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# The Forensic Records Society



## Synopsis

'The Forensic Records Society is like Animal Farm but with blokes for pigs, and much better songs' *Guardian* Two men with a passion for vinyl create a society for the appreciation of records. Their aim is simple: to elevate the art of listening by doing so in forensic detail. The society enjoys moderate success in the back room of their local pub, The Half Moon, with other enthusiasts drawn to the initial promise of the weekly gathering. However, as the club gains popularity, its founder's uncompromising dogma results in a schism within the movement and soon a counter group forms. Then the arrival of a young woman called Alice further fractures the unity of the vulnerable society. As rifts are forged and gulfs widen, Magnus Mills examines the surreal nature of ordinary lives. The master of the comic deadpan returns for his ninth novel, a spectacularly disingenuous exploration of power, fanaticism and really, really good records.

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC (April 5, 2018)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1408878402

ISBN-13: 978-1408878408

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,547,170 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #77 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Records #69660 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Literary

## Customer Reviews

Mills uses his blokes in the back of a pub to tell a massively ambitious story ... A story that could be read as a disguised retelling of the Russian revolution, or the Reformation, or the Sunni-Shia schism, or any great human falling out. As soon as you form any kind of "us", Mills suggests, a "them" will form in response. In this, The Forensic Records Society is like Animal Farm but with blokes for pigs, and much better songs \* *Guardian* \* For nearly twenty years Mills has been entertaining and occasionally perplexing readers with his enigmatic tales of thwarted expeditions, projects and schemes ... Tremendously funny. Mills is one of Britain's best comic writers, and this is an excellent introduction to his scrupulously amusing world ... You will love this book. Buy one on Saturday to go with that Toto single -- *Andy Miller* \* *Spectator* \* A demented, deadpan comic wonder -- *Thomas Pynchon* One of our most idiosyncratic voices ... Deceptively genial, eerily comic ... Mills

is extremely good on the way obsessiveness is an end in itself for these barely distinguishable chaps ... It also contains some classic Mills hallmarks, including the unsettling impression something sinister is going on, if only you could work out what it is \* Daily Mail \* `One for the pop pickers ... There are some wonderful aspects to The Forensic Records Society ... Bloomsbury have pushed the boat out with the packaging, which is a wonderful pastiche of the sort of vintage 1960s seven-inch single sleeve collectors covet at record fairs, and will really make you think there must be three minutes of music as well as 180 pages of prose to discover inside \* Herald \* This, his ninth novel, is as odd, simple and parabolic as the first eight ... The theme is unmistakable and unavoidable - when humans can fall out, they will fall out \*\*\*\* \* Metro \* Magnus Mills is unique. There is simply no equivalent of his brand of domestic absurdism ... The most British of anarchists \* Independent \* A true original \* Mail on Sunday \* He's original, he's eccentric - and I predict that Magnus Mills will still be fascinating his admirers 100 years from now -- Kate Saunders \* Saga \*

Magnus Mills is the author of nine novels, including The Restraint of Beasts, which won the McKitterick Prize and was shortlisted for both the Booker Prize and the Whitbread (now the Costa) First Novel Award in 1999. His most recent novel, The Field of the Cloth of Gold was published to great critical acclaim and was shortlisted for the Goldsmiths Prize 2015. His books have been translated into twenty languages. He lives in London.

This is a very odd book indeed. I hadn't read any Magnus Mills before and was looking forward to it, but in the end I was left bemused. The story is narrated by an unnamed man who, with his friend James starts up a society in the back room of a pub, in which they simply listen "forensically" to records, with "no judgements and no comments." Internal tensions and rival societies arise, and the exercise of power and fanatical purism are (I think) satirised. It's readable enough, but I really couldn't make out what the point of it was. Also, be aware that there are a huge number of musical references; some are to songs by name (but the artist is never given) and some just by lines like "what's all that about leaving a cake out in the rain?" (That's MacArthur Park, written by Jimmy Webb, just in case you didn't know.) I'm by no means an encyclopaedic geek, but I do know quite a lot about the music of the last 60 years and a significant proportion of the songs were unknown to me. If you're not musically knowledgeable, this might be a real problem when reading. Things happen, but in an almost dreamlike detachment (we learn nothing whatever about any of the characters other than their approach to music and the Society), there are lots of slight weirdnesses, only some of which I could see the point of, and the ending is so bizarre that I wondered whether I'd

received a faulty download. (I don't think I had.) I find it hard to rate the book; it's well written but very odd and, to me anyway, ultimately rather inconsequential.(I received an ARC via Netgalley.)

I enjoyed the music but the characters were not very well defined. Maybe that was the point, making the book point out that the music was shallow, but I doubt that was the point.

exactly what i needed to read to get me out of my reading slump. did not expect to love it but i do. goes to show , you have to read a lot of mediocre books to find the special ones.

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