

than you or I will ever have in our lives, and Chevy Chase and Ivan Reitman are on hand to tell some of the stories. —Hollywood Reporter

One of the Best Technology Books of 2020—Financial Times “Levy’s all-access Facebook reflects the reputational swan dive of its subject. . . . The result is evenhanded and devastating.”—San Francisco Chronicle “[Levy’s] evenhanded conclusions are still damning.”—Reason “[He] doesn’t shy from asking the tough questions.”—The Washington Post “Reminds you the HBO show Silicon Valley did not have to reach far for its satire.”—NPR.org The definitive history, packed with untold stories, of one of America’s most controversial and powerful companies: Facebook As a college sophomore, Mark Zuckerberg created a simple website to serve as a campus social network. Today, Facebook is nearly unrecognizable from its first, modest iteration. In light of recent controversies surrounding election-influencing “fake news” accounts, the handling of its users’ personal data, and growing discontent with the actions of its founder and CEO—who has enormous power over what the world sees and says—never has a company been more central to the national conversation. Millions of words have been written about Facebook, but no one has told the complete story, documenting its ascendancy and missteps. There is no denying the power and omnipresence of Facebook in American daily life, or the imperative of this book to document the unchecked power and shocking techniques of the company, from growing at all costs to outmaneuvering its biggest rivals to acquire WhatsApp and Instagram, to developing a platform so addictive even some of its own are now beginning to realize its dangers. Based on hundreds of interviews from inside and outside Facebook, Levy’s sweeping narrative of incredible entrepreneurial success and failure digs deep into the whole story of the company that has changed the world and reaped the consequences.

On October 23, 2001, Apple Computer, a company known for its chic, cutting-edge technology -- if not necessarily for its dominant market share -- launched a 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 people have inserted the device’s distinctive white buds into their ears, and the iPod has become a global obsession. The Perfect Thing is the definitive account, from design and marketing to startling impact, of Apple’s iPod, the signature device of our young century. Besides being one of the most successful consumer products in decades, the iPod has changed our behavior and even our society. It has transformed Apple from a computer company into a consumer electronics giant. It has remolded the music business, altering not only the means of distribution but even the ways in which people enjoy and think about music. Its ubiquity and its universally acknowledged coolness have made it a symbol for the digital age itself, with commentators remarking on “the iPod generation.” Now the iPod is beginning to transform the broadcast industry, too, as podcasting becomes a way to access radio and television programming. Meanwhile millions of Podheads obsess about their gizmo, reveling in the personal soundtrack it offers them, basking in the social cachet it lends them, even wondering whether the device itself has its own musical preferences. Steven Levy, the chief technology correspondent for Newsweek magazine and a longtime Apple watcher, is the ideal writer to tell the iPod’s tale. He has had access to all the key players in the iPod story, including Steve Jobs, Apple’s charismatic cofounder and CEO, whom Levy has known for over twenty years. Detailing for the first time the complete story of the creation of the iPod, Levy explains why Apple succeeded brilliantly with its version of the MP3 player when other companies didn’t get it right, and how Jobs was able to convince the bosses at the big record labels to license their music for Apple’s groundbreaking iTunes Store. (We even learn why the iPod is white.) Besides his inside view of Apple, Levy draws on his experiences covering Napster and attending Supreme Court arguments on copyright (as well as his own travels on the iPod’s click wheel) to address all of the fascinating issues -- technical, legal, social, and musical -- that the iPod raises. Borrowing one of the definitive qualities of the iPod itself, The Perfect Thing shuffles the book format. Each chapter of this book was written to stand on its own, a deeply researched, wittily observed take on a different aspect of the iPod. The sequence of the chapters in the book has been shuffled in different copies, with only the opening and concluding sections excepted. “Shuffle” is a hallmark of the digital age -- and The Perfect Thing, via sharp, insightful reporting, is the perfect guide to the deceptively diminutive gadget embodying our era.

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