



Thousand Mile Song: Whale Music in a Sea of Sound, by David Rothenberg (Basic, £10.99)

Jazz musician and philosopher David Rothenberg is an explorer in the little-known field of “interspecies music”. His goal is to cross the sound barrier and to make music with whales. He meets musicians, such as Pete Seeger, who have been influenced by whale song, and scientists studying what Rothenberg describes as “one of the greatest sounds in the animal world”. Not all scientists share Rothenberg’s enthusiasm: “I don’t see the point of fucking with animals just for the hell of it,” says one. Indeed, in America, unless you’re a scientist, playing music at whales is illegal, regarded as harassment. But Rothenberg’s enthusiasm is persuasive. “His attempts to accompany whales with his “squeaking clarinet” is “the ultimate interspecies experiment”, one he hopes will show a common instinct for music among humans and some animals. Unsurprisingly, the results - which you can hear on the accompanying CD - are inconclusive, but although this sounds like a piece of New Age shtick, the book is both thought-provoking and entertaining. **PDS**