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“Toy Instruments: Design, Nostalgia, Music” Celebrates the Cacophony of Kitsch

*New book collects best of weird and wonderful toy instruments from around the world,
foreword by DJ Spooky*

New York, NY – January 25, 2010 – The newest release from Mark Batty Publisher, *Toy Instruments* (<http://markbattypublisher.com/books/toy-instruments/>), comprises an eye-popping collection of musical toys from around the world made between the 1950s and today. Culled from author Eric Schneider’s personal collection, *Toy Instruments* is the first book to explore this niche of the toy industry doing so with an informative and humorous approach. With an intro from the author and a foreword from world-renown experimental electronic and hip-hop musician Paul D. Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid, the book collects the toy instruments you may remember from your past, and the wacky ones you’ll find hard to believe ever existed.

From the late 70s to the early 80s, the heyday of these bleeping, chirping, thrumming and keening devices, while children were busy driving their parents crazy with battery-powered sounds, adults were incorporating the unique tones into the earliest samples of electronic music and techno. And, just as dazzling as the cacophony of sounds produced by these toys are the designs of the toys, as well as their packaging. Made all over the world, the predominately gender-neutral design applied to the products and packaging is at times more fascinating than the toys.

Says author Eric Schneider: “Adorned with bizarre color schemes, always-happy families and boys and girls immune to gender disharmony, the toys and the packaging create a Shangri-La sheen, albeit one that is out of tune.”

Divided into chapters like “Kling Kong,” “Hamburgers, Lemons & Vampires” and “Headache Included,” *Toy Instruments* represents the crossroads of educational and wacky. From the Skateboard Organ of 1990 – a small skateboard-shaped keyboard from Hong Kong – the Transformers Electronic Voice Synthesizer from ’86, to the tiny hand-held karaoke boom-boxes like Bandai’s Candies Maiku, or even the Body Rap – a beatbox machine you strap on to your limbs – these contraptions range from weird to utterly mystifying.

Citing the 16th century origins of “Chutes and Ladders” and Philip K. Dick, DJ Spooky’s foreword connects these toys to our contemporary gamer culture, concluding that, “Eric Schneider has compiled a kind of ‘object’ time machine, reaching back to the heart of what electronic music represented when it was new.”

“Electronic musical toys are the expression of our deepest dreams; they activate your

personal creativity,” says Schneider. “The sound is often horrible but always impressive. They offer strange learning concepts and surfaces with lots of knobs and sliders. They are pure fun, even when it is just for a minute.”

About Eric Schneider

German-born-and-based author and toy instrument aficionado Eric Schneider has spent years in design and communication with a focus on art theory, film and drawing. Having worked as a copywriter for such international advertising agencies as DDB Needham, Ogilvy & Mather, Grey, EURO RSCG and so on, Schneider also produced some electronic music as “Nothingface” with the release of two albums.

Schneider has been collecting musical toys for over ten years, culminating with a 2009 exhibition in Paris: Musique en Jouets at Les Arts Decoratifs (<http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/arts-decoratifs/expositions-23/archives-25/musique-en-jouets>).

About Mark Batty Publisher

Mark Batty Publisher (<http://www.markbattypublisher.com>) is an independent publisher dedicated to making distinctive books on the visual art of communicating, showcasing the visual power and innovation of contemporary culture in all of its varied poses. Today, the visual comes at us from more places than ever, and its dissemination is faster and more advanced every year. Books from Mark Batty Publisher capture this acceleration on the pages of every book. Affordable, well designed, thoughtfully created, and produced to last, MBP books are artful products that readers want to hold onto forever.

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By Eric Schneider

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