



“Outside the Jukebox”

ABOUT THE BOOK

With student loan debt piling up and no gigs around the corner, Scott Bradlee found himself in a situation all too familiar to struggling musicians: whether to pay either his student loans or his rent, but not both. It was in these circumstances that Bradlee began applying his passion for jazz, ragtime and doo-wop styles to contemporary hits ... and suddenly, an idea was born. The bands Bradlee went on to launch refined this idea of bringing “arcane” genres to modern audiences. Today, his band Postmodern Jukebox has collected more than three million subscribers on YouTube, sold out major venues and developed previously unknown talents into superstars. Taking readers through Bradlee’s false starts, absurd failures and unexpected breakthroughs, “Outside the Jukebox” is an inspiring memoir about how one musician found his rhythm and launched a movement that would change how people make, distribute and enjoy their favorite songs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Bradlee is a pianist and musical arranger. His musical collective, Postmodern Jukebox, is best known for its viral “pop music in a time machine” covers and has performed over 400 live shows in five different continents.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE Each book guide follows the weekly Connect: 21CM Book Club discussions led by Sylvia Yang on [Facebook](#) @21CMBookClub. Feel free to follow along with other book club members in real time or work at your own pace.

Welcome to the 17th meeting of Connect: 21CM’s Book Club. Join us as we read “Outside the Jukebox: How I Turned My Vintage Music Obsession Into my Dream Gig” by Scott Bradlee. Jazz saxophonist and radio host Dave Koz writes that Bradlee has “an uncanny ability to tap into the cultural zeitgeist time and again ... blending pop and jazz in a completely novel way.” “Outside the Jukebox” gives readers an insider’s glimpse into the methods that guide his work.

BEFORE YOU READ...

Scott Bradlee is a musician, pianist and arranger. He is best known for his viral videos on YouTube, including his work with Postmodern Jukebox, an ever-evolving, revolving collective of performers playing popular music in various period styles. In his memoir, Bradlee chronicles the inception and rise of Postmodern Jukebox and the elements of musical entrepreneurship that made it possible.

AS YOU READ...

We offer a few questions for each chapter so you can dive deeper into your reading.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN:

FEBRUARY 7-13: PAGES IX-65

“To the amazement of my parents – and to my own amazement – practicing the piano was no longer something I fought against tooth and nail. Instead, knowing that I wanted to be a piano player, and knowing that practicing, of course, was just something piano players did, I turned my daily practice into a habit.” (p.13)

Bradlee draws our attention to finding the motivation to develop a habitual musical practice. He shares that “building a strong core identity to drive your motivation requires first believing that you’ll eventually master the skill you’ve set out to learn” (p. 13). Were you always motivated to practice music, or was it something you had to learn? Share in the comments!

FEBRUARY 14-20: PAGES 66-125

“Back when I was in music school, I naïvely believed there would come a day when I would ‘make it’ and, from that point onward, be able to earn a great living playing music I loved, with no stress whatsoever. Truth be told, though, stress is an integral part of being successful.” (p. 117)

Bradlee describes the different stressful experiences he encountered along his journey: first moving to New York City, trying to “make it” in the restaurant music scene and riding the waves to Postmodern Jukebox’s rise to fame. How has your relationship with stress changed over the years? Do you have any strategies to combat or relieve stress? Share in the comments!

FEBRUARY 21-27: PAGES 125-186

“If you’re starting from scratch, there’s a very basic cycle to follow that I still use to this day: Engage, crowdfund, release, monetize, repeat. Each time you go through this cycle, you have the opportunity to make new fans, make more money, and further develop your career as an artist. You get a chance to find out firsthand what works and what doesn’t, which in turn allows you to optimize the cycle for better results.” (p. 116)

Bradlee shares his entrepreneurial cycle for other musicians to utilize when starting a new project. Do you have any other suggestions for people starting from scratch? Share your entrepreneurial tips and tricks below!

FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 6: PAGES 187-244

“When I give advice to an aspiring singer who is clearly talented, I usually start by asking what makes him or her unique. Some people give me stock lines like ‘I was inspired by Amy Winehouse’ or ‘I’m a Broadway singer, but I love jazz and pop, too.’ These are all well and good, but they aren’t necessarily unique. I generally tell these performers to dig deeper to uncover something from their life experience that truly sets them apart – and then draw inspiration from that.”

Do you agree with Bradlee’s assessment of what does or does not qualify an artist as unique? What makes you unique? Or what do you feel sets apart your favorite musical artists from others? Share your answer in the comments below!

QUESTIONS FOR THE AUTHOR?

We hope you enjoyed February’s book club selection and the dialogue with colleagues on 21CM.org. Do you have a question for the author? Send us your questions via email at bookclub@21cm.org or message your questions on Facebook to [@21CMBookClub](#).