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# Introduction

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## *I Love Music and I Love Science— Why Would I Want to Mix the Two?*

I love science, and it pains me to think that so many are terrified of the subject or feel that choosing science means you cannot also choose compassion, or the arts, or be awed by nature. Science is not meant to cure us of mystery, but to reinvent and reinvigorate it.

—Robert Sapolsky, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, p. xii

**I**n the summer of 1969, when I was eleven, I bought a stereo system at the local hi-fi shop. It cost all of the hundred dollars I had earned weeding neighbors' gardens that spring at seventy-five cents an hour. I spent long afternoons in my room, listening to records: Cream, the Rolling Stones, Chicago, Simon and Garfunkel, Bizet, Tchaikovsky, George Shearing, and the saxophonist Boots Randolph. I didn't listen particularly loud, at least not compared to my college days when I actually set my loudspeakers on fire by cranking up the volume too high, but the noise was evidently too much for my parents. My mother is a novelist; she wrote every day in the den just down the hall and played the piano for an hour every night before dinner. My father was a businessman; he worked eighty-hour weeks, forty of those hours in his office at home on evenings and weekends. Being the businessman that he was, my father made me a proposition: He would buy me a pair of headphones if I would promise to use them when he was home. Those headphones forever changed the way I listened to music.

The new artists that I was listening to were all exploring stereo mixing for the first time. Because the speakers that came with my hundred-dollar all-in-one stereo system weren't very good, I had never before heard the depth that I could hear in the headphones—the placement of