

Noise—How to Fight a Killer

Stephen Mathey

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This book sets out with the laudable objective of educating the American people on the risks of noise in today's society and how noise problems can, or should, be addressed in the context of current approaches to noise control and the existing legislative framework. The book is written in the form of an interview with questions and responses from Mr. Mathey. Topics covered in the thirteen chapters cover; "Human Hearing and Noise", "Noise and Human Health", "Traffic Noise and the Housing Crisis", "How Noise is Measured" through to considerations of "Acoustics and the Economic Crisis" and "Noise and Politics".

The book does address many important noise issues facing society today, but the conversational format of the book naturally drives it to be heavy on opinion and short on verifiable substantiated technical facts. The book contains no references, no bibliography and no index. The book doesn't set out to be a technical reference, but whenever the author strays toward acoustic explanations and definitions it would be polite to simply say they're a little loose. For example, L90 is defined as "the average noise level, less the noisiest ten percent" and the A-weighting scale was developed by "technocrats" whose goal was to "minimize the low frequencies

because they are the most difficult to fix—frequencies associated with transportation".

The issues addressed in the book are important and deserve to be brought to the public's attention and more importantly the attention of national and local authorities and legislators. My problem is that the book lacks the technical veracity to give the issues the credibility they deserve. I can perhaps understand the author's motives in wanting to present the book in an easy readable format that might have more universal appeal. But, for me, when you can't even get the fundamental technical explanations right everything else is open to question.

When I read this book it felt like reading a magazine article on climate change in the dentist's waiting room. When your name is called and you settle in to the chair you're asking yourself "Where was the science?" "Where were the references?" "Where was the proof for all this opinion and argument?" Then you reach the final chapter; "Noise and Politics". Mr. Mathey doesn't disappoint, with only minor encouragement he weighs in with his own profound opinions on global warming.

I would not recommend this book to INCE members, but I don't think it was ever intended for real noise control engineers.

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