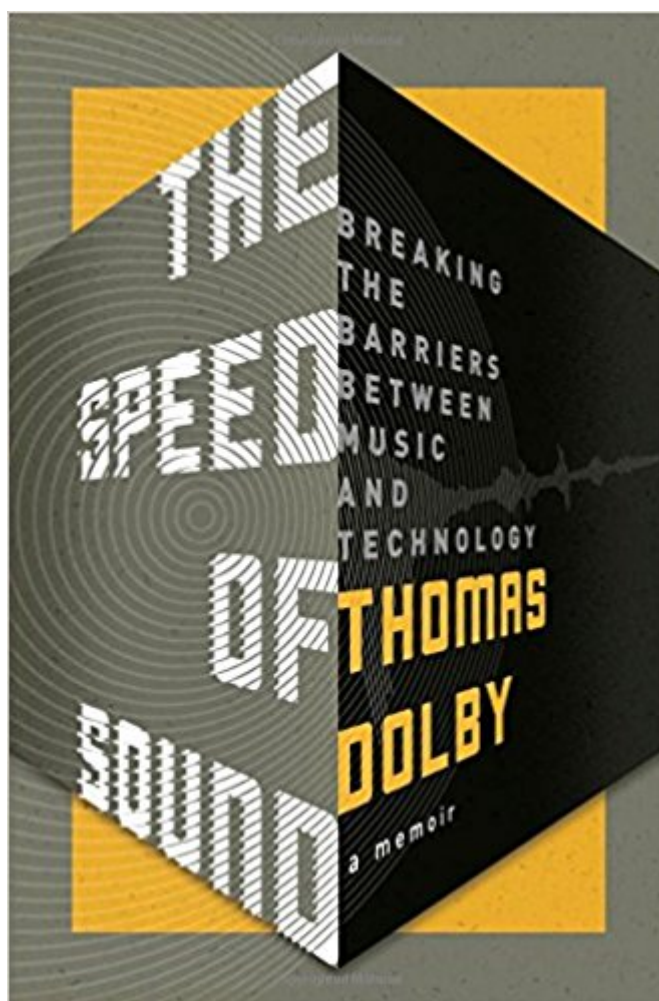


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The Speed Of Sound: Breaking The Barriers Between Music And Technology: A Memoir



Synopsis

The remarkable story of rising to the top of the music charts, a second act as a tech pioneer, and the sustaining power of creativity and art. Thomas Dolby's hit songs "She Blinded Me with Science" and "Hyperactive!" catapulted him to international fame in the early 80s. A pioneer of New Wave and Electronica, Thomas combined a love for invention with a passion for music, and the result was a new sound that defined an era of revolutionary music. But as record company politics overshadow the joy of performing, Thomas finds a surprising second act. Starting out in a rat-infested London bedsit, a teenage Thomas Dolby stacks boxes by day at the grocery and tinkers with a homemade synthesizer at night while catching the Police at a local dive bar, swinging by the pub to see the unknown Elvis Costello and starting the weekend with a Clash show at a small night club. London on the eve of the 1980s is a hotbed for music and culture, and a new sound is beginning to take shape, merging technology with the musical energy of punk rock. Thomas plays keyboards in other bands, does shows, and with a bit of luck finds his own style, quickly establishing himself on the scene and recording break out hits that take radio, MTV and dance clubs by storm. The world is now his oyster, and sold out arenas, world tours, even a friendship with Michael Jackson become the fabric of his life. But as the record industry flounders and disillusionment sets in, Thomas turns his attention to Hollywood. Scoring films and computer games eventually leads him to Silicon Valley and a software startup that turns up the volume on the digital music revolution. His company barely survives the dotcom bubble but finally even the mavericks at Apple, Microsoft, Netscape and Nokia see the light. By 2005, two-thirds of the world's mobile phones embed his Beatnik software. Life at the zenith of a tech empire proves to be just as full of big personalities, battling egos and roller-coaster success as his days spent at the top of the charts. **THE SPEED OF SOUND** is the story of an extraordinary man living an extraordinary life, a single-handed quest to make peace between art and the digital world.

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Customer Reviews

"He rose during the advent of the British New Wave. But what was he, exactly? A singer-songwriter? Performance artist? Programmer? Engineer, poet, actor, inventor? And if we couldn't be sure, how possibly could he? This is the engaging, emotional, funny and surprising tale of Thomas Dolby -- a brilliant multi-hyphenate on his journey of discovery and self-discovery."-- JJ Abrams, Director, Writer, Producer "Whatever technology does to musicians will also be done to the rest of us -- but to Thomas Dolby first. Professor Dolby's candid memoir is fascinating. Its significance will grow." -- Bruce Sterling, author of The Epic Struggle of the Internet of Things and The Mirrorshade anthology "Thomas Dolby has had at least four notable lives. The chart topping musician and ubiquitous MTV presence, the Silicon Valley innovator, the music director for TED and then, astonishingly, a professor at Johns Hopkins. His journey is as amazing as the book is well written. From start to finish, I thoroughly enjoyed every page of The Speed Of Sound. Brilliant." - Henry Rollins, bestselling author, journalist and musician "Musician Thomas Dolby debuts with an absorbing account of his pioneering work merging digital music with film, technology, and science. In this story-filled memoir, Dolby draws deeply on his experiences as a synthesized music guru and early internet geek, offering wonderful scenes involving such notables as Michael Jackson, Joni Mitchell, David Bowie, Steve Jobs, and George Lucas. His innovative accomplishments, rendered in fascinating detail here, are legendary. This stellar book will appeal to readers interested in modern technology's startling effects on music and popular culture." - Kirkus, Starred Review "In his engaging memoir, British New Wave icon Dolby retraces his journey from London stock clerk to pop star to unlikely success as a Silicon Valley pioneer |Dolby's understated but acute and wealth of anecdotes make for an enjoyable narrative | the bespectacled Brit is more Renaissance man than one-hit wonder. - Publishers Weekly "Wildly entertaining" - Salon.com

Thomas Dolby has spent his career at the intersection of music and technology. He was an early

star on MTV, and then moved to Silicon Valley, where he has had an extraordinary career as an entrepreneur. He has been named Johns Hopkins University's first Homewood Professor of the Arts, where he will help create a new center that will serve as an incubator for technology in the arts. He lives in England with his family.

I just finished reading Dolby's memoir. For someone who's been a fan of his music for over 30 years, it was a revelation. The book is full of fascinating anecdotes about his early career as a musician, and his later career as a tech entrepreneur. Throughout the memoir he comes across as an artist who refuses to compromise his integrity, a sort of romantic Don Quixote figure crossing lances with the dragons of the music business and e-commerce. Fans of music will gain many great insights into the making of his songs and albums, as well as discovering what he was doing in the many years in between the production of his music. The biggest gap is his childhood--I would have liked to have learned more about what drew him to music, and synthesized music, in the first place, and would have enjoyed reading about his early years traveling around with his archeologist father. Otherwise this is a gem of a book, and should appeal not only to fans of his music, but to people curious about the inner workings of the music industry since the days of '80s synth pop.

Interesting read, I couldn't put it down, wound up reading it in 2 sessions over 2 days. Mr Dolby provides a very good look at the recent history of the music business and his career in particular which segues nicely into the world of the modern age of wireless which is the dotcom/internet zombie fest of virtual products and data points and vaporware and of course IPO's. This book cost me money, I wound up buying Thomas Dolbies original catalog (released on Rhino Records) and the remastered Golden Age of Wireless, but it was a wise investment or at least my ears thought so. Great music that doesn't age quickly, and now I understand the reasoning and circumstances behind it. Heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in music, technology, music business or the technology business. Funny, tragic, engrossing and sometimes romantic, but virtually no nudity and no animals were harmed in the production of this tome. May contain wood pulp and other organic products.

Finished this fascinating memoir the day I received it. I've been anticipating the book's release for a while, and it did not disappoint. SPOILERS (but what review doesn't have a few): I already knew Elizabeth was Europa, but I still gasped when she said "We'll be the Pirate Twins again", I cried when TMDR described the worst moment of his life checking his Blackberry outside the school, I

laughed about the water skiing accident, I cheered when Kathleen told off Michael Jackson and I felt sympathy for Lesley. And as for Kevin Rowland, "Come on Eileen" is the biggest turd of the 80s. As TMDR admits early on, some events seemed to be re-ordered from ways we have heard them before, but this is done with admirable intent to emphasize the chronology of events and how each lends to things further along. I would have liked to see a bit of greater detail during the Sole Inhabitant and Map of the Floating City years since Le Funky Shed and the Nutmeg were great places of artistic cultivation. Things I learned: 1. When setting out, it never hurts to keep a name in your pocket 2. Stay true to who you are and what you want to build and steer your course with that mindset 3. Keep the Sharpies away from Tony Hadley

Although Thomas Dolby is best known for his first careers as a musician and producer at the height of the 80's synth pop craze, he has since reinvented himself as a silicon valley entrepreneur, taken a few years off in semi-retirement in his native England, and most recently returned to the US as a professor at Johns Hopkins. To me the most interesting aspect of Dolby's story is how he has managed to do all of this as a largely self educated man from a modest background. Lots of one hit wonders have come and gone in the music industry, but I can't think of another who has followed that up with even more success in business. I can also think of lots of successful silicon valley entrepreneurs, but most of them come from privileged Ivy League backgrounds (you might mention Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, but I'd respond that both of them got into Harvard even if they didn't bother to finish.) Dolby tells his story in a straight forward way, including lots of unflattering details that other autobiographers might have skipped. At times there is too much detail about recording sessions, concert tours, and business meetings, but some of the stories about personalities and events are fascinating. I would have liked to hear more about Dolby's latest reinvention as a college professor and what he wants to work on at this stage of his life.

I have gotten used to hearing the staple song "She Blinded Me With Science" in the grocery store and as a Dolby appreciator have kept up with some of his subsequent musical output over the past many years and have always been amazed at what a great musician he is. However, beyond the music, you may be surprised to find out that Dolby is a renaissance man and probably very close to a genius. Beyond helping to create electronic music and give rise to EDM, Dolby has been involved with electronic and technological, pioneering that has literally changed our world. It's fascinating to hear about the evolution of the internet and the cell phone from the perspective of a person who was, when started out, basically a rock star who nobody suspected was also a brainiac. Dealing

with his distaste for the business side of the music business it's fascinating to watch Dolby deal with the business side of the technology revolution, which makes the music business look like a day at Disneyland. Incredibly well written, apparently without the aid of a ghost writer, which further cements Dolby's reputation as a unique talent. Highly recommend this.

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