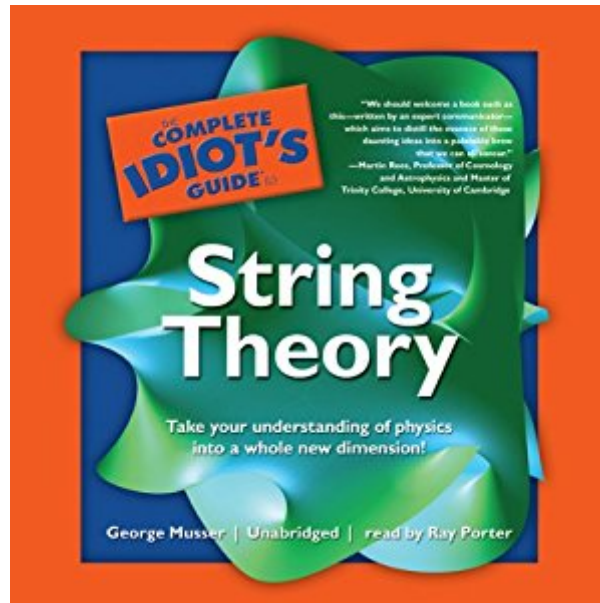# The Complete Idiot's Guide To String Theory

Synopsis

Everything is connected.We're living in the midst of a scientific revolution that's captured the general public's attention and imagination. The aim of this new revolution is to develop a "theory of everything," a set of laws of physics that will explain all that can be explained, ranging from the tiniest subatomic particle to the universe as a whole. Here, readers will learn the ideas behind the theories and their effects upon our world, our civilization, and ourselves.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a very well written book, easy to read, flows very well from topic to topic, doesn't spend too much time on any single area and has excellent coverage.This book is for you if:-You are looking for a good overview of the challenges that String theory is trying to solve-You are not interested in a book of Math formula's (there is no math) or a book that just reprints the theory-You are interested in a balanced view including discussions of alternative theories (it mostly covers String theory but it does highlight how other theories deal with the problem) as opposed to bashing other theories-You have read several other books but still don't see the big picture-You are not interested in a history lesson on how great the author is and all of his friends and all the other guys are nutsHope this helps

Five stars for this introductory book on Quantum Gravity. The name of this book as has been noted is quite misleading. This is an extremely balanced tome not only on String Theory, but on other notable alternative approaches on rational speculative theories as well, concerning what takes place at the level of fundamental particles and small length scales: notably LQG = Loop Quantum Gravity

and CDT = Causal Dynamical Triangulations = "Buckyspace". I suspect it was originally submitted as "Quantum Gravity" but overruled at the Editorial level as "String Theory" for Marketing reasons, which may have been a wise decision but nevertheless would confuse those seeking the broader view this book expounds.One embarrassing consequence of leading QG research is the many "wars" going on among our world's top theoretical physicists, and Musser does a fine job explaining these differences in his chapter on "The String Theory Wars." Other books on this subject are informative yet one-sided; this book gives equal balance to all sides explaining the Pros and Cons of all parties.He eschews mentioning the particular scientists involved in the theories in favor of focusing on the theories themselves. This is a refreshing approach in its own right and makes the book as tight and concise as possible. His writing style is informative, interesting, entertaining, and lucid; one walks away from this book feeling a mastery of the issues at hand, and well prepared to read more detailed works on these subjects with an open-minded attitude to other authors' bias. As a science journalist, he has done this aspect of his job splendidly.As a researcher, he has also excelled. He has consulted the experts on all sides, notably String Theorist Keith Dienes, Loop Gravitationist co-founder Carlo Rovelli, CDT co-founder Renate Loll, and dozens of others in these fields such as Polchinski and Witten.

In this book, George Musser has made an attempt to introduce the concept of string theory to the masses; however, I don't think this "idiot's guide" really accomplishes that goal. Musser covers a wide range of topics in twenty-three bite size chapters of about ten to twelve pages each. I have found in chapter after chapter that the discussion is too superficial to really grasp the concepts discussed. If you think of the vast knowledge of this subject matter as being a large pond, this book will simply give you bits and pieces of information like a rock skimming across the surface of the pond. If you had no prior knowledge of the subject matter, I just think you would walk away with not much more that a smattering of facts and information, but no real depth of understanding. Of course, to be fair, this is a difficult subject to "translate" into the common vernacular so to speak, but I know some justice can be done to this feat. I know because I have read the books written by Brian Greene on the subject. For example, Green's book "The Elegant Universe" did a splendid job of presenting the concepts of string theory and the cosmos in a manner that allowed comprehension by the non-expert.Nevertheless, in his book, Musser touches on many subjects, such as relativity, quantum theory and the world of the small, the Standard Model, black holes, the big bang, time travel, gravitons, strings, loop quantum gravity, extra dimensions, parallel universes, symmetry, branes, testing string theory, and more. New terms introduced are defined in sidebars as are

explanations of key ideas and concepts albeit tersely.If you can be content by a collection of "fast facts" on this subject matter, you will probably find this book satisfying.

A chunk of the book covers relativity.Quantum mechanics is presented with its incompatibilities.With these formalities over with, string theory is discussed.There are some difficulties here.Profound conclusions are presented without much background.The conflicting view points get tiresome.There is not much of a climax at the end.But these problems are inherent to the subject matter.The digressions and historical bits are always interesting.The endless analogies to everyday life are better than you would expect.There is a joy about the audacity of the subject which comes through.

I read this book early on to gain understanding about String Theory, which had languished for years because of how this untested theory might effect a physicist's career. I found the book to be surprisingly insightful. Ed Witten finally united various string theories into one, by declaring that they were all just different views of the same thing. He called his unifying theory 'M Theory'. No one seems to know what the 'M' stands for, but there has been a lot of speculation. So it is.

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