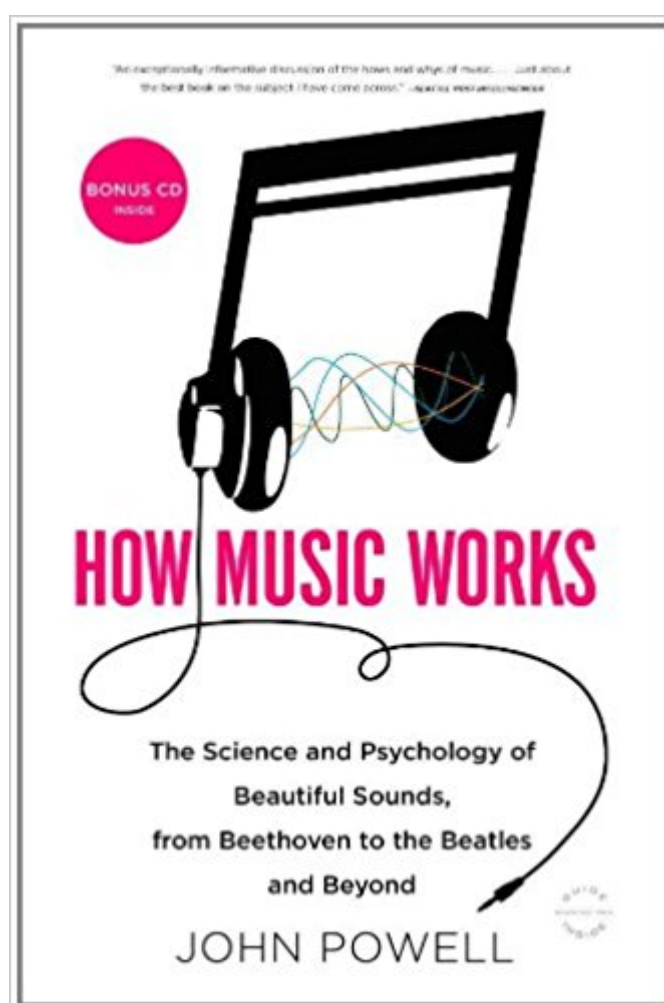


The book was found

How Music Works: The Science And Psychology Of Beautiful Sounds, From Beethoven To The Beatles And Beyond



Synopsis

John Powell, a scientist and musician, answers questions about harmony, timbre, keys, chords, loudness, musical composition, and much more in this fascinating guide to what music is and how exactly it works. What makes a musical note different from any other sound? How can you tell if you have perfect pitch? Why do 10 violins sound only twice as loud as one? Do your Bob Dylan albums sound better on CD or vinyl? In a clear, accessible, and engaging voice, Powell explores the science and psychology behind music. The perfect gift for music lovers everywhere. This edition also includes a CD of examples and exercises from the book.

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Customer Reviews

In this enlightening book, Powell, a British scholar and professor, sets out to explain how we experience music. He selects examples from all manner of disciplines--music composition, simple mathematics, physics, engineering, history--and offers his insights, such as how Bach's Prelude in C Major is similar to Led Zeppelin's Stairway to Heaven. In the first half, he defines the elements of music like pitch, frequency, harmony, rhythm, and decibel. Building on this foundation, Powell hits his stride in the book's second half as he demonstrates, using both classical and pop music, how musicians create sound and how we listen to it. Some of the information can get scientific but Powell conveys the material with enough humor (I think the decibel was invented in a bar, late one night, by a committee of drunken electrical engineers who wanted to take revenge on the world for their total lack of dancing partners) and cocktail party facts (when we listen to Mozart's music

nowadays, we are hearing it a semitone higher than he would have intended) to keep the book light and fun. Included in the book is a 10-track CD. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"By reading Powell's book we can gain a more solid knowledge of the foundations of music and therefore be better able to appreciate it." •Amanda Mark, New York Journal of Books
"Any readers whose love of music has somehow not led them to explore the technical side before will surely find the result a thoroughly accessible, and occasionally revelatory, primer." •James Walton, The Spectator

An outstanding explanation of as the title says how music works. Practical easy to follow and understand with plenty of smiles and laughs as a bonus. I use it as a reference and have read it more than once, that's how good I think it is.

When I first read the beginning of this book, I was less-than excited to finish reading it. Boy, was I wrong. This book is fantastic and covers a wide range of music topics and is easily comprehend able to both musicians and non-musicians. My favorite section was about the different scale and key signatures. A good read for any budding musician or anyone interested in the topic.

A very clear and fun introduction to music theory that creates a nice foundation for deeper and more technical reading. My only complaints are that it was too short and I would have enjoyed a section on what is known about the neurobiology of music, which I expected from the title. These are quibbles though and I highly recommend this for readers of any age embarking on learning to play music.

This book dispenses with the sterile rigidity of theoretical frameworks, and boils down these concepts to everyday experience. I think of it as a DK illustrated book, but in word pictures instead of graphical ones. Wonderful!

Like many kids growing up, I had piano lessons here and there, but my overall knowledge of music was still pretty basic."How Music Works" takes a lot of musical concepts and makes it palatable even for people with limited knowledge of music theory but has an interest in better understanding

why music works the way it does. From what is perfect pitch to the difference between notes and noise to how exactly instruments like organs and guitars work to scales and more, I learned a lot of fundamentals as well as interesting tidbits along the way. For instance, did you know that music notes weren't standardized until 1939? Meaning that a French flute once sounded different than a German one? Or that Mozart's compositions are now played a pitch or two higher than they were originally composed tuned to his tuning fork? I like too that Powell uses easy to understand examples about music accompanied by photos and diagrams using non-music every day reference points (explaining the concept of resonance with the idea of pushing a swing in a park -- pushing at the right time when the swing is just coming down from the top is simple and far less taxing than trying to push at any other point, or that you can visualize an oboe and its function by creating your own simplified version using a straw). Throughout the book there were plenty of music examples too so you can look up the songs on Youtube to understand references like arpeggio. Overall, I found the book to be a good comprehensive intro to music and well worth my time to read.

I understood the "what" behind scales and keys, but I never understood the "why". I always wondered whether the frequencies that define musical notes were hard-wired in us genetically, or were learned? Why are major chords constructed of the 1-3-5 and why do minor chords sound "depressed"? This book does a nice job of digging deeper and answering these and other questions regarding music. As per other reviewers comments the author does try too hard with his jokes at times, but I really didn't find it obnoxious and the jokes seem to diminish as you get further into the book. Well worth the meager \$10 investment. It would have been a good value at twice the price.

Powell provides a very readable, even amusing, but accurate picture of the technical structures of Music. As one who has had to work hard to learn Music Theory in my retirement, I wish I could have had "How Music Works" to guide me. That he is a physicist, as I am, may have contributed to the ease with which I followed his approach, but I believe his very ingenious Ugly Harp model will work for a wide audience trying to come to grips with chords, scales and intervals. It will appeal especially to singers, who often rub along with a very sketchy understanding of these technicalities, and will enhance their singing pleasure with a deeper understanding of how and why certain phrases and note combinations are so effective. It's not written like a reference book, but I refer to it regularly.

a great book, my daughter had to get for a college course

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