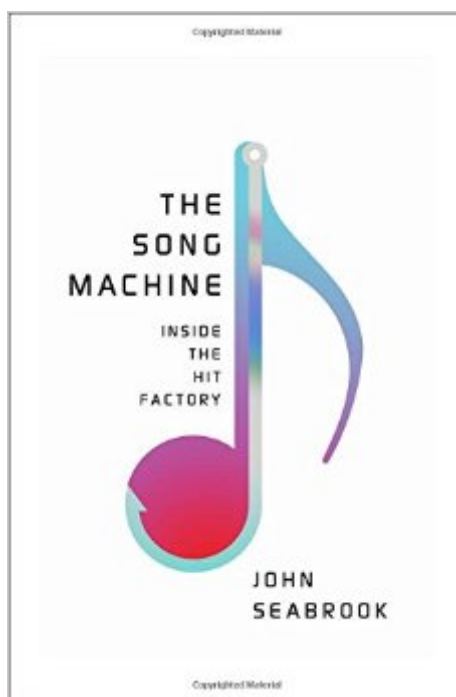


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# The Song Machine: Inside The Hit Factory



## Synopsis

There's a reason hit songs offer guilty pleasure—they're designed that way. Over the last two decades a new type of hit song has emerged, one that is almost inescapably catchy. Pop songs have always had a "hook," but today's songs bristle with them: a hook every seven seconds is the rule. Painstakingly crafted to tweak the brain's delight in melody, rhythm, and repetition, these songs are highly processed products. Like snack-food engineers, modern songwriters have discovered the musical "bliss point." And just like junk food, the bliss point leaves you wanting more. In *The Song Machine*, longtime New Yorker staff writer John Seabrook tells the story of the massive cultural upheaval that produced these new, super-strength hits. Seabrook takes us into a strange and surprising world, full of unexpected and vivid characters, as he traces the growth of this new approach to hit-making from its obscure origins in early 1990s Sweden to its dominance of today's Billboard charts. Journeying from New York to Los Angeles, Stockholm to Korea, Seabrook visits specialized teams composing songs in digital labs with new "track-and-hook" techniques. The stories of artists like Katy Perry, Britney Spears, and Rihanna, as well as expert songsmiths like Max Martin, Stargate, Ester Dean, and Dr. Luke, *The Song Machine* shows what life is like in an industry that has been catastrophically disrupted—spurring innovation, competition, intense greed, and seductive new products. Going beyond music to discuss money, business, marketing, and technology, *The Song Machine* explores what the new hits may be doing to our brains and listening habits, especially as services like Spotify and Apple Music use streaming data to gather music into new genres invented by algorithms based on listener behavior. Fascinating, revelatory, and original, *The Song Machine* will change the way you listen to music. ---

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Seabrook's book will appeal to at least two types of readers. First, it may appeal to those who grew up in the mid-late 1990s and the 2000s, when a new teen pop invasion began (led by Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys), and when Jay Z began his ascent to music-biz tycoon. (Or, if you aren't a Millennial, perhaps the music of Katy Perry, Rihanna, Justin Timberlake, and Taylor Swift scratches an itch for you, and you'd like a peek behind the curtain to learn how it's made). Another group of readers who may be attracted to 'The Song Machine' are the music nerds and musicians who are intimately familiar with how records were made during "the golden age of recording"--the kind of people who watch documentaries like "The Wrecking Crew" and "Muscle Shoals". People curious about who the modern-day Phil Spector and Brian Wilsons are, and how the hits are being made in the digital age. I'm not sure the book will wholly satisfy either group of readers, but I think it's an important piece of reporting that will be read in 50-100 years by historians of music and pop culture. For the fans of this music (particularly fans of female chart-toppers from Britney S. to Kesha), you'll get a look at how the industry finds unknown teens with musical ambition and molds them into superstars. You'll learn how this is taken to even greater extremes by the South Koreans, whose pop marketplace places much less value on "authenticity," rebelliousness, and individuality. There is a discussion of how "American Idol" affected today's record business.

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