



# The Speed of Sound: Breaking the Barriers Between Music and Technology: A Memoir

*Thomas Dolby*

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## **The Speed of Sound: Breaking the Barriers Between Music and Technology: A Memoir** Thomas Dolby

The remarkable story of rising to the top of the music charts, a second act as a tech pioneer, and the sustaining power of creativity and art.

Thomas Dolby's hit songs "She Blinded Me with Science" and "Hyperactive!" catapulted him to international fame in the early 80's. A pioneer of New Wave and Electronica, Thomas combined a love for invention with a passion for music, and the result was a new sound that defined an era of revolutionary music. But as record company politics overshadow the joy of performing, Thomas finds a surprising second act.

Starting out in a rat-infested London bedsit, a teenage Thomas Dolby stacks boxes by day at the grocery and tinkers with a homemade synthesizer at night while catching the Police at a local dive bar, swinging by the pub to see the unknown Elvis Costello and starting the weekend with a Clash show at a small night club. London on the eve of the 1980s is a hotbed for music and culture, and a new sound is beginning to take shape, merging technology with the musical energy of punk rock. Thomas plays keyboards in other bands' shows, and with a bit of luck finds his own style, quickly establishing himself on the scene and recording break out hits that take radio, MTV and dance clubs by storm. The world is now his oyster, and sold out arenas, world tours, even a friendship with Michael Jackson become the fabric of his life.

But as the record industry flounders and disillusionment sets in, Thomas turns his attention to Hollywood. Scoring films and computer games eventually leads him to Silicon Valley and a software startup that turns up the volume on the digital music revolution. His company barely survives the dotcom bubble but finally even the mavericks at Apple, Microsoft, Netscape and Nokia see the light. By 2005, two-thirds of the world's mobile phones embed his Beatnik software. Life at the zenith of a tech empire proves to be just as full of big personalities, battling egos and roller-coaster success as his days spent at the top of the charts.

THE SPEED OF SOUND is the story of an extraordinary man living an extraordinary life, a single-handed quest to make peace between art and the digital world.

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