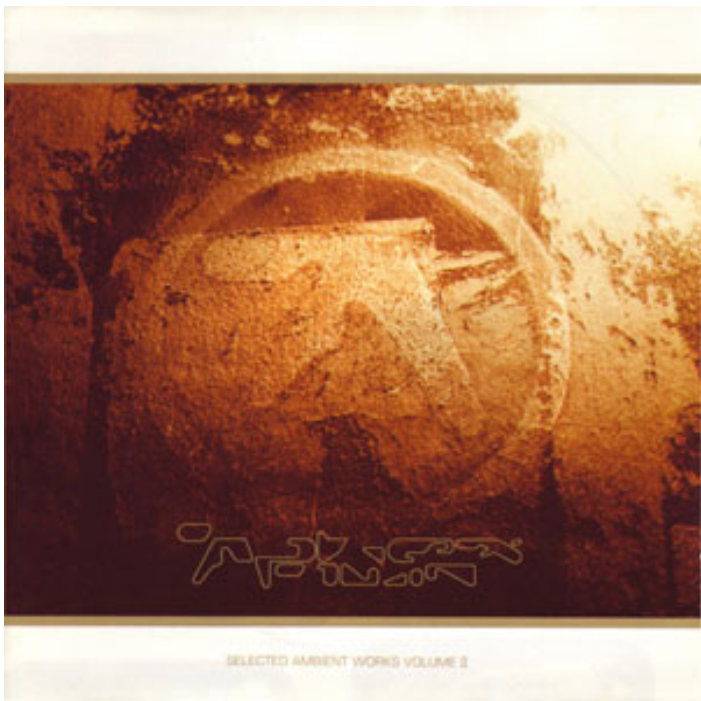


Selected Ambient Works Volume II

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Artist

[Aphex Twin](#)

Label	Warp Records
Year	1994
Summary	Sometimes beautiful, sometimes scary, but always otherworldly.

Selected Ambient Works Volume II contains just over two and a half hours' worth of music, which is just as well because it's a vast departure from Aphex Twin's other output: it is his only full album in the beatless ambient genre, one or two unobtrusive rhythms aside.

This album isn't perfect. Most of it sounds as if Aphex Twin has just discovered the delay and reverb effects and is using them as the basis of every track. It also sounds as if he still hasn't got to grips with [mastering](#) in general. Clipping and painful resonance are present in several tracks, and an overall amateur sound marring the final result.

Despite all that, Selected Ambient Works Volume II is one of the most original albums I've heard. Some of its cuts are beautiful, while others are downright scary, but all of them are alien and mysterious.

My favourite pieces of music from this album are the first and third tracks. In the first, snippets of lush vocals, a pad, and a plucked instrument all gently fade in and out, becoming clearer then duller again. This sublime music is something you could listen to while having a bath, giving a massage or even drifting off to sleep. It seems to end all too quickly, after almost seven and a half minutes. Likewise, the third track is what contentment would probably sound like if it was a piece of music. It's about as relaxing as anything by [Brian Eno](#), which is really saying something.

Some of the other pieces of music on this album are a stark contrast. The scary fifth cut is made up of distant drones and almost tribal sounding percussion. It wouldn't feel out of place if you listened to it while looking at some of H. R. Giger's artwork. Similarly, while little more than a simple arpeggio and some sustained notes, the seventh track is eerie and unsettling. Like the rest of the album, these pieces of music are simple but effective.

This album resembles a long night's series of dreams: each of its tracks puts a vivid image or emotion in your head that, although irrational, seems to make perfect sense at the time. I can't explain why, for instance, the nineteenth track reminds me of a puddle-filled, sunny village just after a bout of rain has finished. It just does. Similarly, I can't explain why such simple and repetitive music is so vivid, inspiring and emotionally engaging. It just is.