



Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation (MIT Press)

By David Huron

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The psychological theory of expectation that David Huron proposes in *Sweet Anticipation* grew out of the author's experimental efforts to understand how music evokes emotions. These efforts evolved into a general theory of expectation that will prove informative to readers interested in cognitive science and evolutionary psychology as well as those interested in music. The book describes a set of psychological mechanisms and illustrates how these mechanisms work in the case of music. All examples of notated music can be heard on the Web. Huron proposes that emotions evoked by expectation involve five functionally distinct response systems: reaction responses (which engage defensive reflexes); tension responses (where uncertainty leads to stress); prediction responses (which reward accurate prediction); imagination responses (which facilitate deferred gratification); and appraisal responses (which occur after conscious thought is engaged). For real-world events, these five response systems typically produce a complex mixture of feelings. The book identifies some of the aesthetic possibilities afforded by expectation, and shows how common musical devices (such as syncopation, cadence, meter, tonality, and climax) exploit the psychological opportunities. The theory also provides new insights into the physiological psychology of awe, laughter, and spine-tingling chills. Huron traces the psychology of expectations from the patterns of the physical/cultural world through imperfectly learned heuristics used to predict that world to the phenomenal qualia we experienced as we apprehend the world.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"David Huron draws on evolutionary theory and statistical learning to situate the particular issue of musical expectation within the study of human expectation in general. The result is a widely knowledgeable and engagingly written book that will serve as a landmark in the cognitive science of music."

—**Fred Lerdahl**, Fritz Reiner Professor of Music, Columbia University

"*Sweet Anticipation* demands careful attention from music scholars who still believe that experimental psychology is too primitive to speak to their concerns. In unpacking the process of expectation, long understood to play a crucial role in our emotional response to music, David Huron makes a powerful case for a musicology that is empirically informed and statistically based. Even those who question whether musical cognition is as strongly determined as he suggests will be challenged by his questioning of basic theoretical assumptions and won over by his continual emphasis on pleasure as a goal, perhaps the goal, of musical experience."

—**William Benjamin**, Professor of Music, University of British Columbia

About the Author

David Huron is Professor of Music and Head of the Cognitive and Systematic Musicology Laboratory in the School of Music at Ohio State University and is affiliated with OSU's Center for Cognitive Science.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Anna Brooks:

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