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# Hearing place: sound art exploring place from around the world (various artists)

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Various sound artists

*Hearing Place: sound art exploring place from around the world*

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Reviewed by Michael Hannan

This CD is in the form of a travelogue. We get to explore the soundscapes of 10 different locations (mostly cities) in the space of 74 minutes. A product of the International Symposium of the World Forum of Acoustic Ecology held in Melbourne in 2003, it was curated by Ros Bandt and Iain Mott.

Petri Kuljuntausta recorded the source material for *Vroom!!* at Piccadilly circus in London. It is easy to believe his claim that he was so close to the traffic that his microphone was in danger of being hit by vehicles. It's a very in-your-face recording with all kinds of traffic noises serving as the background for haunting melodic material processed from the high whining sound of speeding motorcycles. By contrast the beginning of Samuel Pellman's *The Home Planet* is almost New Age in its intent, taking the sounds of bells and birds (and other sounds from upstate New York) and transforming them magically by various digital manipulation techniques.

Christopher DeLaurenti's *Your 3 Minute Mardi Gras* returns us to the abrasiveness of the busy city, namely New Orleans with its extreme partying atmosphere at festival time. His method of sound collage using relatively primitive linear two-track editing and what he calls 'maniacal recombinant polyphony' is disturbingly untidy.

*Sydney Sound Walk* by Jon Drummond takes sounds collected between the Archibald Fountain and Customs House Square and processes them in extreme ways. It tantalises the listener to imagine what the original sounds were.

Aaron Ximm's unedited recording of *Beach Rain* in Vietnam uses 'binaural-like microphones' positioned near his ears. The rain falling on his plastic rain hat creates a mysterious crackling effect.

More soothing is Greg Hooper's 'december Yard', constructed from a number of recordings made in inner-city Brisbane in summer. Given the location, it is surprising that not much traffic noise is evident. Rather we hear a gentle ambient backdrop punctuated by birds (such as the Common Koel) and the occasional shower of rain.

In London again, this time for Viv Corringham doing her *Vocal Strolls*. While wearing binaural stereo microphones she performs extended technique vocal improvisations in response to heavy machinery sounds. The combination is artistically unconvincing. Next we travel to Geneva's waste disposal department for Pierre Thoma's *Le Souterrain*. The sounds are mostly of heavy machinery like pumps and turbines and the dripping ambience of sewers. You can almost smell it.

Gabriele Proy's *Lagom* is an inventive evocation of life in Sweden. Unlike many of the other sound artists on this CD she uses a broad palate of sounds to create an intensely

human sound world. Finally Michelle Nagai's *Hawk Study*, based on Canadian wilderness recordings, features the artist intervening verbally to create a kind of personal commentary on the listening experience.

On the whole I found this an intense auditory experience. The high points for me were the works by Proy, Ximm and Hooper, whereas Corrington's indulgent and artless vocalisations brought down the overall standard.