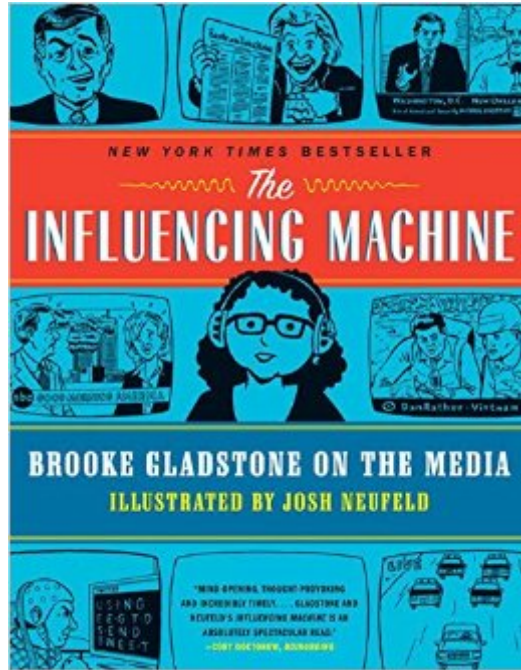


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# The Influencing Machine: Brooke Gladstone On The Media



## Synopsis

"Mind-opening, thought-provoking and incredibly timely" | An absolutely spectacular read." •Cory Doctorow, BoingBoing A million listeners trust NPR's Brooke Gladstone to guide them through the complexities of the modern media. Bursting onto the page in vivid comics by acclaimed artist Josh Neufeld, this brilliant radio personality guides us through two millennia of media history, debunking the notion that "The Media" is an external force beyond our control and equipping us to be savvy consumers and shapers of the news. two-color illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"We get the media we deserve," declares NPR's Brooke Gladstone in her excellent *The Influencing Machine*, an insightful graphic manifesto that sits comfortably alongside Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* and Jaron Lanier's *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto* (Vintage), both of whom make cameo appearances. Gladstone, aided by Josh Neufeld's seamless visuals, makes a compelling case that the ills that plague media today -- mass and social -- are nothing new, that "we've been here before: the incivility, the inanities, the obsessions, the broken business models. In fact, it's been far worse and the Republic survives." What follows is a broad, contextual overview of the history of media, recounted with a healthy sense of humor, and a refreshing undertone of optimism. eg: Near the end of the book, in two pages, she covers Ray Kurzweil and the Singularity, Lanier's skepticism, *Planet of the Apes* and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs... and it all makes sense! "Graphic non-fiction" is a tricky format to pull off and not to everyone's taste, but Neufeld does a great job complementing Gladstone without

letting the medium overshadow her message, and any student of media, formally or arm-chair, should read *The Influencing Machine* without hesitation. Kudos to W.W.

"We get the media we deserve." That's the simple premise that NPR's Brooke Gladstone and artist (not "illustrator"--this is comics after all) Josh Neufeld defend in a variety of often brilliant and always thought-provoking ways over the course of *The Influencing Machine*. The title itself, while intriguing and central to Gladstone's message, is somewhat deceptive: If you knew nothing about this information-packed yet highly readable work of graphic nonfiction, you might think it's a polemic about today's corrupt media cabal and the scary manner in which it manipulates the public. On the contrary, if anything, it's a polemic against those who hold such beliefs. Of course, not all people, under every political system and throughout history, have gotten the media they deserve. Indeed, that's probably a point that the historically minded Gladstone would concede. Still, her book makes a convincing argument that in today's late-capitalism democracies, the consumer-driven media publishers are just that: driven by consumers. It's a truism that's easy to lose sight of, especially in its implications, so it's good that Gladstone is so persuasive when remarking that "when we see ourselves distorted in the media mirror, we should probably consider that some of what we see is actually us." But that's not all. She's also able to see the situation in far greater complexity and sum it up in language that instantly strikes with the force of aphoristic truth: "The media landscape is so cluttered with mirrors facing mirrors that we can't tell where an image begins or ends." Analysis at this depth effectively renders the "Is the media biased toward the left?" question not exactly moot, but just far less compelling than perhaps it had been.

A wise person once said to me, "Tell me what you yearn for and I'll tell you who you are." Though I do not think that it's Ms. Gladstone's intent to add to our national alarm, she does hold the mirror up to the public, so that we can see more clearly what we yearn for and who we are. Looking at the Media as a mirror, in these times, is important. Brooke Gladstone invites us to understand that, "The fault, dear [Public], is not in our stars, But in ourselves." (Julius Caesar). *The Influencing Machine: Brooke Gladstone on the Media* is an invitation for us to make positive change. Because how can we change what we loath, for the better, if we can not see that so much of what we see and hear in the Media is a reflection of ourselves, and thus, we have the power to change that which belongs to us. As long as we continue to think it's "them" and expect "them" to change, we are powerless. Ms. Gladstone makes a truly important and an awakening statement with her deep insights about our relationship with "our" media; about how what we engage with in our Media reflects who we are, and

how our yearning for what we engage with tells us a great deal about who we are; about the how and what we live for. It forces the question: "Where must I be at, to be thinking, this, engaging with this?"

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