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Move Fast And Break Things: How Facebook, Google, And Cornered Culture And Undermined Democracy



Synopsis

Move Fast and Break Things tells the story of how a small group of libertarian entrepreneurs began in the 1990s to hijack the original decentralized vision of the Internet, in the process creating three monopoly firms - Facebook, , and Google - that now determine the future of the music, film, television, publishing, and news industries. Taplin offers a succinct and powerful history of how online life began to be shaped around the values of the men who founded these companies, including Peter Thiel and Larry Page: tolerating piracy of books, music and film while at the same time promoting opaque business practices and subordinating privacy of individual users to create the surveillance marketing monoculture in which we now live. The enormous profits that have come with this concentration of power tell their own story. Since 2001, newspaper and music revenues have fallen by 70 percent; book publishing, film, and television profits have also fallen dramatically. Revenues at Google in this same period grew from \$400 million to \$74.5 billion. Google's YouTube today controls 60 percent of the streaming audio business and pays only 11 percent of the streaming audio revenues. More creative content is being consumed than ever before, but less revenue is flowing to creators and owners of the content. With the reallocation of money to monopoly platforms comes a shift in power. Google, Facebook, and now enjoy political power on par with Big Oil and Big Pharma, which in part explains how such a tremendous shift in revenues from artists to platforms could have been achieved and why it has gone unchallenged for so long. The stakes in this story go far beyond the livelihood of any one musician or journalist. As Taplin observes, the fact that more and more Americans receive their news, music, and other forms of entertainment from a small group of companies poses a real threat to democracy. *Move Fast and Break Things* offers a vital, forward-thinking prescription for how artists can reclaim their audiences using knowledge of the past and a determination to work together. Using his own half-century career as a music and film producer and early pioneer of streaming video online, Taplin offers new ways to think about the design of the World Wide Web and specifically the way we live with the firms that dominate it.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours 23 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Hachette Audio

Audible.com Release Date: April 18, 2017

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B06ZXT59HC

Best Sellers Rank: #15 in [Books > Computers & Technology > Internet & Social Media >](#)

[E-Commerce](#) #46 in [Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Computers](#) #68

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Customer Reviews

A thought provoking view of how GOOG, AMZN, FB etc. are crushing producers, artists and authors as they amass our data to shape messaging for advertisers while net users supply our every thoughts, urges, fears and desires for free. Obviously huge swaths of mankind seldom have any private thoughts.

"Move Fast and Break Things" is the most important book yet about the tragic consequences of monopoly power in the internet. Google, Facebook and have done wonderful things, but by a combination of design and unintended consequences, they have caused great harm to the creative arts, our culture and (in the case of Google and Facebook) our politics. I have been a professional tech investor for 35 years. My first investments in Google, , and Facebook happened when they were tiny private companies. I don't think these companies intended to do harm, but it never occurred to them to take appropriate steps to prevent harm. The result was disastrous. Jonathan Taplin explains it all. If you care about technology or politics, this book is a must read.

This is a must read for artists and creators. It's an exhaustive, well-researched look at the ways in which internet companies, which are now media behemoths, have manipulated the game to their benefit and our economic disadvantage. Taplin turns his years of experience and his keen insight into identifying how we've ended up in an untenable situation for artists and what must happen to correct this inequity going forward. Smart and fun to read.

Taplin's narrative arc is somewhat choppy. However, he is able to intertwine an almost romanticized view of his past professional life in the music industry and his paranoia that the creative class will not be able to adapt to the "zero marginal cost" business model that is personified in Google, et al.

The view that some reviewers are trying to push - a Luddite crying about past - is just untrue. A calm reading actually adds much missed context on some of the well-known personalities that have shaped the Internet age. While he touches on various aspects of how the technology age is changing individual behavior and the self-selection biases that is now inherent in all forums, the primary premise of the book is still focused on the creative class - the content generators. The argument is basically that if Googles of the world start giving artists more channels to directly monetize, the entire world may be a better place.... of course, that is an exaggeration and oversimplification at the same time. Luddite, he is not. Nor is he big on detailing out an alternative path or solutions for an "ideal" state. Nevertheless, the issues being raised by Taplin and the rich, detailed historical context Taplin provides makes this an informative book; one needs to discount (heavily) the possibility of confirmatory biases in his narration. Enjoyable read.

This is an eye-opening book. It's essential reading. Taplin has had an eclectic career ranging from artist management (Bob Dylan, the Band) to movie producer (Martin Scorsese, Guy Van Zant), to investment banker, to director emeritus of the Annenberg Innovation Lab at the University of Southern California. His deep understanding of technology, economics, and the arts are brought to bear on a subject that could be the most important one of our times. This is not hyperbole. I thought I understood the world we live in now, but I was wrong. Some reviewers here are focusing on Taplin's remedies for the arts, but his thesis is much broader. As his opening object lesson, he looks at the recent transformation of the music business as the result of the internet, that has destroyed even well-established musicians' ability to make a living. But Taplin's real target is not the music business, it's the internet giants run by right-wing libertarians that now hold the economy hostage -- Google, Facebook, -- and how they grew to their current state of hegemony, sidestepping the anti-monopoly laws that have protected American free enterprise since the passage of the Sherman Act in 1890. Do you think "hold the economy hostage" is an exaggeration? Do you think that sacrificing a bit of privacy for the convenience of Facebook or a free Gmail account is worth it? Think again. I won't attempt a synopsis. It's too important to dumb down, and Taplin has done an excellent job of explaining it to average folks like me. If you'd like to understand where (and why) all the jobs have gone, read this please. Also, think about the kind of world you'd like to leave for your kids and grandkids. Would you like there to be art in it? How about empathy? How about nature? Or is that all just old-fashioned nonsense for bleeding hearts and fools?"Move Fast and Break Things" is a modern history lesson about a sea change that is still in process. The answer to where we're going to end up is blowing in the wind.

I couldn't stop reading it, which is surprising to me for this kind of book so filled with facts can be dry and dragging. Packed with stories this book is told in almost movie fashion--in fact, it would make a good one. I loved the read. A real eyeopener to what goes on in Silicon Valley behind the scenes and a hard look at our future.

A vastly entertaining, informative and comprehensive account of how certain internet monopolies have affected our lives and incomes and what can be done to correct these manipulative practices. An important book for all of us.

This book clearly explains why and how the creative arts and crafts are under assault. Musicians must tour endlessly, copyrights are ignored, films are pirated, writers are paid by the word (if at all), newspapers and magazines are going belly up or reducing staff and the distribution networks are getting very rich. This book should be required reading for anyone who values the contribution that the arts make to our democracy and the threat posed by the reversal of net neutrality. It's also a good read!

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