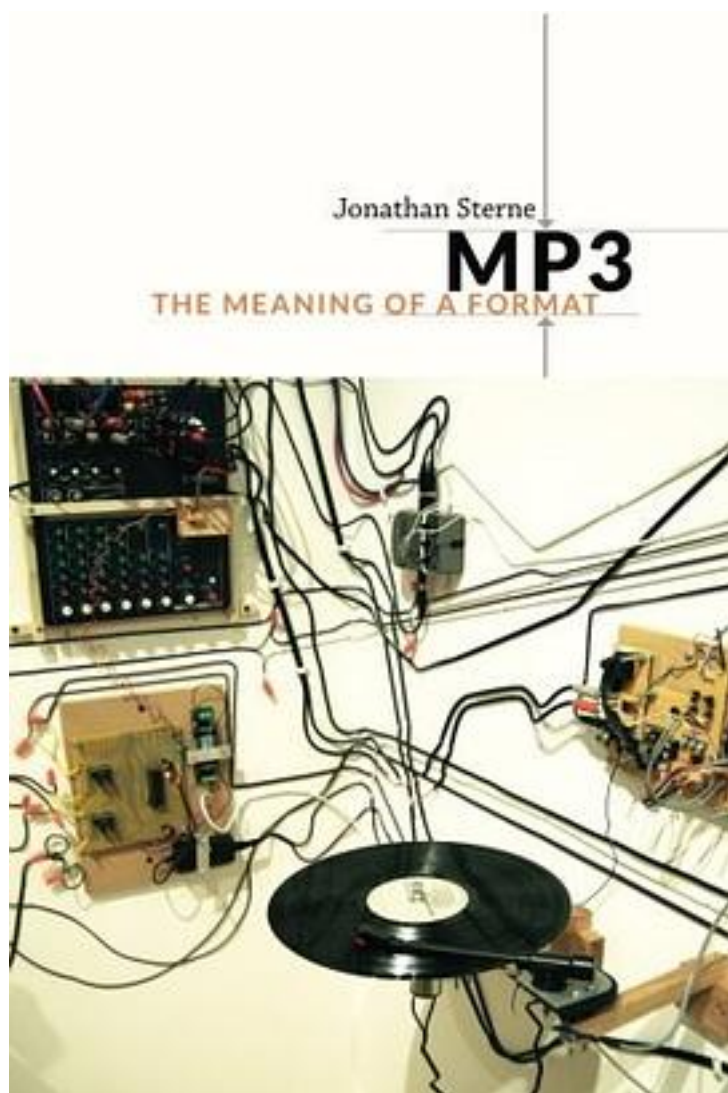


MP3



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MP3: The Meaning of a Format recounts the hundred-year history of the world's most common format for recorded audio. Understanding the historical meaning of the MP3 format entails rethinking the place of digital technologies in the larger universe of twentieth-century communication history, from hearing research conducted by the telephone industry in the 1910s, through the mid-century development of perceptual coding (the technology underlying the MP3), to the format's promiscuous social life since the mid 1990s. MP3s are products of compression, a process that removes sounds unlikely to be heard from recordings. Although media history is often characterized as a progression toward greater definition, fidelity, and truthfulness, MP3: The Meaning of a Format illuminates the crucial role of compression in the development of modern media and sound culture. Taking the history of compression as his point of departure, Jonathan Sterne investigates the relationship between sound, silence, sense, and noise; the commodity status of recorded sound and the economic role of piracy; and the importance of standards in the governance of our emerging media culture. He demonstrates that formats, standards, and infrastructures - and the need for content to fit inside them - are every bit as central to communication as the boxes we call "media."

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