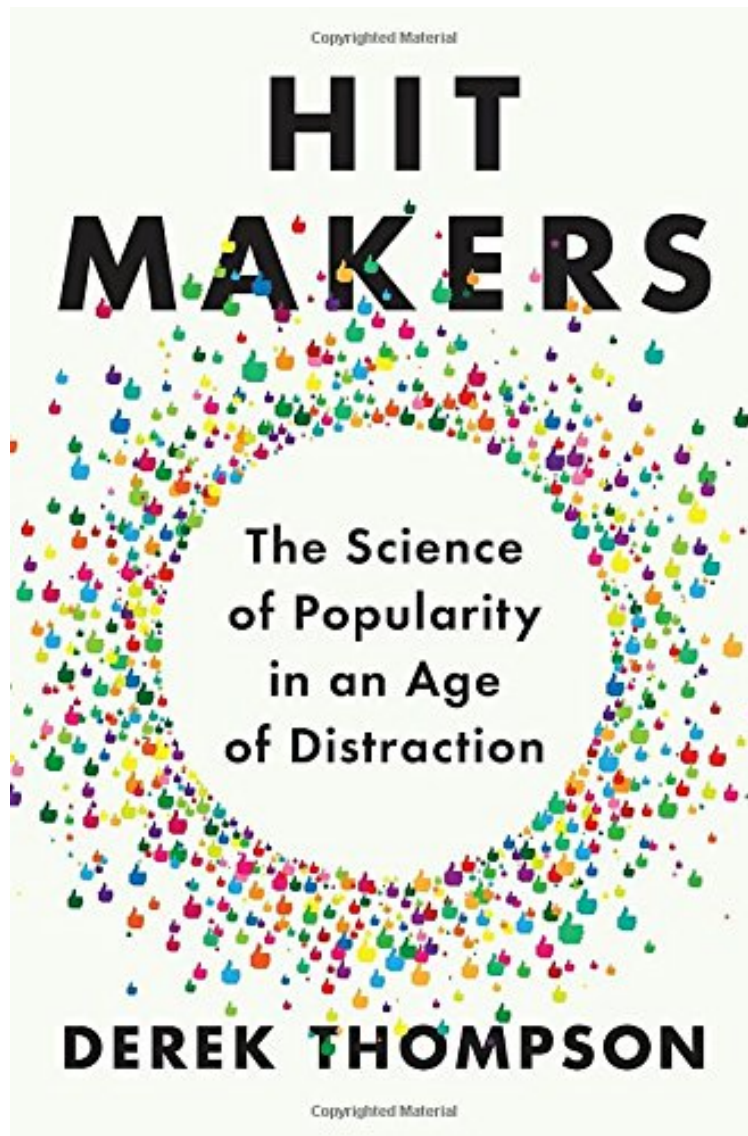


[Free] Hit Makers: The Science of Popularity in an Age of Distraction

Hit Makers: The Science of Popularity in an Age of Distraction

Derek Thompson

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Derek Thompson : Hit Makers: The Science of Popularity in an Age of Distraction before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hit Makers: The Science of Popularity in an Age of Distraction:

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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. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very entertaining! By Hector I found this book interesting mostly because I am not a social media very active person, not following the hottest music hits of the summer neither thinking a lot about marketing strategies that will make me a millionaire, I bought it cos want to know how is the world working right now and get myself more related to the way people define popular stuff these days. I was not disappointed, as the author says at the beginning of the book it is not a hits kitchen recipe, it is an view of some successful stories that gives you an insight of how somethings happen in chaotic circumstances. Really enjoy it and will read it again for sure. Some of the bad reviews must be product maybe of big expectations motivated in someway by the books title, but if you put some effort in getting something valuable of each anecdotic story, you can get pretty excited living trough the thoughts of the writer. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great Read for Pop Culture Enthusiast By Jen Thompson does an excellent job proving his thesis with an abundance of colorful and relatable examples. His subject matter is easy to understand as well as apply. At the very core, Thompson has beautifully written a high-level history of pop culture trends, media, and influences.

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

"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 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 shuddera 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 s About the Author 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. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 1 The Power of Exposure Fame and Familiarity in Art, Music, Politics On a rainy morning one fall, I was walking alone through the impressionist exhibit of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Standing before a wall of renowned paintings, I was struck by a question that I imagine many people wonder quietly in a museum, even if it's rude to say out loud in a company of strangers: Why is this thing so famous? It was The Japanese Footbridge by Claude Monet, with the blue bridge arching over an emerald green pond that is gilded with patches of yellow, pink, and green the iconic water lilies. It was impossible not to recognize. One of my favorite picture books as a kid included several of Monets water lily paintings. It was also impossible to ignore, on account of several kids scrambling through the geriatric crowd to get a closer look. Yes! a teenage girl said, holding up her phone in front of her face to take a picture. Oh! exclaimed the taller, curly-haired boy behind her. It's that famous one! Several more high school students heard their shouts, and within seconds a group had clustered around the Monet. Several rooms away, the gallery held a special exhibit for another impressionist painter, Gustave Caillebotte. This was a quieter, slower affair. There were no students and no ecstatic exclamations of recognition, just a lot of mmm-hmms and solemn nods. Caillebotte is not world famous like Monet, Manet, or Cezanne. The sign outside his exhibition at the National Gallery called him perhaps the least known of the French impressionists. But Caillebotte's paintings are exquisite. His style is impressionist yet exacting, as if captured with a slightly more focused camera lens. Often from a windows view, he rendered the colorful urban geometry of nineteenth-century Paris the yellow rhomboid blocks, the pale white sidewalks, and the iridescent grays of rain-slicked boulevards. His contemporaries considered him a phenomenon on par with Monet and Renoir. mile Zola, the great French writer who drew attention to impressionisms delicate patches of color, pronounced Caillebotte one of the boldest of the group. Still, 140 years later, Monet is one of the most famous painters in history, while Caillebotte is relatively anonymous. A mystery: Two rebellious painters hang their art in the same impressionist exhibit in 1876. They are considered of similar talent and promise. But one painter's water lilies become a global cultural hit enshrined in picture books, studied by art historians, gawked at by high school students, and highlighted in

every tour of the National Gallery of Art and the other painter is little known among casual art fans. Why? For many centuries, philosophers, artists, and psychologists have studied modern art to learn the truth about beauty and popularity. For understandable reasons, many focused on the paintings themselves. But studying the patches of Monet and the brushstrokes of Caillebotte won't tell you why one is famous and the other is not. You have to see the deeper story. Famous paintings, hit songs, and blockbusters that seem to float effortlessly on the cultural consciousness have a hidden genesis; even water lilies have roots. When a team of researchers at Cornell University studied the story of the impressionist canon, they found that something surprising set the most famous painters apart. It wasn't their social connections or their nineteenth-century renown. It was a subtler story. And it all started with Caillebotte. Gustave Caillebotte was born to a wealthy Parisian family in 1848. As a young man, he veered from law to engineering to the French army in the Franco-Prussian War. But in his twenties, he discovered a passion and immense talent for painting. In 1875, he submitted *The Floor Scrapers* to the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris. In the painting, white light coming through a window illuminates the bare white backs of several men working on their knees, scraping the dark brown floor of an empty room, as the skinned wood curls into spirals beside their legs. But the painting was rejected. One critic later summed up the scornful response when he said, "Do nudes, but do beautiful nudes or don't do them at all." The impressionists, as Caillebotte also called them, *les Intransigents*, disagreed. Several of them, including Auguste Renoir, liked his quotidian take on the floor scrapers and asked Caillebotte to exhibit with their fellow rebels. He became friends with some of the era's most controversial young artists, like Monet and Degas, buying dozens of their works at a time when few rich European men cared for them. Caillebotte's self-portraits show him in middle age with short hair and a face like an arrowhead, angular and sharpened to a point, with an austere gray beard. A grave countenance colored his inner life as well. Convinced that he would die young, Caillebotte wrote a will instructing the French state to accept his art collection and hang nearly seventy of his impressionist paintings in a national museum. His fears were prescient. Caillebotte died of a stroke in 1894 at the age of forty-five. His bequest included at least sixteen canvases by Monet, eight by Renoir, eight by Degas, five by Cézanne, and four by Manet, along with eighteen by Pissarro and nine by Sisley. It is not inconceivable that his walls would be valued at several billion dollars in a twenty-first-century Christies sale. But at the time, his collection was far less coveted. In the will, Caillebotte had stipulated that all paintings hang at the Muse du Luxembourg in Paris. But even with Renoir serving as executor, the French government initially refused to accept the artworks. The French elite, including conservative critics and even prominent politicians, considered the bequest presumptuous, if not downright ludicrous. Who was this scoundrel to think he could posthumously force the French government to hang dozens of blotchy atrocities on its own walls? Several art professors threatened to resign from the *cole des Beaux-Arts* if the state accepted the impressionist paintings. Jean-Lon Grme, one of the most famous academic artists of his time, blasted the donation, saying, "For the government to accept such filth, there would have to be a great moral slackening. But what is the history of art if not one great slackening after another?" After years of fighting both the French state and Caillebotte's own family to honor the bequest, Renoir persuaded the government to accept about half the collection. By one count, the accepted paintings included eight works by Monet, seven by Degas, seven by Pissarro, six by Renoir, six by Sisley, two by Manet, and two by Cézanne. When the artworks were finally hung in 1897, at a new wing in the Muse du Luxembourg, it represented the first ever national exhibition of impressionist art in France, or any European country. The public flooded the museum to see art they'd previously savaged or simply ignored. The long battle over Caillebotte's estate (the press called it *l'affaire Caillebotte*) had the very effect he must have hoped: It brought unprecedented attention, and even a bit of respect, to his intransigent friends. One century after the exhibition of the Caillebotte collection, James Cutting, a psychologist at Cornell University, counted more than fifteen thousand instances of impressionist paintings to appear in hundreds of books in the university library. He concluded unequivocally that there were seven (and only seven) core impressionist painters, whose names and works appeared far more often than their peers. This core consisted of Monet, Renoir, Degas, Cézanne, Manet, Pissarro, and Sisley. Without a doubt, this was the impressionist canon. What set these seven painters apart? They didn't share a common style. They did not receive unique praise from contemporary critics, nor did they suffer equal censure. There is no record that this group socialized exclusively, collected each other's works exclusively, or exhibited exclusively. In fact, there would seem to be only one exclusive quality the most famous impressionists shared. The core seven impressionist painters were the only seven impressionists in Gustave Caillebotte's bequest. Exactly one hundred years after Caillebotte's death, in 1994, James Cutting stood before one of the most famous paintings at the Muse d'Orsay in Paris and had a familiar thought: Why is this thing so famous? The painting in question was Renoir's *Bal du Moulin de la Galette*. Standing about four feet high and six feet wide, the artwork shows scores of well-dressed Parisians clustered in an outdoor dance hall, waltzing, drinking, and huddling around tables in the dappled light of a Sunday afternoon in the Montmartre district of Paris. Cutting instantly recognized the work. But he wondered what was so inherently special about the painting, apart from the fact that he recognized it. Yes, the *Bal du Moulin* is absorbing, he granted, but the artwork was not obviously better than its less celebrated peers in adjacent rooms. I really had an aha moment, Cutting told me. I realized that Caillebotte had owned not only the *Bal du Moulin*, but also many other paintings at the museum that had become extremely famous. He returned to Ithaca to flesh out his eureka. Cutting and a research assistant went through about

one thousand books of impressionist art in the Cornell University library to make a list of the most commonly reproduced artists. He concluded that the impressionist canon focuses on a tight cluster of seven core painters: Manet, Monet, Cezanne, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, and Sisley—the Caillebotte Seven. Cutting had a theory: Gustave Caillebotte's death helped to create the impressionist canon. His bequest to the French state created the frame through which contemporary and future art fans viewed impressionism. Art historians focused on the Caillebotte Seven, which bestowed prestige on their works, to the exclusion of others. The paintings of the Caillebotte Seven hung more prominently in galleries, sold for greater sums of money to private collectors, were valued more by art connoisseurs, were printed in more art anthologies, and were dissected by more art history students, who grew into the next generation's art mavens, eager to pass on the Caillebotte Seven's inherited fame. Cutting had another theory: The fact that Caillebotte's bequest shaped the impressionist canon spoke to something deep and universal about media, entertainment, and popularity. People prefer paintings that they've seen before. Audiences like art that gives them the jolt of meaning that often comes from an inkling of recognition. Back at Cornell, Cutting tested this theory. He gathered 166 people from his psychology class and presented them with paired works of impressionist art. In each pair, one of the paintings was significantly more famous—that is, more likely to appear in one of Cornell University's textbooks. Six times out of ten, students said they preferred the more famous picture. This could have meant that famous paintings are better. Or it might have meant that Cornell students preferred canonical artworks because they were familiar with those paintings. To prove the latter, Cutting had to engineer an environment where students were unwittingly but repeatedly exposed to less famous paintings the same way that art audiences are unwittingly but repeatedly exposed to the impressionist canon from a young age. What came next was quite clever: In a separate psychology class, Cutting bombarded students with obscure artworks from the late nineteenth century. The students in this second class saw a nonfamous impressionist painting four times for every one time they glimpsed a famous artwork. This was Cutting's attempt to reconstruct a parallel universe of art history, where Caillebotte never died prematurely, where his legendary bequest never created an impressionist wing, and where the Caillebotte Seven never benefited from a random historical accident that elevated their exposure and popularity. At the end of the second course, Cutting asked the 151 students to choose their favorite paintings among fifty-one pairs. The results of the popularity contest turned the canon upside down. In forty-one of fifty-one pairs, the students' preference for the most famous impressionist works disappeared. The emerald magnetism of Monet's gardens, the electric polychrome of Renoir, and the genius of Manet were nearly nullified by something else—the power of repeated exposure. It's extraordinary that Caillebotte's bequest helped to shape the canon of impressionism because he purposefully bought his friends' least popular paintings. Caillebotte made it a principle to buy especially those works of his friends which seemed particularly unsaleable, the art historian John Rewald wrote. For example, Caillebotte served as a buyer of last resort when he purchased Renoir's *Bal du Moulin de la Galette*. Today, the painting that Caillebotte rescued from obscurity and that inspired Cutting's famous study of art psychology is considered a masterpiece. When it sold at auction for \$78 million in 1990, it was the second most expensive artwork ever purchased. You may find Renoir's painting to be inherently beautiful, but its canonical fame is inseparable from its absurd good fortune to be among the Caillebotte collection. Mary Morton, the curator of French paintings at the National Gallery of Art, organized the museum's 2015 Caillebotte exhibit. She told me that a lack of exposure might account for Caillebotte's anonymity for another reason: Impressionism's most important collector didn't try to sell his art. One of the most important behind-the-scenes figures in impressionist history is Paul Durand-Ruel, a French collector and dealer who served as a one-man clearinghouse for impressionist paintings before they became world famous. His exhaustive efforts to sell work by Monet and others created and sustained the movement while the French salons and European aristocracy considered their patched style a heinous affront to French romanticism. Durand-Ruel found more success among American collectors. As the industrial revolution and income growth cranked up, newly wealthy people inhabited big new apartments in Paris and New York City, Morton told me. They needed decoration that was affordable, beautiful, and widely available, and impressionist paintings were all three. New wealth created the space for new tastes. Impressionism filled the void. But Caillebotte does not fit into this story of impressionism's popularity among the nouveau riche. He was a millionaire, as the heir to a large fortune in textiles, and he had no need to make money from a painting hobby. There are more than 2,500 paintings, drawings, and pastels attributed to Monet. Despite his severe arthritis, Renoir produced an astonishing 4,000 works. Caillebotte produced about 400 paintings and made little effort to distribute them to collectors or museums. He faded into obscurity in the early twentieth century while his peers hung in crowded galleries and private collections, as the echoing power of Caillebotte's gift rolled through history. When today's high school students recognize Monet's water lilies, they're seeing more than a century's worth of exposure and fame. Caillebotte is the least known of the French impressionists. But it's not because he's the worst. It's because he offered his friends a gift that he was willing to withhold from himself: the gift of exposure.