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# Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music

By Greg Milner



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**Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music** By Greg Milner

In 1915, Thomas Edison proclaimed that he could record a live performance and reproduce it perfectly, shocking audiences who found themselves unable to tell whether what they were hearing was an Edison Diamond Disc or a flesh-and-blood musician. Today, the equation is reversed. Whereas Edison proposed that a real performance could be rebuilt with absolute perfection, Pro Tools and digital samplers now allow musicians and engineers to create the illusion of performances that never were. In between lies a century of sonic exploration into the balance between the real and the represented.

Tracing the contours of this history, Greg Milner takes us through the major breakthroughs and glorious failures in the art and science of recording. An American soldier monitoring Nazi radio transmissions stumbles onto the open yet revolutionary secret of magnetic tape. Japanese and Dutch researchers build a first-generation digital audio format and watch as their "compact disc" is marketed by the music industry as the second coming of Edison yet derided as heretical by analog loyalists. The music world becomes addicted to volume in the nineties and fights a self-defeating "loudness war" to get its fix.

From Les Paul to Phil Spector to King Tubby, from vinyl to pirated CDs to iPods, Milner's *Perfecting Sound Forever* pulls apart musical history to answer a crucial question: Should a recording document reality as faithfully as possible, or should it improve upon or somehow transcend the music it records? The answers he uncovers will change the very way we think about music.



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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Recording gadgets evolve with dizzying speed, but debates over their effects on music never change, according to this fascinating study of technology and aesthetics. Journalist Milner (coauthor, *Metallica: This Monster Lives*) surveys developments in recording, from Thomas Edison's complaints about those new-fangled Victrolas to the contemporary controversy between CD and vinyl. With every advance of hardware, he notes, comes accompanying shifts in the sound of music: the sense of physical space implied by stereo sound; the advent of rock 'n' roll reverb; the big obnoxious ambient drum sound that defined the '80s under the Phil Collins dictatorship; the unsettling robotic tone imparted to vocals by today's Auto-Tune pitch-correction software; the arms race toward ear-grabbing, distortion-heavy loudness that leaves us surrounded by music that does nothing but shout. Perennial arguments about the fidelity of new technologies, he contends, miss the point: now that every record is digitally spliced together out of multiple tracks and far-flung samples, there is no authentic musical performance for the sound engineer—contemporary music's true auteur—to record. Milner combines a lucid exposition of acoustics and technology with a critic's keen discernment of the pop-music soundscape. The result is a real ear-opener that will captivate fans and techies alike. (June 16)

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### Review

"*Perfecting Sound Forever* is an exhaustively researched, extraordinarily inquisitive book that dissects the central question within all music criticism: When we say that something sounds good, what are we really saying? And perhaps more importantly, what are we really hearing?" ?CHUCK KLOSTERMAN

"A compelling look at the birth and evolution of recording, and how it changed the way the world hears itself." ?MARC WEINGARTEN, *Los Angeles Times*

"Greg Milner tells the story of recorded music with novelistic verve, ferocious attention to detail, and a soulful ambivalence about our quest for sonic perfection. He shows how great recordings come about not through advances in technology but through a love of the art, and that same love is the motor of his prose." ?Alex Ross, author of *The Rest Is Noise*

"You may never listen to Lady Gaga the same way again . . . [Milner is] a gifted storyteller with an ear for absurdity . . . You might not think a book about reverb could thrill. Milner's does." ?MIKAEL WOOD, *Time Out New York*

"Very, very, very few books will change the way you listen to music. This is one such book. Read it." ?JARVIS COCKER

### About the Author

**GREG MILNER** has written about music, media, technology, and politics for *Spin*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Village Voice*, *Slate*, *Salon*, and *Wired*. He is the coauthor, with the filmmaker Joe Berlinger, of *Metallica: This Monster Lives*. He lives in Brooklyn.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Lindsey Gant:**

Book will be written, printed, or illustrated for everything. You can understand everything you want by a reserve. Book has a different type. As you may know that book is important issue to bring us around the world. Beside that you can your reading proficiency was fluently. A reserve Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music will make you to possibly be smarter. You can feel a lot more confidence if you can know about every thing. But some of you think this open or reading a new book make you bored. It is far from make you fun. Why they can be thought like that? Have you trying to find best book or suited book with you?

#### **Scot Vines:**

The e-book untitled Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music is the publication that recommended to you you just read. You can see the quality of the reserve content that will be shown to you actually. The language that writer use to explained their ideas are easily to understand. The writer was did a lot of research when write the book, and so the information that they share for you is absolutely accurate. You also can get the e-book of Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music from the publisher to make you a lot more enjoy free time.

#### **Scott Tucker:**

Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music can be one of your starter books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to put every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music yet doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource data that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information may drawn you into new stage of crucial imagining.

#### **Larry Strickland:**

This Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music is great publication for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who else always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it information accurately using great coordinate word or we can say no rambling sentences included. So if you are read the item hurriedly you can have whole data in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but tough core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music in your hand like keeping the world in your arm, details in it is not ridiculous one. We can say that no e-book that offer you world throughout ten or fifteen tiny right but this book already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hey there Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt this?

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