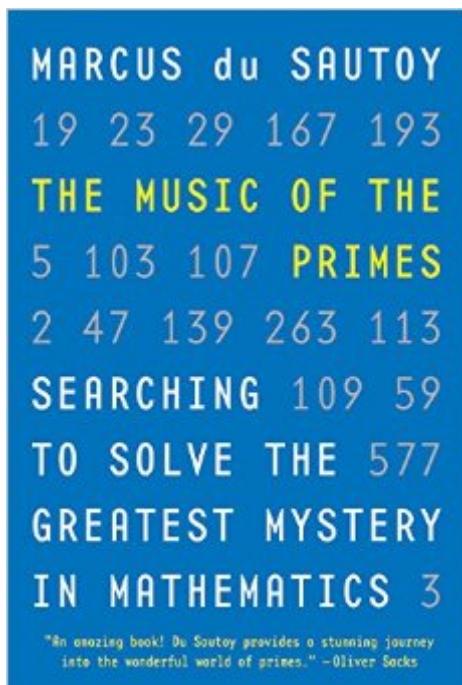


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Music Of The Primes, The



Synopsis

In the tradition of Fermat's Enigma and Pi, Marcus du Sautoy tells the illuminating, authoritative, and engaging story of Bernhard Riemann and the ongoing quest to capture the holy grail of mathematics—the formula to predict prime numbers. Oliver Sacks, author of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, calls *The Music of the Primes* an amazing book. "I could not put it down once I had started." • Simon Winchester, author of *The Professor and the Madman*, writes, "this fascinating account, decoding the inscrutable language of the mathematical priesthood, is written like the purest poetry. Marcus du Sautoy's enthusiasm shines through every line of this hymn to the joy of high intelligence, illuminating as it does so even the darkest corners of his most arcane universe." •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the attractions of number theory is that it has to do with the counting numbers; if you can get from one to two and then to three, you are well on your way to hitting all the subject matter of "The Queen of Mathematics." All those numbers can be grouped into two simple categories. The composite numbers, like 15, are formed by multiplying other numbers together, like 3 and 5. The prime numbers are the ones like 17 that cannot be formed by multiplying, except by themselves and 1. Those prime numbers have held a particular fascination for mathematicians; they are the atoms from which the composites are made, but they have basic characteristics that no one yet has fully fathomed. We know a lot about prime numbers, because mathematicians have puzzled over them for centuries. We know that as you count higher and higher, the number of primes thin out, but

Euclid had a beautiful proof that there is no largest prime. However, the primes seem to show up irregularly, without pattern. Can we tell how many primes are present below 1,000,000 for instance, without counting every one? How about even higher limits? Speculating about the flow of primes led eventually to the Riemann Hypothesis, the subject of The Music of the Primes: Searching to Solve the Greatest Mystery in Mathematics (HarperCollins) by mathematician Marcus du Sautoy. The counting numbers turn out to be astonishingly complicated, and Du Sautoy knows that egghead number theorists will understand these complications better than we nonmathematicians, but he invites us to consider at a layman's level the importance of the particular quest of proving the Riemann Hypothesis. He is convincing in his demonstration that it is worth knowing what all the effort is about.

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