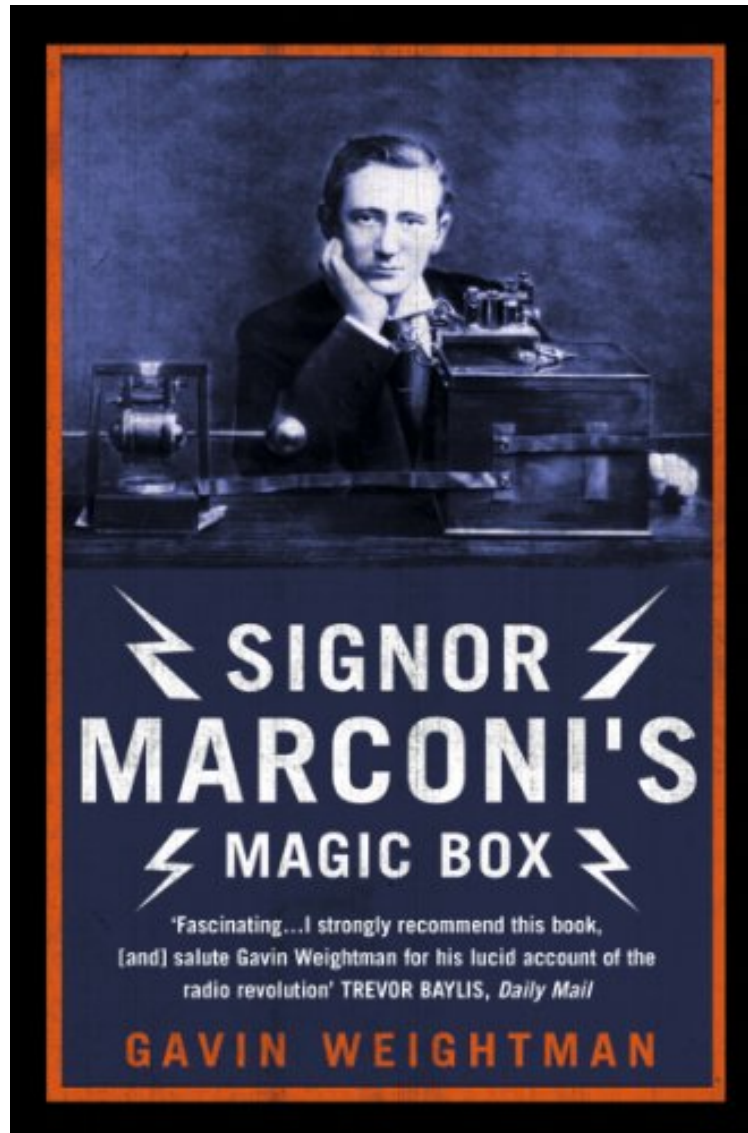


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## Signor Marconis Magic Box: The invention that sparked the radio revolution (Text Only)

Gavin Weightman

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**Gavin Weightman : Signor Marconis Magic Box: The invention that sparked the radio revolution (Text Only)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Signor Marconis Magic Box: The invention that sparked the radio revolution (Text Only):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. It was a good narrative but it was more about Marconi than about ...By Ken BoyleI wanted to read more of the technical detail of radio in its infancy. I wanted to know precisely who did what. This book was a bit shallow in that sense. It was a good narrative but it was more about Marconi than about

the magic box. For instance I did not know that the Marconi transmitters designed for trans Atlantic communication worked by generating a massive spark with each press of the telegraph key. I would have liked to know how they did that and how they managed the spark for shorter transmissions. How did they develop the right frequencies and wave lengths? How did they protect their messages from outside listeners? The book was not tech enough for me even though I am a lay person in the field of radio. There were periods of the book where I felt the writer went off at length with irrelevancies. I skipped through these. It was Ok but only just. 13 of 15 people found the following review helpful. WiredBy Bruce Loveitt Thomas Edison, who was a man who was not easily impressed, once quipped about Guglielmo Marconi that he "delivered more than he promised." This statement demonstrates two of Marconi's most significant traits: he was modest and extremely hard working. Marconi was the first to admit that his work was based on both the theories and the inventions of others. He also acknowledged that he didn't understand the reason his own inventions worked. He believed, contrary to many of his contemporaries, that "radio" waves could travel great distances. Many other people thought the waves could not be transmitted to a receiver that was beyond the horizon line...that at longer distances the waves would travel off into outer space. Based on this belief, with no theoretical underpinning, Marconi kept things simple: he built taller transmitters and he kept making them more powerful. His goal was to transmit electrical signals in Morse Code that could be received across the Atlantic Ocean. He eventually succeeded in this, and gained worldwide fame and popularity when wireless telegraphy, after being used by ships in distress at sea, resulted in the saving of many lives. Marconi was also an astute businessman, rather than a starry eyed inventor. (He amassed a very healthy fortune, perhaps equal to \$200-\$250 million today.) He was an early master of public relations- for example, using wireless to report on important yacht races. Mr. Weightman doesn't ignore the less savory aspects of the inventor: Marconi's womanizing and obsession with work resulted in the termination of his first marriage. As previously mentioned, Marconi was very weak on theory. He also failed to see the commercial possibilities of radio. That was left to others, such as Lee de Forest, to develop. While Mr. Weightman is a little skimpy on biographical depth (I never quite felt I understood what made Marconi tick), he is great on interesting details...for example, he explains how wireless was used to help capture the infamous murderer Dr. Crippen, and he also tells how Orthodox Russian priests once almost destroyed Marconi equipment because they wanted to anoint it with holy water! The book is meant for the lay reader, and the scientific detail is kept to a minimum. Very enjoyable. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great ReadBy Douglas D Hanson This book is very well written. It has a nice easy flowing style. It is not a technical book on Marconi but rather more like a biography to a degree. Great historical references and a fairly unbiased version of the drama of the birth of wireless. Most who buy this probably have some technical interest in the subject but I would suggest it to anyone who has interest in the period of the early 1900's.

The intriguing story of how wireless was invented by Guglielmo Marconi and how it amused Queen Victoria, saved the lives of the Titanic survivors, tracked down criminals and began the radio revolution. Wireless was the most fabulous invention of the 19th century: the public thought it was magic, the popular newspapers regarded it as miraculous, and the leading scientists of the day (in Europe and America) could not understand how it worked. In 1897, when the first wireless station was established by Marconi in a few rooms of the Royal Needles Hotel on the Isle of Wight, nobody knew how far these invisible waves could travel through the ether, carrying Morse Coded messages decipherable at a receiving station. (The definitive answer was not discovered till the 1920s, by which time radio had become a sophisticated industry filling the airwaves with a cacaphony of sounds most of it American.) Note that it has not been possible to include the same picture content that appeared in the original print version. Marconi himself was the son of an Italian father and an Irish mother (from the Jameson whiskey family); he grew up in Italy and was fluent in Italian and English, but it was in England that his invention first caught on. Marconi was in his early twenties at the time (he died in 1937). With the new telegraphy came the real prospect of replacing the network of telegraphic cables that criss-crossed land and sea at colossal expense. Initially it was the great ships that benefited from the new invention including the Titanic, whose survivors owed their lives to the wireless.

Gavin Weightman brings alive the excitement and uncertainty of the early wireless experiments. His book cannot fail to spark the imagination of anyone wishing to comprehend the magnitude of the revolution brought about by wireless. It is an excellent read' New Scientist' A fascinating story set in a fascinating period' Sunday Tribune (Dublin)' Gavin Weightman's impeccably researched book is far more than a fact-led shunt through the Marconi story. His prose shimmers with the kind of romance that, in the mobile phone age, is quite difficult to grasp. But what a lovely story! An unassuming young chap confronts and defies the finest scientific minds in the world. It is pleasing to report that the cinematic aspect of this tale comes gloriously alive within Weightman's evocative, vividly detailed writing. Utterly captivating and, even for techno-dunces like myself, wholly illuminating' Manchester Evening News' Fascinating! I strongly recommend this book, [and] salute Gavin Weightman for his lucid account of the radio revolution' Trevor Baylis, Daily Mail About the Author Gavin Weightman is an experienced television documentary-maker (producer/director/writer), journalist and author of many books such as The Making of Modern London: 1815-1914, The Making of Modern London: 1914-1939, London River, Picture Post Britain and Rescue: A History of the British

Emergency Services (Boxtree). His first book for HarperCollins, *The Frozen Water Trade*, was published in February 2002