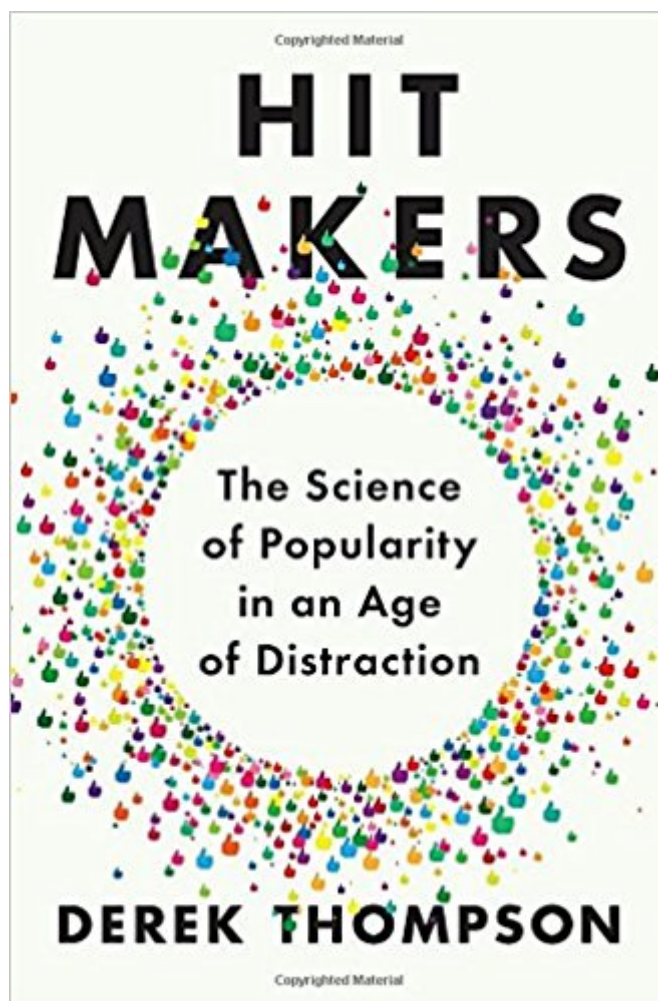


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# Hit Makers: The Science Of Popularity In An Age Of Distraction



## Synopsis

NATIONAL BESTSELLER “This book picks up where *The Tipping Point* left off.” —Adam Grant, Wharton professor and New York Times bestselling author of *ORIGINALS* and *GIVE AND TAKE* Nothing “goes viral.” If you think a popular movie, song, or app came out of nowhere to become a word-of-mouth success in today’s crowded media environment, you’re missing the real story. Each blockbuster has a secret history of power, influence, dark broadcasters, and passionate cults that turn some new products into cultural phenomena. Even the most brilliant ideas wither in obscurity if they fail to connect with the right network, and the consumers that matter most aren’t the early adopters, but rather their friends, followers, and imitators — the audience of your audience. In his groundbreaking investigation, *Atlantic* senior editor Derek Thompson uncovers the hidden psychology of why we like what we like and reveals the economics of cultural markets that invisibly shape our lives. Shattering the sentimental myths of hit-making that dominate pop culture and business, Thompson shows quality is insufficient for success, nobody has “good taste,” and some of the most popular products in history were one bad break away from utter failure. It may be a new world, but there are some enduring truths to what audiences and consumers want. People love a familiar surprise: a product that is bold, yet sneakily recognizable. Every business, every artist, every person looking to promote themselves and their work wants to know what makes some works so successful while others disappear. *Hit Makers* is a magical mystery tour through the last century of pop culture blockbusters and the most valuable currency of the twenty-first century: people’s attention. From the dawn of impressionist art to the future of Facebook, from small Etsy designers to the origin of *Star Wars*, Derek Thompson leaves no pet rock unturned to tell the fascinating story of how culture happens and why things become popular. In *Hit Makers*, Derek Thompson investigates:

- The secret link between ESPN’s sticky programming and the *The Weeknd*’s catchy choruses
- Why Facebook is the world’s most important modern newspaper
- How advertising critics predicted Donald Trump
- The 5th grader who accidentally launched “Rock Around the Clock,” the biggest hit in rock and roll history
- How Barack Obama and his speechwriters think of themselves as songwriters
- How Disney conquered the world but the future of hits belongs to savvy amateurs and individuals
- The French collector who accidentally created the Impressionist canon

Quantitative evidence that the biggest music hits aren't always the best  
Why almost all Hollywood blockbusters are sequels, reboots, and adaptations  
Why one year--1991--is responsible for the way pop music sounds today  
Why another year --1932--created the business model of film  
How data scientists proved that "going viral" is a myth  
How 19th century immigration patterns explain the most heard song in the Western Hemisphere

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Enthralling-- full of 'aha' moments about why some ideas soar and others never get off the ground. This book picks up where The Tipping Point left off." --Adam Grant, Wharton professor and New York Times bestselling author of ORIGINALS and GIVE AND TAKE  
"While giving Lady Luck her due, Thompson studiously examines the myriad factors that make the things we buy, like and follow so irresistible: whether Facebook, TV shows such as Seinfeld, Bumble (the app, not the insect), even favorite lullabies. In Hit Makers, his first book, Thompson tackles this mystery with solid research, ready wit and catchy aphorisms -- a wonderful book." --USA Today  
"Superb." --Fareed Zakaria, Book of the Week selection  
"Hit Makers is thoughtful and thorough, a compelling book -- a terrific look at what makes a hit, from the Mona Lisa to Donald Trump." --Vox  
"Fascinating ... Thompson has huge

enthusiasm for his topic and has amassed an amazing amount of material, including many offbeat and engaging stories. ... [Should] be read for insight and provocation." • John Gapper "Financial Times" [Thompson] has assembled a book in the Malcolm Gladwell tradition: telling great stories to illustrate some fascinating and often far-from-obvious theses." • "Daily Mail" Thompson's diligent research and lively prose ensure that Hit Makers is always informative and entertaining." • "Prospect" Thompson does a really fascinating job of explaining how things become popular, drawing on a wide range of cultural phenomena, from Star Wars to the iPhone, Taylor Swift to Game of Thrones." • "Ben East" "Observer" [An] engaging cultural study." • "Steven Poole" "Guardian" Spirited ... An entertaining and informative guide." • "The Times" A useful survey ... Thompson makes lots of snappy remarks and unexpected comparisons." • "David Sexton" "Evening Standard" Derek Thompson has long been one of the brightest new voices in American journalism. With HIT MAKERS, he becomes one of the brightest new voices in the world of non-fiction books. Ranging from Impressionist art to German lullabies to Game of Thrones, HIT MAKERS offers a fresh and compelling take on how the media function and how ideas spread. As deftly written as it is keenly argued, this book is true to its title is a hit. • "Daniel H. Pink, New York Times bestselling author of DRIVE and TO SELL IS HUMAN" "Derek Thompson's HIT MAKERS is a sharply observed history of the megahit, from the 13th-century tunic craze to the iPhone, tracing the strange ever-changing mixture of genius, dumb luck, business savvy, and network math that turns an obscurity into a worldwide smash." • "Jordan Ellenberg, New York Times bestselling author of HOW NOT TO BE WRONG" "What makes one song hit, and another, flop, one book a success and the other, fodder for the discount bins? That's the mystery Derek Thompson probes with his characteristic verve, wit, and insight in "Hit Makers." It's an engrossing read that doesn't settle for easy answers, and one that seems destined to become one of the hits that Thompson so deftly analyzes." • "Maria Konnikova, New York Times bestselling author of THE CONFIDENCE GAME" "Hit Makers blends historical lessons with technological & social insights to explain what makes culture tick, and hits happen." • "Steve Case, Chairman and CEO of Revolution and Co-Founder of America Online" "Derek Thompson's Hit Makers is a terrific read a sparkling combination of fascinating stories, cutting-edge science, and superb business advice. Just as he does when he writes for The Atlantic, Thompson shares more interesting ideas per paragraph than practically any other writer today. Hit Makers is a bible for anyone who's ever tried to promote practically anything, from products, people, and ideas,

to books, songs, films, and TV shows. — Adam Alter, New York Times Bestselling author of *Drunk Tank Pink* and *Irresistible* "I always read everything by Derek Thompson I see, and this book was no exception. Why things become popular is one of the most important questions in an ever-more networked world, and Derek Thompson's *\*Hit Makers\** is the best and most serious attempt to take a look at it." — Tyler Cowen, author of *The Great Stagnation* and *Marginal Revolution* "This book is brilliant, a fascinating exploration of the relationship between artistry and industry, the ways that everything from immigration to distribution helps create the popular imagination. You may never look at your favorite film or song the same way again. It should be required reading for anyone working in the popular arts." — Simon Kinberg, producer of *The Martian*, screenwriter and producer for the *X-Men* film franchises "Thompson tackles the daunting subject of how products come to dominate the culture in this interdisciplinary romp that delves into many facets of the entertainment industry as well as industrial design, art history, publishing, and politics — presenting his case with verve and a lightning chain of compact anecdotes. This book will appeal to readers of Malcolm Gladwell as well as pop-culture enthusiasts and anyone interested in the changing media landscape." — *Booklist* "How does a nice idea become an earworm, or a fashion trend, or a shudder or a meme? Atlantic senior editor Thompson ventures a few well-considered answers. Good reading for anyone who aspires to understand the machinery of pop culture and perhaps even craft a hit of his or her own." — *Kirkus Reviews*

Derek Thompson is a senior editor at *The Atlantic* magazine, where he writes about economics and the media. He is a regular contributor to NPR's "Here and Now" and appears frequently on television, including CBS and MSNBC. He lives in New York City.

The main question discussed in this book is: what are the patterns of successful books, songs, applications etc.? The "scientific" way to research such a question is to analyze a representative sample of successful and unsuccessful cases, in order to find the features that exist in the successful cases and does not exist in the unsuccessful ones. This book however analyzes successful cases only. It points at some features that are found in many hits, but ignores the possibility that these features characterize many flops as well.

Book was okay. Not one of my overall favorites.

This book is beautifully put together and is full of interesting stories and facts. If you are in the media business, it is a MUST read.

Some good stuff here but it's a little too scattered. Thompson barely stays on a single topic for more than 3 pages, makes things hard to follow. Not too much new insight either.

I really like the way the author weaves familiar stories and makes you think. Everyone know about Star Wars and Disney.....but, readers discover that they really didn't know much about how they become worldwide hits. Good read.

Mr. Thompson delves into the way we make decisions on what we purchase. We think we make rational decisions as individuals and he explains that most of us buy according to a formula. It does it in a very interesting way.

This book is one of the most interesting books I've read this year. There are important lessons to be learned from this book such as MAYA and distribution models that can relate to any industry and teach anyone how to rethink their marketing or sales strategies. However, while it is useful, it goes further than just being a book on how to make a hit - it gives you valuable examples and historical and psychological lessons that are not only fascinating but fun to re-tell and share with friends. I would recommend this book to anybody who enjoys the Atlantic and Derek's writing, but also to anyone who is working in a hit-making industry today!

Loved that book! Very interesting insights into how so many things became "hits" in my lifetime and particularly in more recent years. The story of "Tender" is among the most interesting.

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