century. It fulfills a very particular function, providing moments of stillness in a constantly moving world. This chapter

explores the relationships of ambient music to religion and new age concepts of spirituality. It asks how this music has been used by religion, and how it has used religion. In doing so it examines religion and popular music from the perspective of this genre rather than from the perspective of a religion or religions.

This will involve exploring the nature of ambient music, beginning with its prehistory in a range of religious traditions that focus on meditation, ecstatic states and stillness. The development of ambient music will be explored through the integration of a number of elements. These include mysticism and spirituality, Eastern religious thinking adopted both from within the popular music driven counter-culture that emerged from the 1960s, and from within experimental art traditions including the music of John Cage and minimalism. Such spiritualities, sometimes associated with the term new age, reflect a post-secular search for meaning (Bailey 2002).

Another element is European electronic music that focused on soundscape and a sense of space, beginning with European experimentalist Stockhausen and popular music bands he influenced, including Tangerine Dream and Kraftwerk. This is explored, although a more detailed historical overview can be read in David Toop's *Ocean of Sound* (1995) or Prendergast's *The Ambient Century* (2003). These elements merge to create the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of ambient music. The emergence of the term ambient music is discussed, including the definition of the term ambient music by Brian Eno. The popularization of ambient music in the nineties is examined, following the Orb and KLF into the electronic dance music culture (EDMC) and electronica of club chill out rooms. The religious and spiritual role of ambient music is explored, before concluding remarks. Ambient music is examined in context as a genre and a musical style (Fabbri 2012; Moore 2009).

## **Development of Ambient Music**

Ambient music is used by individuals within spiritual practice "to create narratives of meaning that help them to understand the world and their place in it" (Mulcock 2001: 181). Distinctions between the sacred and profane, or sacred and ordinary experiences, are no longer clear. This chapter seeks to explore particular experiences related to ambient music, often described as ecstatic and related to trance practices. Rouget (1985:7) uses the term "ecstasy solely to describe one particular type of state - altered states, let us say, attained in silence, immobility, and solitude". He also discusses a range of spiritual practices that explore ecstatic states, including meditation of Tibetan monks or Christian mystics; Senegalese Wolof practicing khwala, Sufi dhikr; Indian yogic samādhi; and Japanese mystical nembutsu. Such traditions discuss annihilation in God, abolition of all action and loss of everything (Rouget 1985:7-8), the still small voice of calm. Ecstasy is characterized by immobility, silence, solitude, no crisis, sensory deprivation, recollection and hallucinations. (ibid. 11) The inner languaging stops (Becker 2004: 29). Such introspective seeking of ecstasy in stillness similarly

permeates wider musical cultures. As well as a general background in various ethnographic contexts, Ambient music has a specific musical history that is relevant to its religious context.

One of the first specific references to ambient music is the work of Erik Satie. The French composer developed the idea of furniture music, music designed to be background music, to play unobtrusively, masking noise without imposing itself, a background for other experiences. Satie's furniture music was first performed in a theatre intermission (Remes 2014: 448-9), and he carried the same ideas over into music he wrote for film. From its beginning, silent film played background music that provided a counterpoint to the onscreen action. As films developed soundtracks, synchronized music developed that was designed to set the scene, and to "communicate what characters played on screen are supposed to be feeling (...) using music to communicate a certain set of emotions" (Tagg n.d. discussing the film music functions described by Lissa 1959; see also Chion 2009; Kassabian 2001; Sonnenschein 2001). Film music accustomed audiences to having a soundtrack to life. Without a film to watch, ambient music directs the focus of the listener within.

Satie's theories of furniture music were revived in the 1960s by John Cage, who knew of Satie's work. He also explored Zen Buddhism, embracing the silencing of self and connecting with stillness (Shultis 2013). Cage's use of silence in his compositions focused listeners' attention on ambient sound outside of instrumental performance. As a result of Cage's interest, Satie's furniture music became better known, especially amongst minimalist composers. Cage's music influenced a number of composers who embraced a minimalist aesthetic. Composers such as La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Philip Glass mixed Cage's ideas with influences from Gamelan, Indian classical music and other ethnographic forms, and created a genre that embraced Eastern spirituality alongside a meditative music style (Mertens 1983).

Discussing the origins of ambient music, Brian Eno suggests that "La Monte Young is the daddy of us all" (Potter 2002: 91). Young's long, slowly developing minimalist structures emerged from Javanese, Balinese and Indian music. For Young music is part of a spectrum of vibration that models the temporal structure of the universe. He describes wanting to understand the

relationship to universal structure and to time. Even in as simple a way as where do we come from, why are we here and where are we going? (...) Time is really a very important aspect of universal structure. What I have learned is it goes very slowly. (Young, quoted in Toop 1995: 178-79)

Influenced by Young, minimalist pioneer Terry Riley also composed in a spiritual context, using systemic approaches and reduced resources, "staying on one note, there's different ways but that's definitely a way to ecstasy" (Toop 1995: 185). His performances were influenced by peyote and shamanism, and he was involved in all night musical events focused on improvisation. Riley says

you developed a kind of feeling, like you were a sort of channel for the energy that was coming in from the space. You were all joining together, which was more of a ritual experience" (Toop 1995: 186),

especially influenced by the spiritual and psychological elements of Indian classical music. Minimalism was an overtly spiritual musical form. It was set in the same counter-cultural context of an experimental 1960s search for new spiritual paths.

German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen played a significant role in this firmament. Both Pierre Schaeffer's manipulation of sound through tape splicing and sound collage, and John Cage's exploration of space and silence are important references, but Stockhausen's early advocacy of the use of electronic musical sources infused popular music in general, and ambient music in particular. Like Cage, Stockhausen saw spirituality and religion as significant within composition. Stockhausen's compositions aimed to direct attention away from the self and towards the divine. His focus on serializing all elements of music provided a release from the ego, and a connection instead with supraconsciousness, connection beyond oneself. Electronics allowed structure and control to be systematized, reducing human agency, distanced from the composer, and separating audience from performance through recording. His aim was to take elements of the Universe, transform them into musical materials, and use these to create direct religious experiences and encounters. Much like Young, for Stockhausen,

everything in nature, moving and living in its own rhythm is a vibration of the genius of God (...) In music, human vibrations form the vibrations of nature in a way which transcends the functions of rational language". (Peters and Schreiber 1999: 101)

Electronic music allowed the composer to reflect the order of the Universe, controlling frequency spectra, pitch and duration to a level of detail not available with traditional musical instruments, reflecting the divine more accurately, and thus affording a more direct communion with God. Indeed Stockhausen modelled his approach to composition on the process of God's creation in the cosmos. (Ulrich 2012: 108). A number of young musicians and composers adopted Stockhausen's ideas and adapted them for popular music forms. For example he is pictured on the cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967). By 1973, a number of popular music artists were making electronic music that included elements of ambient music.

The world of late 1960s popular music was linked to these musical and spiritual ideals. A wave of experimentalism influenced bands from the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) in the UK to the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (1966) in the United States. The development and increasingly widespread availability of electronic musical instruments and other sound tools, including synthesizers with keyboards and tape echo units, influenced the soundworld of popular music. Rather than the rhythmic sound of the guitar and drum kit, the sustained tones of the Moog synthesizer and Mellotron afforded different possibilities. The counterculture "explored the values of peace and love, communality, creative expression, and Eastern forms of spirituality such as yoga and Buddhism". (Slyvan 2002: 84)

Music by bands such as the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and the Beatles was at the centre of this scene, placing psychedelic culture in mainstream view. Eastern religious beliefs were integrated by those returning from travelling (Maclean 2009), as epitomised by spiritual explorations of the Beatles, manifest in songs such as "Tomorrow Never Knows" (*Revolver*: 1966). The mysticism missing from an increasingly secular Western 1950s culture contrasted with ecstatic experiences within Eastern religious practice, and was embraced by 1960s culture involving psychedelic drugs and smoking marijuana. The latter encouraged stillness while enhancing sensory input, and was particularly associated with popular musicians (Shapiro 1999: 26-54).

Pink Floyd brought together a psychedelic mixture of free improvisation, jazz, experimentalism and electronics. Keyboard player Richard Wright had become interested in Stockhausen while studying piano at the London College of Art (Prendergast 2003: 259; Bayles 1996: 222). The band used Binorec tape echo added liberally to guitar and Farfisa organ, were early adopters of the EMS Synthi and VCS3 synthesizers, used found sound recordings of rain and wind, and tape splicing and editing techniques, mixing avant-garde classical and popular music sensibilities. The albums *Ummagumma* (1969) and *Meddle* (1971) developed these techniques, with long rambling structures based on the band's live improvisations, including LSD driven performances at the UFO club. Pink Floyd's music is an elegant forerunner to ambient music, with complex structures and production. *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) saw a flowering of the band into a full range of detailed experimental and electronic timbres, and *Wish You Were Here* (1975) featured long sustained motionless ambient textures. These two albums were hugely successful and brought proto-ambient music mass exposure, establishing a significant audience for such music.

Christopher Franke joined Edgar Froese's German psychedelic rock band Tangerine Dream in 1970, a group who were influenced by Pink Floyd's improvisation and experimentalism. Franke had studied composition at Berlin Conservatory, and was influenced by John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen. He started to use Moog modular synthesizers to generate sequences of notes, creating a fast hypnotic sound that reflected minimalism, and became the characteristic fingerprint of the band. The group's early music features few drums, and guitars that are transformed by effects units, moving away from conventional popular music instrumentation towards a purely electronic sound. Their experimentation involved "their own research leading directly to sampling technology and sequencing software" (Prendergast 2003: 286). Franke helped to design the Roland Jupiter 8 synthesizer and left the band eventually to create Steinberg's Cubase sequencing software, which would become the template for contemporary sequencers and digital audio workstations (DAWs) (Prendergast 2003: 289). Similarly, Peter Baumann worked with Emu systems on their electronic instruments. Highly prominent on the album *Alpha Centauri* (1971) synthesizers were used almost exclusively, to produce the albums and *Zeit* (1972) and *Atem* (1973). *Phaedra* (1974) featured the innovative synthesizer sequencer patterns discussed above, which became a characteristic stylistic meme of ambient music, echoing the sequential musical approaches of Indian classical music and Gamelan.

Tangerine Dream involved a number of musicians, with founder Edgar Froese the only constant. Like Stockhausen his attitude to composition involved spirituality. He describes how listening to music functions for the listener in relation to spiritual thoughts:

it's first inside you. Then you somehow see it or feel it outside yourself and start reflecting with what you experience first inside. So through that reflection, you somehow get those inside-out exchanges (Toop 1990: 90-91).

Tangerine Dream were part of a German experimental music scene that also included the band Kraftwerk. Kraftwerk were influenced by La Monte Young and Terry Riley (Toop 1995: 205) as well as by Stockhausen and the futurists (Flur 2003: 228). Their album *Ralf und Florian* (1973) relied on drum machines and largely home made synthesizers, and their next album *Autobahn* (1974) integrated a Moog synthesizer and was a major success. Their music was overtly electronic, with titles like *The Man-Machine* (1978) and *Computer World* (1981). They influenced a wide range of music, including 1980s European synthpop by artists such as Ultravox, the Human League and Duran Duran, and in the United States inspired house and techno music as well as the electro sounds of hip hop.

Labeled "Krautrock" in the media, bands like Kraftwerk, NEU! and Can used repetitive and mechanistic rhythms, elongated structures and electronic sources. Can were formed by Irmin Schmidt. Classically trained, he had worked with Stockhausen and Cage in Darmstadt, and with minimalists Young, Reich and Riley in New York in 1966. (Prendergast 2003: 280). Another band member Holger Czuckay had also studied classically, and with Stockhausen, and met Schmidt at Darmstadt. The so-called krautrock bands gained further status when David Bowie adopted their sounds for his *Low* (1977) and *Heroes* (1977) albums, produced by Brian Eno in Berlin, who had discovered these German experimental popular minimalists. A year later Eno would recast krautrock as ambient music.

### **Brian Eno and Ambient Music**

Brian Eno was drawn into the world of experimental art school by Tom Phillips, who taught him at Ipswich School of Art. Eno became a member of Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Ensemble, a group that performed experimental free improvisation and text scores. His musical origins are confused somewhat by his membership of the band Roxy Music, in which he performed on the VCS3 synthesizer. He was in the band for a short period, and acted as much as producer and sound engineer as band member. He has been associated throughout his career with minimalist and experimental art music composition. Before leaving Roxy Music he had already joined in 1972 the experimental ensemble the Portsmouth Sinfonia, producing their first two recordings. The ensemble's leader was Gavin Bryars, a British minimalist composer who had studied with John Cage. Eno's life and work is described in some detail by Sheppard (2008) and Tamm (1995).

In 1975 Eno released an album *Another Green World* (1975) that used

random chance and Eno's Oblique Strategies cards to structure the music, while staying broadly within a popular music form. In the same year he opened a record label Obscure Records. Obscure released Eno's *Discrete Music* (1975) involving Robert Fripp and Bryars, exploring Terry Riley influenced tape loops with Fripp. Eno also released Bryars' *The Sinking of the Titanic* (1975), and the album *Ensemble Pieces* (1975) on which Eno performed alongside Cardew and others on compositions by John Adams, Bryars and Christopher Hobbs. In 1978 Eno released the first of a series of four albums labelled Ambient 1 to Ambient 4. The first was *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978). It contained extensive liner notes, in which he defined what he meant by ambient music:

I have become interested in the use of music as ambience (...) using the term Ambient Music. My intention is to produce original pieces ostensibly (but not exclusively) for particular times and situations (...) Ambient Music is intended to induce calm and a space to think. Ambient Music must be able to accommodate many levels of listening attention without enforcing one in particular; it must be as ignorable as it is interesting. (Eno 1978)

Many predecessors, composers, musicians and producers had written music in a similar vein, but Eno did so overtly, setting out a manifesto to deliberately write ambient music, and in doing so established a new genre. As Demers puts it Eno:

provides the template for many later works: repetitive, tonal language, an absence of abrasive or abrupt attacks, long decays, and non-teleological writing, as if the melody could continue on indefinitely. (Demers 2010: 117)

Eno's innovations are part of a larger field of (largely) instrumental downbeat music focused on electronic sounds. This included Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* (1973); continuing releases by Pink Floyd and Tangerine Dream; film soundtrack albums *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Blade Runner* (1982) by Vangelis; and *Oxygene* (1976) by Jean-Michel Jarre, who had studied with Schaeffer at GRM in France, and subsequently with Stockhausen (Remilleux 1988).

These sounds colonized commercial music in the 1980s, as British synthpop bands like Japan, the Human League, Cabaret Voltaire, and in Japan the Yellow Magic Orchestra, included instrumental or ambient material tracks on their albums. In the same decade, world music developed as a music industry catch all for music from around the globe, for example the WOMAD (World of Music Arts and Dance) festival and record label emerged from 1980, and the Real World record label in 1985, both driven forward by Peter Gabriel (<http://realworld.co.uk>). Releases of music by for example Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (*Best of Qawwal and Party Volume 1* 1986; *Passion* 1989) provided a new type of globalized ambient music. The development of digital recording technology, and digital synthesizers provided further opportunities for ambient sound to be explored. Synthesizers became more commonplace, for example Dire Straits changed from a bluesy guitar-focus to the ambient electronic sounds of "Telegraph Road" (*Love Over God* 1982). Although a number of musicians explored the same territory as Eno's ambient music, few worked overtly in the genre. This was to change as a new wave of drug culture



exploded in 1988, as the drug ecstasy mixed with electronic dance music,, and chill out music became the new face of ambient.

### **Chill Out Music**

From 1985 onwards, new forms of electronic music developed in the United States such as house and techno, but with little commercial impact. British DJ Paul Oakenfold, along with friends Johnny Walker, Danny Rampling and Nicky Holloway experienced the interaction of this music with ecstasy (the drug MDMA or "E") while on holiday in Ibiza for his 24th birthday in 1987. They had been to Ibiza before, and would chill out in one of the few west-facing bars on the island, the Cafe Del Mar in San Antonio where watching the sun setting is an Ibiza rite of passage. Taking ecstasy for the first time, they went to the club Amnesia, which featured peripheral chill out areas as well as the dancefloor (Warren 2007). On their return to London they set up club nights trying to recreate their Ibiza experiences. In an upstairs VIP room at his Land of Oz events at the Heaven nightclub in London, Paul Oakenfold and some friends set up a chill out room called the White Room (Reynolds 1999: 189), where dancers could take a break from the intensity and volume of the dancefloor. Oakenfold had only one instruction for the DJs, "don't get them to dance" (Norris 2007: 135).

Jimmy Cauty and Alex Patterson were the DJs, playing music that avoided drums, using samples, tapes and records as sources, mixing them with sound effects, combining them together as an extended ambient DJ set. This live approach was published as the first single in 1989 by the Orb "A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain That Rules from the Centre of the Ultraworld" (*The Orb's Adventures Beyond the Ultraworld* 1991). The rear of the single proclaimed it "ambient house for the E generation" (Reynolds 1999: 190), underlining the idea of listening to EDMC ambient music under the influence of drugs. Cauty left the Orb, causing some acrimony, as he found greater commercial success with KLF compared to the Orb, using the musical ideas and content he had developed with Patterson. He released *Space* (1990) and with Bill Drummond released KLF's *Chill Out* (1990). Rather than the Orb's ambient house, KLF coined the term chill out and referenced ambient music with "file under ambient" written on a sticker on the cover of an early KLF record. (Toop 1995: 58-63) These releases provided a template for electronic ambient music, providing a new term for a new genre, chill out.

Both the Orb and KLF were aware of their ambient music predecessors. The Orb's Alex Patterson had heard Eno's album *Music for Films* (1978) having taken LSD on tour as a roadie with Killing Joke, and was inspired to create similar music (Prendergast 2003: 407-12). He had also worked for Eno's EG records, who released his ambient series (Reynolds 1999: 191). KLF sampled Pink Floyd's "On The Run" (*Dark Side of the Moon* 1973) on *Madrugada Eterna* (*Chill Out* 1990) and the album it featured on used synthesizers, Tuvan throat singing, slide guitar, Elvis Presley and lots of found natural sounds, such circadas, wind and waves. The Orb sampled "Electric Counterpoint" (1989) by Steve Reich on their 1990 single "Little Fluffy Clouds" (*The Orb's*

*Adventures Beyond the Ultraworld* 1991), and their "A Huge Ever Pulsating Brain That Rules From The Centre of the Ultraworld (Loving You)" (*The Orb's Adventures Beyond the Ultraworld* 1991) samples Pink Floyd's "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" (*Wish You Were Here* 1975). (Prendergast 2003: 408).

This EDMC development was a second overt embracing of the term ambient music. The music was particularly targeted at clubbers coming down from the night before, congregating after a night dancing. Many other EDMC artists produced downtempo tracks to contrast with their dancefloor material. Warp Records released a range of experimental tracks on *Pioneers of the Hypnotic Groove* (1991) and *Artificial Intelligence* (1992) branded compilation albums, leading to the intelligent dance music (IDM) ambient sub genre. Aphex Twin released *Selected Ambient Works 85-92* (1992). Another compilation *Ambient Dub Volume 1 (The Big Chill)* (1992) reflected the influence of Jamaican dub music on EDMC in general, and chill out culture in particular, especially the reverb and echo laden productions of Lee Scratch Perry and King Tubby. (Partridge 2010). Ambient house, ambient dub, IDM and chill out developed the field of ambient music. Club chill out rooms proliferated alongside chill out club nights and festivals such as the Big Chill. As Sylvan puts it (2002: 138), "There is a rhythmic temporal oscillation between the intensity of the dance floor and the relaxing break of the chill room".

### **Ambient music in religion, and religion in ambient music**

Peter Baumann left Tangerine Dream in 1984 to establish the Private Music record label. This initially released new age music, including Tangerine Dream, that overtly integrated spirituality and ambient music. In 1987 the Grammy awards in the United States introduced an award for best new age recording, establishing new age music as a genre with increasing sales figures. A number of artists with more widespread popularity have been nominated for this category, including Clannad, Enya, Eno, Jean-Michel Jarre, Mike Oldfield and Tangerine Dream. Other artists are more overtly aligned with new age music, such as Don Robertson, Kitaro, Paul Winter and Peter Kater. A number of websites, such as <http://www.newagemusic.guide> discuss new age music.

New age is a difficult term, as it has been applied indiscriminately to a range of disparate groups, alternative spiritualities emerging as a response to the reenchantment of society (Gablik 1991; Partridge 2005). As Toop (1995: prologue) says of ambient music, "sound was used to find meaning in changing circumstances". A similar term is self-spirituality, in which the self, rather than the divine is the ultimate source. Heelas *et al.* (2005) describe this in terms of a turn towards spirituality, rather than religion. The term new age music is similarly problematic and ill-defined. New age music often draws upon world music, electronica and ambient music. It is separated from ambient or chill out music principally by presentation, packaging and its sales demographic, rather than by musical style.

Heelas *et al.* (2005: 10) discuss religion giving way to spirituality, in "a less regulated situation in which the sacred is experienced in intimate relationship

with subjective-lives". As Lynch (2002: 89) states, "Western culture could then be seen as becoming increasingly 'post-religious', with the individual search for meaning taking on new and surprising forms". Beyond secularization (Bruce 2002; Davie 2007; Martin 2007), new age and ambient music fulfills a continuing need for spiritual exploration within an individuated world featuring the sacred popular (Till 2010). Lynch (2007: 136) describes

the sacralization of the self, in which the struggles, growth and interior life of the individual have developed a sacred quality without any necessary reference to a transcendent sacred or external religious authority.

Fields such as popular music genres are also sacralized, and the boundaries between the sacred and profane in everyday life are eroded. Within New Age spirituality the sacred and mundane become newly interfused (...) This amounts to a social reconfiguration of the sacred". (Redden 2011: 657)

Numerous musical examples of EDMC ambient music sample music that was originally set in a spiritual context, or use religious signification. EDMC embraces transcendental or pschedelic experiences and spirituality in much the same fashion as 1960s counter-culture (St. John 2004; Till 2009; 2011). *MCMXC a.D* (1990) by Enigma is an album created by Michael Cretu, a producer based in Ibiza who was caught up in the island's involvement in the EDMC (Prendergast 2003: 405). The album mixes Gregorian chant with ambient beats and sounds. In the same year band the Beloved sampled a recording by Gothic Voices (1982) of "O Eucari" by mediaeval Christian mystic Hildegarde of Bingen on their song "Sun Rising", a track from the appropriately titled *Blissed Out* (1990). Such recordings helped to launch a revival of interest in Gregorian and other chant music as ambient listening.

If such religious content appears to operate at a somewhat surface level, such appropriation of religious music has afforded religious institutions the use of ambient music, for example within the alternative worship movement of the Christian church, now sometimes subsumed within "fresh expressions", or multi-sensory church. The Nine O'Clock Service in Sheffield, an Anglican church, used a range of ambient music in services from as early as 1987, including "Love on a Real Train" (*Risky Business* 1984) by Tangerine Dream and "Someday" (Ce Ce Rogers 1989). The latter was an underground club hit released as a single by Atlantic in 1987, the first house music to be released on a major label. Like many deep house or garage tracks from New York, the record featured gospel style piano and vocals, the lyrics inspired by the famous Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" speech. The Nine O'Clock Service (Till 2006) brought many elements of EDMC into their worship services, including DJs, club music, originally-produced EDMC-influenced music, lighting, smoke, video and slide projections. Many other groups adopted these ideas, and in particular have used ambient music in services (Wallace 2002; Gay and Baker 2003).

Ambient music has its origins in religious music, whether Gregorian or Tibetan chant, Hindu mantras or Sufi prayers, and its relationship with religion and spirituality is thus unsurprising considering its draws from Cage, Stockhausen, minimalism, 1960s counterculture, and new age spiritualities, as well as its later placement within EDMC. EDMC activities involve ecstatic merger,

communitas, connection and collective effervescence, create powerful emotional experiences (Till 2010: 131-66). Beate Peter (2009) describes EDMC dissolution of self on the dancefloor as collective Jungian therapy sessions, aided by social lubricant of ecstasy (Till 2009). Such behaviour requires space afterwards to process after-effects, an opportunity afforded by chilling out to ambient music, whether in a club or at home. Becker (2004: 38) points out that "we sometimes enjoy the feeling of nothing but our own bodies in a space", ecstatic experience through entrainment and entrancement of the body and mind, perceptions and expectations coordinated by entrainment to what is heard (Turow and Berger 2009). Listening to ambient music can play a part in an ontological experience, focusing on the nature of being and becoming, and of relationship with others.

Toop (1995: prologue ii) describes Ambient music as

drifting or simply existing in stasis rather than developing in any dramatic fashion (...) encouraging states of reverie and receptivity in the listener (...) engendered by techniques for disrupting a conventional relationship with time. (...) often uses multiple time signatures, a range of periodicities, or combinations of groups of prime numbers of beats. Alternatively (...) disrupted by a lack of musical beat.

The musical style of ambient music affords a sense of *kairos*, or qualitative time, rather than *chronos*, quantitative time. A non-teleological musical approach allows pause, the creation of place, and the opportunity to slow the frantic pace of life for a moment. A Western world characterized by stress and fear, a fluid post- or liquid culture in which it is difficult to find one's place, has led many towards a sense of the homeless self (Heelas and Woodhead 2001). Ambient music sets a context, a sense of place that is calming and serene, re-establishing a sense of home. It draws the listener inwards, stilling time and moving the deep listener into a sense of *kairos*, to a greater or lesser extent. Even when ambient music is being largely ignored by the listener, the music is fulfilling this function, helping to set a scene, situating those who are listening to or ignoring the music.

Describing ecstatic trances, Becker (2004: 27) tells us that

By enveloping the trancer in a soundscape that suggests, invokes, or represents other times and distant spaces, the transition out of quotidian time and space comes easier. (...) One is moved from the mundane to the supra-normal: another realm, another time.

Popular culture, and more specifically popular music culture, fulfils with ambient music a need for music that provides a soundtrack for those seeking a range of ecstatic states.

The music focuses on stillness on engaging with nothingness, setting an atmosphere, and turning space into place. Yi-Fu Tuan (1977: 6) defines space and place. Whereas space allows movement, the contextualised place is stillness, "each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place". Cresswell (2004: 11) describes places as contextualized spaces:

Place is also a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world. When we look at the world as a world of places (...) we see attachments and connections between people and place. We see worlds of meaning and experience.

In a similar way, Demers relates ambient music to space that is situated, and the listening context of the audience, "not only the environments in which sound propagates but also those that listeners physically and metaphorically occupy". (2010: 113) She describes listening space in ambient music as "a composite of the perceived spatial characteristics of a work" (116), an emotional elicitation similar in concept to that within film music. For Demers "ambient music excels at creating the impression of an acoustic cocoon that surrounds the listener" (119).

Contextual consciousness of sound in space, transforms it into place. When listening to the time-based medium of sound in a specific place, we pause but do not stop, embedded within its soundscape (Till 2014). Listening to ambient music helps to turn a neutral, physical space into a contextualized, meaningful place, the music interacting with external sonic references (blanketing or absorbing them), disrupting a conventional sense of time by inserting its own free association with temporality.

Ambient music is highly functional, it interacts with a habitus (Bourdieu 1977) of listening that is specific to the individual but relates to the field of the genre. It ranges along a spectrum from background atmosphere, to assisting in loss of self. This operates in a similar fashion to Hindustani music focused upon meditation, in which music listening is focused upon "refining of emotional essence, a distillation of his or her emotion that will lead to a transformation of consciousness to a higher level of spirituality (...) closer to the divine" (Becker 2004: 76). Just like in ambient music,

silent, still, focused listening is also the habit in some other musical traditions, notably the north Indian Hindustani tradition, where one sits quietly, introspectively listening to the gradual developing filigree of the musical structure (...) Thoughts and feelings are turned inward. The setting is intimate, conducive to introspection and a distancing from one's fellow listeners (Becker 2004: 69).

Becker describes such participants as deep listeners, characterized by expressions of transcendence and gnosis, in which out-of-body sensations abound featuring nearness to the sacred, loss of boundaries between self and other, experiences of wholeness and unity. Ambient music embraces such embodied phenomenological listening.

At its best, as Becker puts it, such musical experiences are

a special blessing, a benediction (...) a life-enhancing skill (...) with the resulting intensely felt emotion and feelings of transcendent numinosity (...) to temporarily abide in an eternity (...) to feel more purposefully alive and in direct communication with the Holy (...) in an enchanted world. (2004: 195).

With its effectiveness enhanced by the religious practices of alternative spiritualities or the drug taking of EDMC, this music has for many become an important part of everyday spirituality. Whether encountered during an intense meditation session, or while shopping in a supermarket, ambient music plays a part in re-enchanting our daily lives.

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