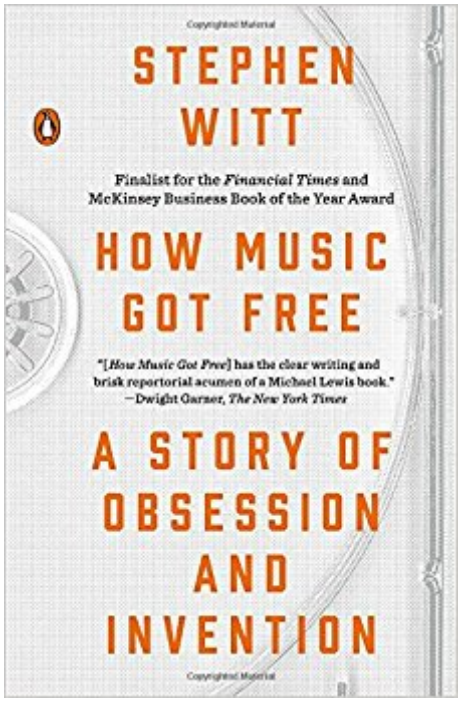
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How Music Got Free: A Story Of Obsession And Invention



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Synopsis

Finalist for the 2016 Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the 2016 J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize, and the 2015Ã Â Financial TimesÃ Â and McKinsey Business Book of the YearOne of BillboardÃ¢â ¬â„¢s 100 Greatest Music Books of All TimeAÃ Â New York TimesÃ Â EditorsÃ¢â ¬â„¢ ChoiceONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST BOOKS: TheÃ Â Washington Post Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â TheÃ Â Financial TimesÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢ SlateÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢ The AtlanticÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢ TimeÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢ ForbesÃ¢â ¬Å"[How Music Got Free] has the clear writing and brisk reportorial acumen of a Michael Lewis book.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Dwight Garner, The New York TimesWhat happens when an entire generation commits the same crime?How Music Got Free is a riveting story of obsession, music, crime, and money, featuring visionaries and criminals, moguls and tech-savvy teenagers. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s about the greatest pirate in history, the most powerful executive in the music business, a revolutionary invention and an illegal website four times the size of the iTunes Music Store.Ã Â Journalist Stephen Witt traces the secret history of digital music piracy, from the German audio engineers who invented the mp3, to a North Carolina compact-disc manufacturing plant where factory worker Dell Glover leaked nearly two thousand albums over the course of a decade, to the high-rises of midtown Manhattan where music executive Doug Morris cornered the global market on rap, and, finally, into the darkest recesses of the Internet.Through these interwoven narratives, Witt has written a thrilling book that depicts the moment in history when ordinary life became forever entwined with the world onlineÃ¢â ¬â •when, suddenly, all the music ever recorded was available for free. In the page-turning tradition of writers like Michael Lewis and Lawrence Wright, WittÃ¢â ¬â„¢s deeply reported first book introduces the unforgettable charactersÃ¢â ¬â •inventors, executives, factory workers, and smugglersÃ¢â ¬â •who revolutionized an entire artform, and reveals for the first time the secret underworld of media pirates that transformed our digital lives.An irresistible never-before-told story of greed, cunning, genius, and deceit, How Music Got Free isnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t just a story of the music industryÃ¢â ¬â •itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a must-read history of the Internet itself.From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“The richest explanation to date about how the arrival of the MP3 upended almost everything about how music is distributed, consumed and stored. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a story you may think you know, but Mr. Witt brings fresh reporting to bear, and complicates things in terrific ways. . . . [How Music Got Free] has the clear writing and brisk reportorial acumen of a Michael Lewis book.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Dwight Garner, The New York TimesÃ¢â ¬Å“Taut, cleareyed. . . . Witt, a first-time author, comes from the world of finance, and his old-fashioned, connect-the-dots reporting presents a nuanced depiction of an issue usually reduced to emotional absolutes. . . . [A] complex, groundbreaking story.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times Book ReviewÃ¢â ¬Å“[W]hip-smart, superbly reported and indispensable.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Washington PostÃ¢â ¬Å“A lucid, mordantly funny account of the rise of digital music piracy, starting with the story of a worker in a North Carolina CD-pressing plant who personally leaked more than 2,000 albums over eight years.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Time magazineÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“WittÃ¢â ¬â„¢s book is more than just a simple history Ã¢â ¬â • or defense Ã¢â ¬â • of file sharing, a development most people associate with Napster, but which, according to Witt, involved a much more wide-rangingÃ¢â ¬â •and fascinatingÃ¢â ¬â •story.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Seattle TimesÃ¢â ¬Å“A must-read on the rise of privacy. . . . Suspenseful, entertaining. . . . Essential reading for all students of the music business.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •BillboardÃ¢â ¬Å“Incredible, possibly canonical. . . . A story that's too bizarre to make up, but needed to be told. . . . Even if you're not a music geek,Ã Â How Music Got FreeÃ Â is one of the most gripping investigative books of the year.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •ViceÃ¢â ¬Å“How Music Got FreeÃ Â doubles as a detailed ode to the MP3 as it tells the story of three men grappling with digital compression technology and its widespread fallout. . . . According to WittÃ¢â ¬â„¢s account, these three relatively unknown figures spurred on the tectonic shifts within the music industry over the last few decades and changed how we listen to and consider music today. . . . How Music Got Free tells of supreme innovation as well as stubborn

hard-headedness, and though its trio of principle characters never actually cross paths in real life, itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s tempting to consider what would have happened if they did, what crises may have been avoided.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Pitchfork.comÃ¢â ¬Å“The story of the music industryÃ¢â ¬â„¢s epic struggle with the technological developments that swiftly and irrevocably changed it forever. . . . Recounted by Witt with the clarity and momentum of any fictional page-turner.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The FaderÃ¢â ¬Å“Witt uncovers the largely untold stories of people like the German entrepreneurs who invented the mp3 file and Dell Glover, the compact disc factory worker who leaked some of the biggest albums of the aughts, leaving record label execs frustrated and scared.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Business InsiderÃ¢â ¬Å“Brilliantly written. . . . Fascinating. . . . Highly entertaining. . . . Full of surprises.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The GuardianÃ¢â ¬Å“An enthralling account of how technology has turned the music business upside down . . . This is a terrific, timely, informative book.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Nick Hornby, The Sunday Times (UK)Ã¢â ¬Å“Compelling . . . . An accomplished first book.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The EconomistÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“[Witt] organizes his narrative around alternating chapters that each focus on a separate protagonist: an engineer, an executive, and a criminal: Universal chairman Doug Morris and two nemeses Morris didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t even know he had: German engineer Karlheinz Brandenburg, and music pirate Dell Glover, a Polygram/Universal employee at the Tennessee CD manufacturing plant.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Daily BeastÃ¢â ¬Å“How Music Got Free is the result of five years of tunnel-vision focus on the history of digital music.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Village VoiceÃ¢â ¬Å“[An] excellent history of the MP3 and its effect on the recording industry. . . . An essential read for musicians.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •John Colpitts, The TalkhouseÃ¢â ¬Å“The riveting story of post-millennial technology, piracy, and corporate futility.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Los Angeles Review of BooksÃ¢â ¬Å“A captivating new book that unearths the story of mp3s, pirates and a recalcitrant music business.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Lincoln Journal StarÃ¢â ¬Å“[A] fascinating account of the rise of music piracy. . . . An engrossing story. . . . The year’s most important music book.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Independent (UK)Ã¢â ¬Å“A virtuosic, briskly readable account of when the music industry was briefly, seemingly, brought to its knees. . . . There’s a lot to learn from the music business’ antagonistic relationship with the technology that defined it, and Witt lays it all out on the page.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Portland MercuryÃ¢â ¬Å“The story of how the Internet brought the imperious music business to its knees has never been told more succinctly and readably than it is here. . . . How Music Got Free cries out for a movie treatment like The Social Network.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •BookPageÃ¢â ¬Å“A fascinating peek behind the scenes of a worldwide cultural phenomenon that blew apart the music business structure while at the same time creating a new one in which no one company holds all the cards (though a few of

them still hold plenty). . . . An engaging account of how the music industry had to change in order to survive, thanks to the efforts of a few technologically savvy people from diverse backgrounds.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Shelf Awareness for ReadersÃ¢â ¬Å“A riveting detective story . . . WittÃ¢â ¬â„¢s exposÃƒÂ© of the business of mainstream music will intrigue fans and critics of pop culture and anyone who has bought a compact disc, downloaded an MP3, or used a streaming music service.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Library Journal Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A propulsive and fascinating portrait of the people who helped upend an industry and challenge how music and media are consumed.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus ReviewsÃ¢â ¬Å“LikeÃ Â Bond meetsÃ Â 28 Days LaterÃ Â . . . Witt tells a thrilling tale, with a cast of music biz bigwigs, painstaking German boffins, and pirates and petty thieves. WittÃ¢â ¬â„¢s writing reminded me of all my favourite modern essayists: Remnick, Franzen and John Jeremiah Sullivan. I loved it.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Colin Greenwood, Radiohead Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“How Music Got Free is as much a story about greed, friendship, genius and stupidity as it is about music piracy. And it tells an amazing story of a part of the Internet (not to mention the criminal underground) that I took for granted. Ã Â I burned through it--you will too.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Christian Rudder, author of DataclysmFrom the Hardcover edition.

Stephen Witt was born in New Hampshire in 1979 and raised in the Midwest. He graduated from the University of Chicago with a degree in mathematics in 2001. He spent the next six years playing the stock market, working for hedge funds in Chicago and New York. Following a two-year stint in East Africa working in economic development, he graduated from Columbia UniversityÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Graduate School of Journalism in 2011. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

History of the MP3? How data compression works? This must be a book for technoweenies, right? Wrong.It’s an extremely well-written book about the music industry and the greed, fear, and loathing within it, and how it was upended by the "darknet" and a bunch of guys who stole music from Universal and other insanely-profitable goliaths (a CD ultimately cost 40 cents to produce including liner and case and sold for $16) and gave it to hackers who stole music for the thrill of it to beat the Big Labels to a major release rather than to get rich. It’s also the story of how hits are (or were) made and how the music industry, hackers, and oh yes, consumers, ultimately wound up where we are today.Even the story of how the MP3 (and other accomplishments) came to be was the result of fierce competition between naive scientists and engineers in academia versus scientists and engineers backed by the massive assets and marketing savvy of Philips. Philips won Round One with its MP2 technology but the MP3 rose from the dead through sheer dogged refusal by its

champions who refused to give up (and who ultimately "won" and got rich). This is a terrific book for anyone, as it’s written by someone with the rare ability to describe technology in a way anyone can understand, combine it with intrigue and a fair dose of biography, and make it a page-turner.It’s a keeper...

Summary:- this is a captivating and very educational book, and I’m happy to recommend it. It’s a one-of-a-kind on the market, and the book’s flaws shouldn’t deter you from reading it.As a musician, a programmer, a composer, and a millennial, I’m greatly interested in understanding the dynamics of the modern music industry. So, I picked up this book with great joy, and I am very glad I read it. As I read, I felt like I was sitting at a cafe with Stephen Witt - a man who is clearly deeply knowledgeable and full of incredibly interesting stories. As a narrative, the work is captivating. However, as a coherent, edited book, it falls short of perfection.As the other reviews mentioned, Witt carefully interweaves several stories within the book. I felt that the balance between the broader music industry and the individual stories of prolific pirates was a bit jarring sometimes. I greatly appreciated the introduction where the author discusses the academic research that led to the invention of the MP3, and even dives into some of the technical aspects of how music is compressed. As a layman, this was incredibly useful, and I learned lots. I was also emotionally captivated by Dell and Glover’s story. The book fell a bit short, however, when it jumped to the broader dynamics within the music industry. Moreover, while Witt’s conversational tone can be a page turner, oft-repeated sentence structures and convoluted phrasing would have surely benefitted from a better editor.All in all, I greatly enjoyed the book, but wish it was edited for clarity and slightly restructured for coherence. This shouldn’t deter you from reading it, as the benefits still greatly outweigh the cons.

A music journalist from the US said to me, "If you want to know why is it that I think the music industry is to blame for its own destruction, this book is all you need." I suppose he’s right; they didn’t want to adapt themselves to the changes, technology-wise...How Music Got Free is a very entertaining read. The reader gets to know everything that has to do with the way music developed since the 1960’s while feeling like Witt is right there in the living room with you, telling how it’s all been, coffee mug in hand. Highly recommended to anyone who’s a music nuts, also to rising musicians who nowadays see themselves having their music on iTunes, Spotify and other digital stores. It’s important to know the story behind the ways of distributing music, past and present.

A very interesting read. I think this book would appeal to two types of people: 1) Gen X-ers and Y-ers who were around for much of the digital revolution of music (I started college in 1999, right when networking and Napster were becoming huge); and 2) business and marketing strategists. The beginning of the book is more about creating the technology (which I really liked as an engineer) and format wars. The latter half was more about coming to grips with the digital era from a business perspective, and how pirating affected the industry. Highly recommend if you dig music.I still buy CDs and rip them, and will continue to do so as long as I can find them. I think there's room to have both mediums, and an interesting add-on chapter or sequel could be the resurgence of vinyl. I do think Spotify is terrible for the industry, as convenient as it is.

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