



# **The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness**

*Steven Levy*

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## **The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness** Steven Levy

A technology columnist for Newsweek goes inside Apple Computer and into the heads of millions of music lovers to show how CEO Steve Jobs and his team of engineers, programmers, and designers created a product that has become a business and cultural blockbuster.

## **The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness Details**

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Author : Steven Levy

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# From Reader Review The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness for online ebook

## Greg says

Recently I got really curious about the business decisions behind the creation of the iPod, so I picked up "The Perfect Thing." Only about a chapter or two discussed the decisions that went into making the iPod the rest is really an analysis and description of the cultural impact of the iPod.

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## Harvey says

- from the jacket: "October 23, 2001, Apple Computer, a company known for its chic, cutting-edge technology (if not for its dominant market share) launched a new product with an enticing promise: You can carry an entire music collection in your pocket. It was called the iPod. What happened next exceeded the company's wildest dreams. Over 50 million iPods have been sold in 5 short years. In fact, it is the fastest selling product in history. An excellent overview of the history of the iPod, how it has changed our behaviour, and even our society. Now Apple's iTunes is revolutionizing the entire broadcast/recording industry."

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## Carrie says

This is supposedly a book about the iPod and the how and why of Apple's success with it, but really it's just a book about how much Steven Levy loves his iPod, Apple Computer and Steve Jobs. (He loves them all a whole lot.) He spends most of his time on the iPod and Apple and the genius of Steve Jobs, but he also goes into the history of the mp3 player and the Walkman and some of the culture surrounding the iPod (assessing your co-workers personality via their iTunes library!) Best of all, worried that the shuffle feature isn't really random since his iPod seems to have a preference for Steely Dan, Levy sets out to find out if it really is random. I'm not even an iPod junkie and this was a really fun, addictive read, I suspect mostly because Levy is so very much in love with his iPod and Apple and Steve Jobs.

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## Mona says

TITLE: The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness

WHY I CHOSE THIS BOOK: Part of my reading challenge covering the category, Read a book about technology.

HOW READ: Ebook purchased on amazon

REVIEW: I have never been a huge Apple fan. Not a hater, but not a fanatic. The other of this book is a fanatic, so the book is not particularly impartial. While I could have done without the level of rhapsody, he did go on and on at times, overall I liked this book. I learned a lot about the history of portable audio devices from the recorders created for journalists on the go, to the Sony Walkman, to the various iterations of Ipods. I also learned a lot about the history of Apple as well as the electronics industry as a whole. The thing I like best about these types of stories is reading about smart, creative people who through perseverance change the

world. How cool would it be to be one of those people, or one of those type of people.

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### **Robert DePriest says**

Levy describes what he sees as the huge success and impact of the iPod not only as a personal entertainment device but as a force that has changed how we not only consume media but even create it. He describes the creation of the iPod as a saving angel for a struggling Apple when it began to design the product in the late 90s. He marks Apple's success as a combination of hard work nailing exactly the right mix of features and craftsmanship, artistic design, the no-compromise leadership of Steve Jobs, and a small dash of luck of having the right product at the right time.

Not only was the device a sales success, Levy argues, but it's software sibling iTunes paved the way for the music industry to save itself from the spiral decline of cd sales and rise of illegal file-sharing services.

He closes with a chapter on podcasting, which he says has leveled the playing field, allowing individuals to broadcast time-shifted audio or even video as easily as major corporations. He holds out high hopes for this democratization of media creation, and notes this as a major shift never achieved since the creation of modern electronic media.

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### **Kristina says**

Now that iPod's popularity has been surpassed by the next big thing (again an Apple product), it is interesting to read this book written at its heyday. Levy chronicles the development of the iPod- showing how many existing technologies came together at the right time to create a beloved product. Levy wrote this book with "stand-alone" chapters, which do not need to be read in order. While this would be great for a professor who wants to pick and choose sections for a class curriculum, the requisite repetition is a bit annoying for the reader who reads the book in its entirety.

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### **Serge Boucher says**

Somewhat dated but may still be worth reading if you care about the design process behind the iPod. Interesting discussion about the randomness of "shuffle".

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### **Joel Tone says**

It's a fanboy's paen to a favorite gadget.

This book gives a good history of the iPod and a description of its cultural significance. What really annoyed me about the book is that it seems to take the perspective that Apple and more specifically Steve Jobs can do no wrong. Any mistakes that must be admitted are at most minor, charming quirks. The fanboy tone really got on my nerves.

As always, Steven Levy does a wonderful job of describing what it was like to actually be one of those who developed the iPod. He provides snippets from a wide variety of insiders and you feel the emotional impact of their struggles and successes. The iPod doesn't seem like such an amazing invention now, but the challenges that were overcome in developing it were impressive. The discussion of the effects of everyone carrying around entire collections of music in their pockets and living with their own personal soundtrack to life was fascinating, if a little shallow. I would heartily recommend this book to anyone who is interested in how the iPod came to be what it is.

I came out of this book wanting to buy any other music player but an iPod. When the author praises iTunes, I really have to wonder if he's using the same iTunes that I've struggled with. The Apple attitude seems to be "We're way cooler than you so shut up and do it our way" and I resent that. I want a music player that works the way I want it to.

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### **Fiz Larsen says**

#### **This hunk of plastic changed industries**

I've been obsessed about the iPod. It's just an MP3 player, so why am I so smitten by it by my own 3rd Gen iPod nano. This book was made to satisfy that question, going into the history of how it's made, plus its impact on the world. Plus it's nice to see the occasional small snippet of that man Steve Jobs. Great read if you're interested in this particular bit of Apple history, written shortly before the iPhone changed everything, again.

For the record, my iPod nano was green, survived a fall, and two hours in a washing machine, was a high point in what was a dark few years in my life, and I can't seem to find it anymore. I love my iPhone 7, and the iPad 2 I'm typing this on, but I do miss that tiny, perfect thing.

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### **Christine says**

I loved this book. I don't own an iPod, but I do own 5 other MP3 players and am nuts about digital music. But I've always thought and still do think the iPod is the most creative, beautiful digital music player invented. The author traces the origins of the iPod, but more interestingly, writes about the impact of the iPod on the way we listen to music, on the way music is consumed as well as the "hipness" of this little revolutionary device.

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### **Sarah Heffern says**

When Alison loaned me this book, she said, "You shouldn't read this because it's [work VP's] new favorite book; you should read it because you love your iPod." And she was right.

I started using the shuffle function on my iPod more after reading this book, because of the author's fascination with it and the concept of randomization in general. I think it's made me enjoy my iPod even

more, which is an unusual outcome from reading a book.

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### Phil Simon says

If I have one complaint about the Steve Jobs' biography from Walter Isaacson, it's that certain topics could be not covered in sufficient depth. I understand why; the book was about the life and times of one of the most influential people in the last fifty years. Yet, while reading it, I couldn't help but want to know more about many things, not the least of which was the iPod.

Enter *The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness* by Steven Levy. This is a book about one thing and its cultural impact: the iPod. While the iPhone has arguably made its predecessor obsolete, Levy's book is a compelling trip down memory lane and a fascinating examination of Apple's first blockbuster, non-computer product.

While caught up in the iPod craze, I somehow missed interesting things Levy calls out, like the fact that The Pope actually used one. Levy is an excellent writer and I'll be buying his other books after this posts. The Perfect thing allows us, in retrospect, to appreciate Apple's truly game-changing product and its remarkable run. Buy it.

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### Maggie says

This book was very hit and miss for me. Two things became clear very quickly: Steven Levy was smitten at the first click of his iPod, and he's very thorough in his reporting. Both of those work against him at times. I found the chapters about identity and shuffling the most insightful, but elsewhere, there was so much history and so many names packed into chapters that it was difficult to keep everything straight.

Also, for what it's worth, I don't think that "shuffling" the chapters (books were apparently printed with the chapters in different orders) really adds anything to the book. In fact, in places it led to repeated information or a sequence that just didn't make sense. Overall, though, it was a well-written and informative book, and I plan to use a section of it for a class I'm teaching in the fall.

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### Adih Respati says

Steven Levy starts **The Perfect Thing** with iPod history, probably the first take on iPod's story which gives credit to actual group of people responsible for iPod instead of giving an over-credit to Jobs as many literatures do. Then he continues on to how iPod goes through its business saga, came to define owners personality, and lastly shape a new culture. **The Perfect** shines on the last two account.

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### **Melissa says**

Who would have thought it possible to write a "page-turner" about the iPod? Picked it up to read on a break and had to check it out to finish it. Makes technology understandable to someone who has a very passing acquaintance with it. Very much a sociological study as well, it explains how the "coolness factor" comes into play when Jobs runs Apple and why this little piece of tech has become such a cultural icon.

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### **Erik says**

Listened to the abridged audio version. Presents an overdramatized overview of the cultural influence of the iPod. There are a few interesting anecdotes. Most of the content is fluff.

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### **Shivasankari says**

This book covers the iPod from just about every angle. How it was made, how people responded to it, where it fits in the history of portable music players, why it's "cool".

The most surprising thing to me is how long ago the pre-smartphone world feels. The book was published in 2006 (1 year before the iPhone), but it feels like the stone age when Levy gushes about how small and light the iPod is...!

An Interesting read :)

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### **Brian says**

The Perfect Thing covers the story of the iPod as it was developed and released to the public. It looks not only at the business and the technology but also the sociological effects of the iPod and what it did to shape culture in the United States. It is a very well written book that the reader can move through easily. I agree with the other reviews that this is a light and fun read with not a ton of substance but just enough to learn something new if you are not familiar with how the iPod was developed. Overall the book was entertaining and worth the time to read if you want to learn more about how the iPod has shaped culture in the United States.

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### **Mani Singh says**

I picked up this book ahead of Jobs biography as I had just finished Steven Levy's "In the Plex" which is an exceptional effort by the writer. However, this book was bit of a let down and perhaps could ve been finished by wasting just half the rain forests by saving the paper. Nonetheless its a good account of the phenomenal

rise of iPods. If you could read with skipping pages, it's a good read. If you intend to read it from cover to cover, it ll be hard to finish....

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### **Nathan says**

Despite the subtitle, this book doesn't so much study "how the iPod shuffles commerce, et al", but rather reiterate the claim over and over...and over. Pure Macfan brain candy that won't really convince the unconverted or tell adherents anything they don't already believe, a few interesting glimpses into the iPod's design notwithstanding.

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