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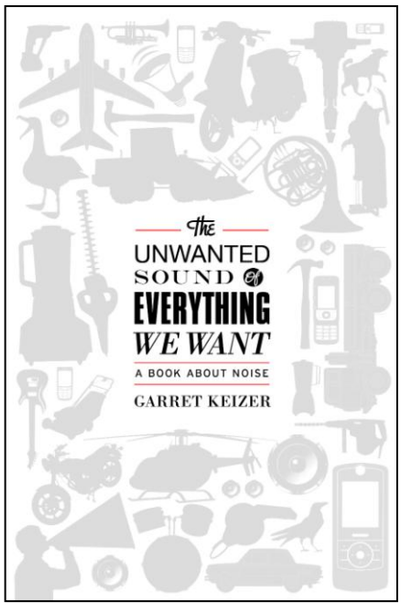
THE UNWANTED SOUND OF EVERYTHING WE WANT

A Book About Noise

by GARRET KEIZER



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Noise is usually defined as unwanted sound: loud music from a neighbor, the honk of a taxicab, the roar of a supersonic jet. But as Garret Keizer deftly illustrates in ***The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want***, noise is as much about what we want as about what we seek to avoid. A byproduct of human striving since ancient times, and a hallmark of industrial development, noise has emerged as a significant cause of stress, disease, and environmental degradation in our own. At heart, noise provides a key for understanding some of our most pressing issues, from social inequality to climate change.

In a journey that leads us from the primeval Tanzanian veldt to the modern streets of Mumbai, from the world's biggest motorcycle rally in Sturgis, South Dakota, to wind farms in Maine, Keizer invites us to listen to noise in history, in popular culture, and not least of all in our own backyards. He examines noise and its political ramifications, the connection between one's income and noise exposure, and the sometimes ironic relationship between economic growth and quality of life. He questions the U.S.'s influential role in an ever louder world and whether it's intrinsically American to be loud. Finally, he considers what noise has to tell us about a sustainable future —especially noise pollution's correlation with carbon emissions and its destruction of natural sounds and festive ways of life. Deeply satisfying, ***The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want*** is guaranteed to change how we hear the world, and how we measure our own volume within it.

Cutting through the noise

Noise was the top community complaint of New Yorkers at the beginning of the 20th century. It remains so today.

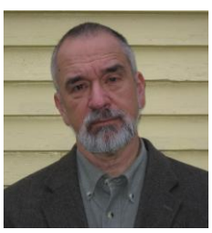
One out of four American military service personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan has a hearing loss.

Some children's toys emit sounds on par with those of a sandblaster. This is legal.

Titanium golf clubs have the potential to damage your hearing.

Noise has been shown to elevate stress hormones in school-age children.

Adolph Hitler said, "Without the loudspeaker we [the Nazis] never would have conquered Germany."



GARRET KEIZER is a freelance writer, a contributing editor to *Harper's Magazine,* and a recent Guggenheim Fellow. He is the author of six books, including the critically acclaimed *Help* and *The Enigma of Anger*. His essays and poems have appeared in *The Los Angeles Times, Mother Jones, The New Yorker, The Best American Essays*, and *The Best American Poetry*. He lives with his wife in northeastern Vermont.

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