

# Music and technology

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Last weekend, a friend and I went to a Roger Waters concert (Pink Floyd). In the train to Amsterdam I caught a conversation between two parents who both had a child who had registered at the Rock Academy of a conservatory. One son, a drummer, had just been rejected and never needed to come back. "What to do now, drumming is his lust and his life?" his mother asked out loud.

When we arrived in the Ziggodome, we made our way to the front row of the balcony. Capacity 17,000 men sold out 4 days in a row. Roger Waters (75 this year) and his band never needed a conservatory. Rock Academies did not exist yet; these men are the inspiration that such schools have arisen at all. They still inspire, the same day the video *Carpool Karaoke Paul McCartney* (age 76) went viral and was viewed a few million times in a few hours!

The concert had more to do with Brain & Technology than I had expected. In the hall there was a complete "engine room" on the floor, the size of a couple of connected living rooms. From the balcony we had a nice view of dozens of computers and monitors and an army of technicians. I joked: "If they had already attended a Rock Academy, one sound engineer behind a mixing table would be enough". Much better informed with Pink Floyd, my friend replied that the show would be spectacular: quadratic sound effects, flying drones and a laser show among others. He was right! It was fantastic! I felt the deepest respect for the (old) men: this is Healthy Aging!

Then the Brain component. Until *The Wall* ("we do not need no education") it was fun: well attuned pop musicians performed their classics nonchalantly, while the light and sound show was programmed to the millisecond. A moving contrast. From *The Wall* the message became political. Written with blood letters, the word "resist" appeared on the screens accompanied with images of war and struggle. Explosions were audible all around, we were in the middle of a battlefield, in which "beasts" (dictators) tried to destroy "our" humanity. Trump was compared to the pig that had taken over power in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, while a big pig hovered through the concert hall: humanity had to overcome our bestiality. But the message - "fuck the pigs" for a few evil geniuses are the cause of all wars and human suffering – was incomprehensible to me.

Animals don't make wars, technique and mass communication do. So, shouldn't the motto be "be animals, don't be human"? I did not expect so much naivety from such an experienced man, a godfather of Rock because he was at the right time in the right place. Both Trump, and Waters (and other pop stars) are famous thanks to the amplification that was made possible by technology and mass media. Fortunately, the show ended in peace, with a beautiful love song (*Wait for Her*).

Back in the train I rethought the parents of the rejected drummer, technology and the rock show. Apart from the two backing vocalists, neither Waters nor his band would probably pass the entrance exams at a conservatory. In one of his science fiction stories Asimov writes about Shakespeare who travelled with a time machine from 1600 to a literature lecture about Shakespeare in the twentieth century. The real (but undercover) Shakespeare is asked to explain the essence of a poem. As he replies, the professor gestures to him to sit down and murmurs that he certainly does not understand much about Shakespeare. It is precisely in their imperfect skills that Waters and his band are very humane compared to the machined show. Thanks to technology, everything has been speeded up so much that we no longer need a time machine: we see it in one lifetime. Still the question remains whether the rock heroes didn't develop their instrumental skills, or do Rock Academies put the cart before the horse? To unknown drumming sons and all other rejected talents I'd say: Keep on dreaming, Rock Academy or not: follow Waters, just go for it!

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