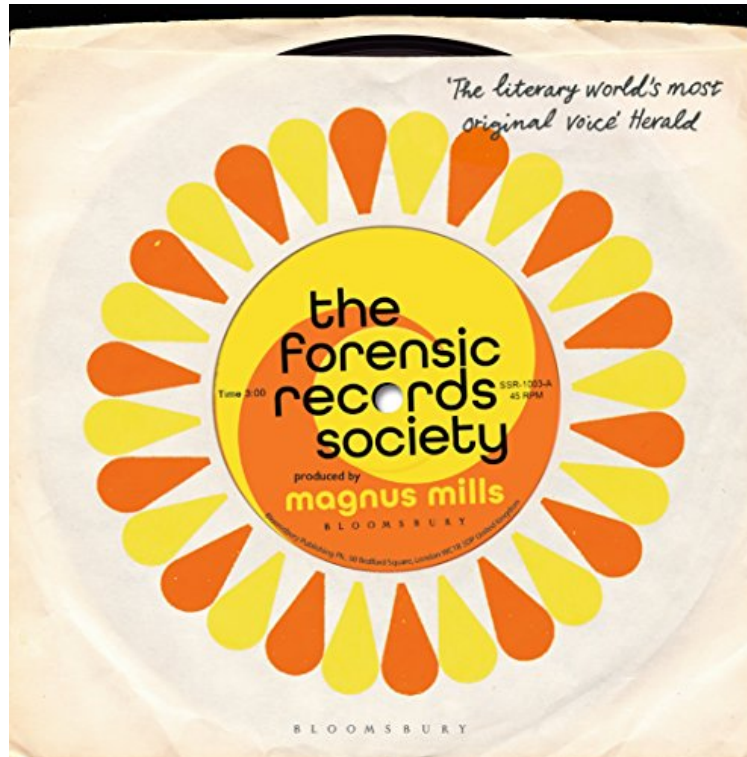


## The Forensic Records Society

*Magnus Mills*

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**Magnus Mills : The Forensic Records Society** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Forensic Records Society:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very odd  
By Sid Nunciuz  
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.)  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fun, new absurdist work  
By Mister Plow  
I ran my finger along the book cover several times to make sure there wasn't actually a 45 in there. Finally something different on a jacket; I think

two-thirds of all the books I read this year had block lettering over a blurry photo. The book begins simply, with two friends enjoying a record. One of them mentions that probably nobody else in the world is listening to that record at that time, and the notion prompts them to form the Forensic Records Society Monday nights in the backroom of the pub they frequent. But hell is other people, and the purity of two friends sharing a moment over a record quickly goes by the wayside as the group splinters into various paranoid record-appreciation factions mostly having only slightly-different rules yet meeting on the other days of the week at the same pub, which has the same name as another nearby pub, where, we can only guess, other societies are similarly forming, thriving, withering, and dying. You can easily see this as being about religion, with the glitziest rival faction that charges for "record confessionals" standing in as organized religion. Or you could, as our narrator outright suggests, see this as a normal breakdown of any society. Or you could just see it as the ebb and flow of a friendship or power structures, or all of the above. Do I understand the ending? No, I do not. I thought about going online for others' ideas about it, but that seemed iffy, considering James's hard and fast rule against commenting on the records. (Bad enough to write a review of the book, probably. Sorry, James.) Lots of fun, weird moments. If you like Beckett, you'll be thrilled to have something new. It will become tempting to make a list of all the records and listen to them all in order of their mention. Just don't invite a crowd or someone will surely ruin it for you. Probably with an iPhone. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Do these people have jobs? By Customer 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.

The award-winning, Booker and Goldsmiths Prize-shortlisted author Magnus Mills is back with his best novel yet, a hilarious and surreal exploration of power, fanaticism and really, really good records. Within a few months we'd witnessed bickering, desertion, subterfuge and rivalry. I was rapidly coming to the conclusion that only a miracle could save us now. 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.

"This is a little book, but Mills has big fun as he parlays the trivial into the profound. The starting point for The Forensic Records Society may be an old 7-inch plastic disc, but it isn't long before the stakes feel huge. Mills, clearly, has much to say on cult mentality and the confines of conformity." - Washington Post "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." - The Guardian "A delightful absurdity, a surreal novel spinning at 45 RPM . . . a lovely commentary on politics and social interactions . . . beautifully written." - San Francisco Book "A gem of a novel about obsessive record collectors . . . hilarious." - Dayton Daily News "Mills [is] an earnestly whimsical and quietly subversive British writer . . . What Mills targets is the thirst for hierarchy, rules and regulations, schisms, spies in each society . . . The novel's light and clever with its male characters' passion for order and conspiratorial aspirations. And these can be applied to all human organizations, as Mills applies his scalpel to such ingrained compulsions." - Providence Journal "An allegory about power, ambition and primal struggles for supremacy. It works wonderfully well because it is so distilled and so funny . . . A novel that feels like an off-kilter Nick Hornby starts to be imbued with the spirit of Harold Pinter. It is quite remarkable how, on such a tiny canvas, Mills can achieve such stunning effects . . . A discomfiting read as well as a hugely enjoyable one." - The Independent "Tremendously funny. Mills is one of Britain's best comic writers, and this is an excellent introduction to his scrupulously amusing world." - The Spectator "A pithy allegorical critique of how wider contemporary society works . . . Understated, precise, observational prose . . . A brisk and entertaining read. Bloomsbury have pushed the boat out with the packaging, which is a wonderful pastiche of the sort of vintage 1960s 7-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." - The Herald Scotland "Funny . . . a unique achievement . . . It's as if Don DeLillo had gone for a pint in an old English pub." - Irish Times "The Forensic Record Society feels fresh for tackling the issue of societal disintegration with a revamped style . . . This story is light, ironic and funny." - Popmatters About the Author Magnus Mills is the author of three story collections and eight previous novels. His first novel, The Restraint of Beasts, won the McKitterick Prize and was shortlisted for both the Man Booker Prize and the Whitbread (now the Costa) First Novel Award. His most recent novel was The Field of the Cloth of Gold, shortlisted for the Goldsmiths Prize. His books have been translated into

twenty languages. Mills lives in London.