

environments disc 9

Document prepared by the **Museum of Portable Sound**

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*Transcription of the inner sleeve of **Environments 9: Pacific Ocean / Caribbean Lagoon, 1979**. While seeking to preserve this text, we were unable to resist correcting some of the considerable misspellings & grammatical errors found in the original. We have, however, maintained the text's liberal use of italics.*

Side One

THE MAGIC OF PSYCHOACOUSTIC SOUND

NOISE MASKING

One of the most amazing aspects of Environments is the ability to control distracting noise with a phonograph record. Basically, SR releases with a "white noise" content are most effective in this context. Sounds with a high degree of white noise content are: moving water (the ocean, rivers, streams), rain, and certain types of rural conditions, such as wind in a wheat field, cornfield, or orchard. There are many variations on these themes in the Environments Series, each with specific characteristics which research has shown to be important to various personality types.

However, with all such sounds, the technique remains the same. You should play the sounds just barely above the ambient noise you wish to neutralize. You will probably find that you truly enjoy listening to sounds on a particular disc but we recommend that you play the recording at a less noticeable level, so that you will not be upset by the recycling at the end of the record. Also, at this level, you will seldom actively listen to the sound, so that you will never really get tired of hearing it. We are certain that you will be amazed at the amount of noise cancellation accomplished with even a barely heard Environments record of this type.

Other releases useful in this context are "busy" records with many pleasant sounds, such as birds, insects, and other fauna. These recordings tend to hide offensive sounds in their dense patterns of random sound. The first technique is called "reducing the signal-to-noise ratio" and the second is called "mnemonic interference,"

SOLITUDE

One of the things hardest to come by in this modern world is decent solitude. True, you can hide in a closet or you can spend hundreds of dollars to sit on a

beach in the Bahamas but solitude is really a *state of mind*. What people have found so strange about Environments over the years is that, with the use of these records, their living room or bedroom is the best, most comfortable solitude they know of.

Noise masking is a funny thing. It can be so effective that you actually think you are somewhere else, If the effect is (1) psychoacoustically correct and (2) it takes you to a place you would want to be. Many of the Environments sides are extremely effective when you want to be only with yourself. They are not sounds you would use at a party (although this can sometimes be effective, too) or for entertaining your mother-in-law. The noise masking is so effective that carrying on a normal or subdued conversation can be difficult, you simply can't hear the other person clearly enough. Living spaces are shrinking each year, and the use of Environments for solitude will become more and more of a vital resource as decent solitude becomes increasingly precious.

SOCIALIZING

The other side of the coin is what to play when people come over, especially when their tastes may not agree with your own. There are certain Environments sides expressly designed for such circumstances, in that they are "transparent" sounds which produce mnemonics useful under social conditions. Depending on volume, almost any Environments release can be useful for entertaining small groups. Should it be raining outside? How about a party aboard a boat or in the midst of an English meadow? Use your imagination and you will find that Environments are actually a great aid to interaction.

STUDY HABITS / CONCENTRATION / READING COMPREHENSION

If you play music while you read or study, you do so because your surroundings are too quiet or you just want some aural "company." However, almost all music is meant to be listened to, thus you are placed in the schizophrenic position of switching attention from what you are reading to what you are listening to. Since almost everyone knows how distracting this is, one of our initial priorities in developing the Environments Series has been to find sounds which can be used as an effective aid to concentration. To our pleasant surprise, we found that many of our releases not only aided concentration, but also relaxed and calmed most people to the point where quite a few college students reported dramatic improvements in their grades and business and professional people actually attributed job advancements and salary increases to the use of Environments! What sounds were most effective? Almost every Environments side has been reported as effective in this context and it is impossible to indicate specific sounds, as they have a great deal to do with your own preferences and experiences, in terms of what you might reference as 'a place you wish to be.' We do suggest that, once you find a sound that works for you in this context, you stick with that sound

as a *habit* and that you use specific environmental sounds for specific purposes, such as “Gentle Rain In a Pine Forest” for technical material, “Woodmasted Sailboat” for report preparation and “Summer Cornfield” for paying bills. This may sound a little strange but we are making this ‘habit’ recommendation based on many years of listener responses.

NATURAL HIGHS

High Times Magazine worried that the FDA might eventually ban Environments as “highly addictive” and might even wish to make them a “controlled substance.” Although the comment was facetious, the fact is that many people have commented that Environments are a “natural high” in both senses of the term. SR knows exactly what they mean, in that our research is, for the large part, based on this phenomenon. If you live in the city and only hear machines, electronic noise, and other people, pristine natural sounds can truly have the effect of a “natural high” and, although it bends your mind a bit to consider it, sound *can* get you high. If you live in the country, you know how transitory these natural sounds actually are, plus the fact that you are probably far more appreciative of these sounds than “city slickers” and it is often surprising to reviewers to find that more than half the purchasers of Environments actually live in areas that might be considered rural. Country folk know how rare these sounds are and they also know how carefully crafted the reproduction of these sounds must be to be effective for them.

MEDITATION / ALPHA WAVES / SELF-HYPNOSIS

For many years, hundreds of thousands of people have been enthusiastic concerning the use of Environments as an aid to meditation. In addition, it has been found that listening to Environments sides puts most people into Alpha state and *keeps them there longer* than the use of most bio-feedback training devices. This is not to denigrate the usefulness of such monitoring/feedback devices in general, but Alpha state is a *symptom* of an automatic mind function and it is easier to “just let it happen” than to consciously control one’s own mind.

People seem to need reinforcement to explore meditational states of mind. We do not believe this is necessary. We have explained to experienced meditators that we wanted them to *listen* to particular Environments sounds on earphones and compare the experience to meditational experiences they had learned through other methods. For the most part, these experimental participants reported *a different state of meditation* from what they had ordinarily experienced. Since most participants did not have to actively work at the meditational process, we called the process “induced meditation,” in that it was virtually automatic.

There are some rules, however. (1) You must *want* to meditate (2) You must be in a circumstance where you *can* meditate and (3) you must *let it happen* and not fight it. Most people have already experienced an almost identical

state while on vacation. You have beautiful surroundings, no distractions, and time. Rather than go into the exact process, which would require far more space than what is available here, what we are recommending is an attempt to duplicate the *fifth* day of a one-week vacation, utilizing the three rules above. We think you will be very surprised.

SEX

Utilizing Environments in a dark room is always a delight. That dark room can be *anywhere* and, if you happen to be engaged in lovemaking, a bed or sofa is usually not where your imagination really wants to be. Imagine how nice lovemaking would be in a meadow, without mosquitos and burrs to contend with. Imagine making love aboard a schooner on the high seas, without worrying about a hurricane or a reef. Get the idea? We do recommend that you not use the same Environments side twice in a row for this particular purpose. Almost all of the Environments Series can be utilized in this highly rewarding way, so use a number of them to maximize the effectiveness.

We have found that our heartbeat recording does have a *special* relationship to sex, however. This particular sound actually seems to slow down and synchronize the act of lovemaking in a way not experienced by most people. It works for almost everyone and it is a unique experience.

RELAXATION

Noise and silence make people tense. Not everyone can have a field of crickets or silbant surf outside the living room window when they are trying to forget the traumas of the day. However, anyone with a hi-fi system can replicate this and other effects with ease by utilizing the Environments Series. Not only that, but you can use these discs over and over again without getting tired of them. We recommend that you find a particular side that works for you and, unlike our lovemaking recommendation, use only this disc whenever you wish to relax.

The problem with substances taken internally for relaxation purposes is that one often has no control over their effects once they are in the body and many drugs in this category are only marginally safe. (For instance: alcohol and certain tranquilizers) SR has spent a decade searching for sounds which can serve as substitutes for these drugs. If you can set aside your preconceptions concerning the capabilities of the 'normal' phonograph record, and give yourself the mental space to properly evaluate the entire gamut of Environments releases, we are certain that you will find that certain sounds will be highly effective in this context. It is always a comfort to know that, if an effect is too strong, all you need to do is reach for your amplifier control knob.

TENSION HEADACHE RELIEF

We have been receiving comments for years concerning a technique used by owners of Environments releases in alleviating common tension headaches. The technique involves lying down with a damp cloth covering your eyes and forehead. Use a white-noise type Environments at moderate volume and concentrate on the ebb and flow of the sound. We don't guarantee it but it works for many people and it sure beats aspirin.

INFANTS / ANIMALS / PLANTS

If a child is under six months of age, we think you will be surprised by how effective certain Environments are in calming various discomfort conditions. Put the crib by a speaker and keep the room as quiet as possible. We recommend you start with the heartbeat sound but you may also wish to consider water and bird sounds as well.

We evaluate almost all our Environments with animals at some stage in our test procedure. We think you will be surprised how calm and interested cats and dogs become when exposed to Environments, particularly those containing birds and other fauna. These recordings also have a surprisingly pleasant effect on canaries and parakeets.

In terms of plant growth, we have received considerable mail telling us that specific Environments seem to be effective, particularly meditation-type sounds and flowing water. Try putting a plant in front of one of the speakers for a day or two and see what happens. Best results seem to occur with one hour exposures to sounds having low frequency content. You might consider utilizing two identical plants, if you wish to experiment. Put one by a speaker and the other in another room. (note: Syntonic Research, Inc. has had mixed results utilizing plant experiments, although research is continuing. If you come up with a particular occurrence under controlled circumstances, please document the results and provide us with details.)

Side Two

ENVIRONMENTS

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ENVIRONMENTS ARE DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER RECORDS YOU OWN.

If you are like most people, you own a great many records. Have you ever asked yourself *why* you own so many records? Perhaps the main reason may

be one you have never really considered before; you *have* to own a great many records because you can't stand to listen to the same records over and over again, no matter how attached you are to them.

For this reason you will find Environments releases totally different from all other records you own. Environments are sounds based on how we all react to aural stimulation. For the most part, this means that the sounds on an Environments disc get *better* the more you hear them, and that you can play most Environments sides over and over without getting tired of them.

It is actually very difficult to actively *listen* to an Environments side. If you attempt to do so, you may find the experience both unusual and initially somewhat unsettling. While total reactions are uniquely your own, most people find that Environments conjure up images and ideas they ordinarily don't think about. People often become so totally relaxed they fall asleep. Others find their creativity or concentrational abilities increase. Some find that, whatever mood they are in, the sounds seem to increase that particular mood. Some say it is like a drug experience and others say it excites them sexually. How can such seemingly simple sounds have such profound effects?

Simple Sounds?

Well, for one thing, they aren't simple. These are the sounds we human beings have been hearing for *millions* of years. During these aeons, natural sounds have not changed at all, but technology and social forces have changed *us*. In the last hundred years or so, mankind has become increasingly isolated from the natural music of the earth. The sounds of wind, rain, the sea and the creatures of the wild, have been replaced by machine noise, electronic noise, the sounds of other human beings, and silence. Actually, many of these sounds aren't all that offensive, yet they often aren't all that pleasant either. Since our ears are always "on", we can't really shut out sounds that bother us, even when we are asleep.

Listening for the Dinosaur

You may have noticed that, in the last paragraph, we mentioned silence as a form of technological noise. Think about it. Have you ever been out in the open, anywhere on this earth, and heard *nothing* for more than a few seconds at a time? Nature abhors silence and we, as an integral part of nature also abhor silence. Yet, in most homes and offices that is what we hear most often. Silence. When it is very quiet, our hearing ability actually increases, and every little noise becomes that much more apparent. You might call the effect of all this noise simply, "Listening for the dinosaur."

After all, we have been using our ears as early-warning devices since the dawn of time and we certainly don't change as fast as our technology and social needs demand. If our ancestors didn't hear the dinosaur, they didn't live very long. Now, about all our keen hearing is useful for is appreciating high

fidelity components. If your hearing is too sensitive, every little sound takes its toll on your psyche, and you usually find yourself tense and distracted.

Hi-Fi Made it Happen

We are certain Edison never thought of Environments when he invented the phonograph. This great man did not have the distraction of acute hearing to contend with. This may have had no small part in making him the genius we all consider him to have been. In fact, until about ten years ago, it had been considered *impossible* to capture the complexities of nature's sounds with any realism whatsoever. Imagination allowed us to perceive reproductions of the human voice and musical instruments and believe we heard the real thing, but reproducing nature was far beyond technology's capabilities.

How It All Began

In 1968, an experimental loop (a short length of tape repeated continuously) of an ocean recording convinced I.S. Teibel, founder of Syntonic Research, Inc., that certain natural sounds could be utilized in ways hitherto unknown in the annals of acoustic reproduction.

After considerable experimentation and the recording of hundreds of lengthy tapes of the ocean, Teibel chanced upon a technique which yielded an extraordinary effect unlike anything similarly recorded up to that time. The ocean recording had all the characteristics necessary for this unusual new environmental sound concept. Teibel chose to call the recording "The Psychologically Ultimate Seashore". During subsequent testing in university dormitories near New York City, it was soon found that this particular recording was not only unusually effective in neutralizing distracting noises but also produced surprising results in increased concentration. Demand for this unusual study and relaxation aid was such that the fledgling company soon found itself hard put to keep up with the growing market for this unusual new concept.

Sound Affects

Rather than succumb to merely making glorified sound effects, Teibel determined that the Environments Series would continually explore new aspects of psychoacoustic perception. He soon embarked on several unusual research projects which were to astonish both consumers and critics alike. Hundreds of articles and features have appeared on the Environments Series since its inception, attesting to the dedication lavished upon expanding the usefulness of this unique collection.

Not only were these beautiful sounds useful for noise masking and relaxation, but they have also been unusually effective for meditation, self-hypnosis, altered perception, and as an aid to calming emotionally disturbed individuals and hyper-active children. Lovers have discovered that Environments discs

are a matchless aid for improving the esthetics of sex. The realism of the recordings was such that Environments recordings were placed aboard a NASA Explorer capsule launched into space to represent the sounds of the earth to distant galaxies. Environments have also been used in numerous recent motion pictures, as their quality far surpasses recordings made obsolete by recent technological improvements.

Since there are no language barriers to the appreciation and use of these unusual releases, people in all parts of the world have discovered how useful these universal sounds can be.

HOW TO USE ENVIRONMENTS

You will probably never play any other records as quietly as you play an Environments disc. Each recording is designed to be effective at very low volume and you may find that, when you initially audition a disc, you will have to readjust the volume from its initial setting once you have experienced the sound for a few minutes.

Since most high-fidelity systems have varying characteristics and the acoustics of a particular room may have an effect upon reproduction, we strongly recommend that you use the amplifier tone controls and/or an equalizer circuit to fine-tune the sounds to your perceptions and needs of the moment.

Although these records have extraordinary high-fidelity characteristics and utilize state-of-the-art recording and pressing techniques, almost any modern inexpensive phonograph can be used for reproduction. However, it is important to use as light a tonearm force as possible when playing these discs, as a heavy stylus weight will drastically lessen the playback capabilities of this record and wear out the grooves much more quickly than normal. With a stylus force of less than one gram, tests have shown that each side of this record should be capable of several thousand playbacks before wear is discernible.

Play it again, Sam.

To allow the record to repeat on most automatic changers, consult the manual that came with the phonograph. Most phonographs can be modified by utilizing the normal multiplay spindle. If the player has an arm that holds the stack of records on the spindle, swinging the arm to the side will cause the record on the platen to repeat. There may also be a little flap that retracts when struck by descending records. This determines where the arm repositions when recycling. By taping the flap down, the tone-arm will reposition correctly.

Considerations

Almost all of the records in the Environments Series are designed for playback with the speakers at eye level or slightly above eye level. SR releases are encoded with a special matrix coding for playback in Quadraphonic, compatible with SQ, QS, and RM matrix systems. Since a special computer lathe is used in cutting the master of these discs, you will find that the playing time of each side is substantially longer than most commercially available LPs.

Do not interrupt the record during playback, or, if you must, use extreme care when lifting the tonearm, as damage to the groove may cause the stylus to catch at that point during subsequent playback. Use a dust cover if possible to keep grit from accumulating in the grooves and blow gently on the needle if lint or dust do accumulate.

Washable Records?

Environments discs are meant to be washed if they become unusually dirty. Use a normal concentration of dish-washing liquid in lukewarm (not hot!) water. Submerge part of the record and brush gently with a soft wad of wet cotton batten. Do not rub hard. Inspect the grooves occasionally with reflected light; lint and dirt will be readily apparent. Do not soak the label. Once the record grooves are clean, rinse and lean the record against a flat surface so that the grooves are not in contact with anything. Allow to dry at normal room temperature. If the water in your area is hard, use distilled or bottled water to prevent mineral stains.

Care & Storage

If the record is warped due to improper storage, the warp can usually be corrected by putting the record back in its protective sleeve and placing several heavy books on the warped record for a few days. Be certain the weight is evenly distributed by using the album cover. It is usually wise to remove the shrink-wrap from the jacket when you purchase a record, as the plastic continues to shrink if exposed to variations in temperature and this may be sufficient to warp the record inside. If you purchase more than one copy of an Environments release as a spare, be certain to remove the shrink wrap from both copies, as the wrap may continue to tighten. Store all records in an upright position.

There is a raised area on the outside edge of each disc which will protect the grooves from damage if records are stacked together. However, care must be taken to see that all discs are stacked evenly or this lip will not be effective.

Handle all Environments discs only by the edges and never touch the grooves with your fingers, if at all possible.