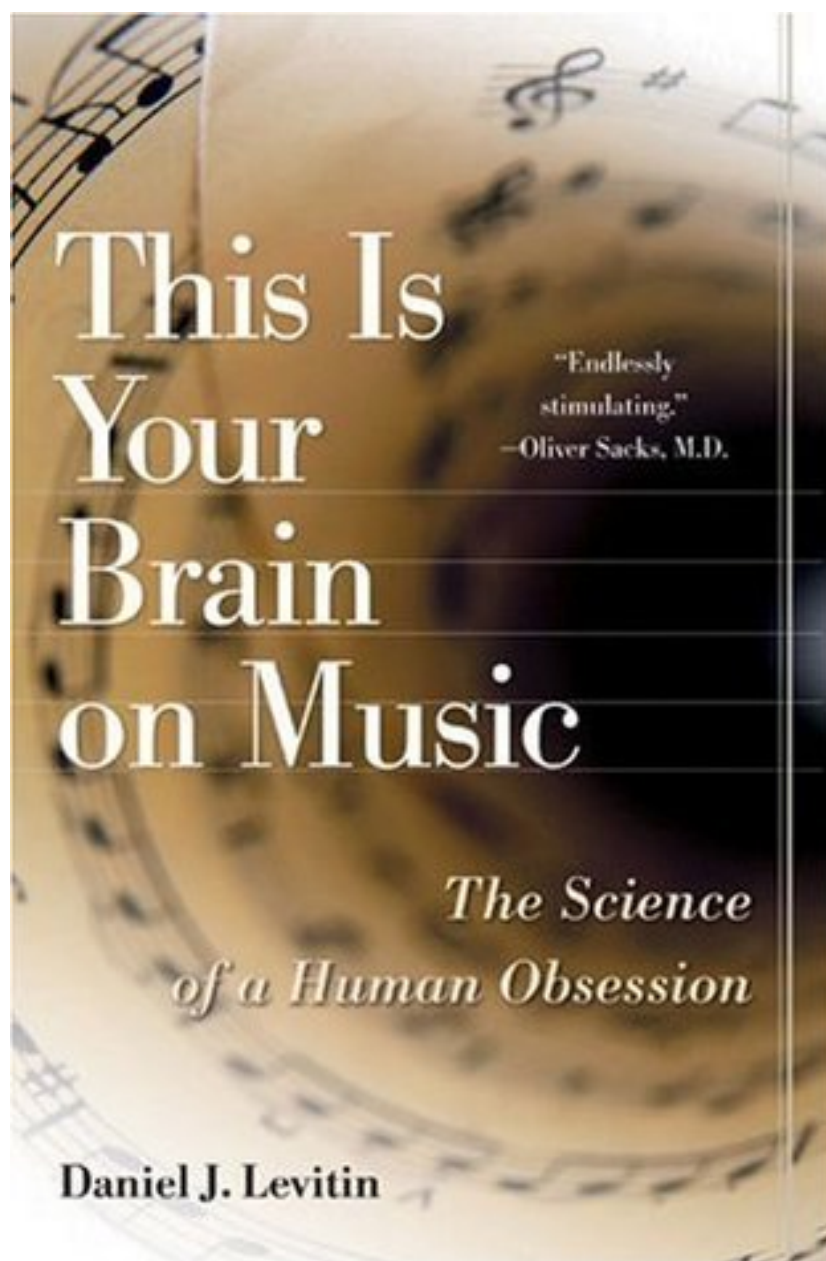


## This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession Book PDF Download



**By:**  
**Daniel J. Levitin**

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## What people Say:

### Jackie "the Librarian"

A book is the wrong medium for this information. As I read this book, I kept wishing I was watching a PBS show version of it instead, where I could HEAR the music Mr. Levitin was referencing, and see visuals of the brain showing what parts are being affected by music, and how they all link up.

Instead of having to tell us in excruciating detail what an octave is, he could demonstrate on an instrument, and we could hear it for ourselves. When discussing half steps and whole steps, we could both h

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Instead of having to tell us in excruciating detail what an octave is, he could demonstrate on an instrument, and we could hear it for ourselves. When discussing half steps and whole steps, we could both hear them, and see how a piano's white and black keys work with the structure of the scale.

Beyond all that, I'm a little disappointed in the focus of the book. Mr. Levitin says at one point that he is more interested in the mind, than in the brain. And yet, instead of telling us how all these brain interactions manifest in our minds, he focuses on details about the cerebellum and the amygdala. We learn what parts of the brain act together when listening to music, but not much what that MEANS to us mentally. I guess I wanted more psychology, less biology.

That doesn't make the subject any less fascinating. I think my favorite chapter was the one on what makes a musician. It's not just innate talent. No, it takes hours and hours and hours of practice, 10,000 in fact to master an instrument (this may sound familiar to those of you who read Malcolm Gladwell's book

). It may also take helpful physiology, like long fingers to reach keys on a piano easily. But humans are INNATELY musical, and how our brains and bodies react to music is astonishing.

Other interesting things I learned:

- humans have always made music, and that it likely predates language
- music can comfort and inspire us, and has the power to change our mood through the chemistry in our brains

## Matthew

There's a lot of amazing stuff in this book to contemplate, but the author tries too hard to make it relevant for readers who listen to the Eagles and Mariah Carey (musicians he specifically sites), and he gets caught up in the most mundane details of his personal interactions with his colleagues at meetings and dinners and such, and who ordered what, and how everybody was dressed, and where everybody got their degrees.

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My girlfriend got me interested in it because I found her passionate explanations of the salient neuroscience very interesting, but that information could be contained in a book about a quarter of the length of this one. Read it, because you don't have Stacey to give you the short version, and you'll love learning about how deeply and profoundly music affects human and animal brains, but do yourself a favor and skip a few paragraphs every time Levitin starts to ramble on with his personal anecdotes which usually pertain only very tangentially to the science at hand.

## Patricia

It wasn't until I was half-way through this book that things started to get really interesting. As a musician, the first half was like retaking Music 101, but I felt this was a book I need to read, so I

plowed on. I am looking for answers to the questions: "Why, when I hear any musical interval, my brain automatically zips through all the tunes I know which start with that interval, and I start humming one of them?" and "Why the hell have I had '76 Trombones' on my mind for the last 6 weeks?" Is

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**Sam**

Seemingly for musicians or composers this book is more fitting a read for scientists and doctors. Not much content is musicianship related. Middle third is a bore.

What I learned:

- There is no sound in space

(there are no molecules to vibrate)

- Virtuosity comes from hours of practice

(talent and absolute pitch play a small role)

- Learning to play an instrument after 20 is hard

(the brain is done developing)

- Percussion is a primitive musical trait

(affirming my suspicion drummers are apes)

## Mike Bularz

From the reviews I've seen here, the material seems to have passed over most people's heads (by being too rough, or the phrase you'll come across a few times, "I didn't feel like I walked away exclaiming 'eureka!'"... or the book angered more expert readers by its simplicity, but it wasn't meant to talk of new discoveries as much as it was meant for a general public.

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The book takes a while for an average person, and I'd say you have to have some knowledge of chorded instruments and such where you'd come across ideas such as frequencies ringing together to form major and minor chords. It covers various interesting topics, and I speculate the reason people walk away feeling not so enlightened is because after chapter 8+, chapters 1-5 are a distant memory. If you have trouble, jot down a few things, it helped me.

There is one chapter that the author wastes time talking about a dinner with his idol neuro-scientists from which you will take not much away except for a list of forgettable names and how the next

chapter's ideas were spurred by one of the professors' advice: "Look at the connections [something along those lines at least]".

Overall, I'm glad I read this book, and often check back to it as a reference, and it's great food for thought.