



## Technology for Technology's sake

As a species, Homo Sapiens has existed for 200,000 years and, incredible as this may seem, for 199,985 of those years we survived without the mobile phone. The way people behave these days, though, you'd think the mobile was as vital to the evolution of man as the increase in cubic centimeters of the human brain. I mean, do you remember at school the classic evolutionary graphic of man's progress from monkey to human? If the mobile companies designed the textbooks, the graphic of man in all his phases of development from a monkey to an upstanding bi-pedal, would have as it's final image - a human holding a mobile phone.

Mobile phones, to me, are the classic example of technology creating the idea that something is necessary, when it was only the technology itself that made it necessary. For example, everybody now thinks that mobiles are essential for **meeting up** with people: just think about how many SMS and calls you have to make to meet up with someone these days.

### Communication 1

Speaker one: *I'll meet you at 2.*

Speaker two: *Ok.*

### Communication 2

Speaker one: *Hi, I'm just leaving... see you soon.*

Speaker two: *Oh ok.*

### Communication 3

Speaker two: *Hi, I'm stuck in traffic, I'll be ten minutes late...okay?*

Speaker two: *Ok.*

### Communication 4

Speaker one: *Hi, that cafe you wanted to meet in is closed so I'll be in the one opposite.'*

Speaker two: *Oh ok.*

The way people talk now you would think that before the invention of the mobile in the nineteen eighties people never used to meet up successfully? That meeting up was in fact, an invention of modern times **occasioned by** the invention of the mobile phone? What's next? Kids writing essays in school with theories like: *Hannibal's invasion of Rome was unsuccessful because his scouts didn't have mobile phones to report enemy troop movements?* As I remember it, people used to meet up just fine and it was actually a lot more **straightforward**. You said 'I'll meet you at 2,' and guess what? you fucking met the person at 2 and didn't have to involve yourself in seven **pointless** conversations you have these days.

In the old days, you first of all - made a much greater commitment to be on time because people generally had more respect for each other, and if you were gonna be late the person just waited, and in the event of the bar being shut - you used **your nut** and sat opposite and waited till you saw them approach the other cafe and called out, 'Richard, I'm over here.' Yes, you heard me right ... *call over* ... using your *voice* and *not* a digital medium.

Another completely **overrated** piece of technology for me is the MP3 player.

Having a choice of a billion songs doesn't substantially change the experience of listening to music more than when you only had *half* a billion songs, or 100,000 or as in the days of the walkman, 20 songs on a **tape**, (sorry, a quick word for our younger listeners... a tape was this **chunky** piece of plastic with some thin brown tape inside and a couple of small wheels which when put inside a tape player - *the walkman*- played music). You see, when I had a Walkman, I seem to remember that when you knew you didn't have a billion other albums at your **fingertips**, an album **lasted** a lot longer in your appreciation and enjoyment. You would listen again and again and then you eventually ended up listening to the songs which you didn't like originally, and guess what - sometimes they ended up being the songs you liked most. Then, in the later stages of listening to the album you began to notice things and sounds you hadn't noticed before. After a while, you came to know the album intimately and it became a part of your life and your personal history by which you remember where you were and who you were with. Now, of course, it's **undeniable** that we are brutal and impatient with music, rapidly fast-forwarding through our 1000 **track** library, passing by brilliant songs because they're not *instantly* brilliant... because they don't capture our attention within 2.3 seconds. So you see, the way I see it is *that* for every advantage a new technology **bestows**, there will always be some hidden disadvantage. This is called *the technology sting*.

Also, we only have so much capacity for pleasure and amazement, and just because something is bigger, faster, brighter, **whatever**, doesn't change the qualitative experience. Imagine an experiment where we compare the level of enjoyment of a person in the eighteenth century listening to a limited selection of 10 songs played on a violin and piano, and an individual on a metro in 2011 with 3000 songs on his ipod. Do you think one would – in terms of pleasure and enjoyment be having a better experience? And is there really any difference in the level of ecstasy felt by primitive (in inverted commas) **tribesmen** listening to a single drum, than a 21st century teenager listening to a 32 Track techno album?

These concepts undermine the idea that if we buy the latest model it will improve the experience. The only thing it gives us a **short-lived buzz** at the new technology, then it becomes normal, and then our enjoyment is exactly the same as before. For example, a Normal TV only became unsatisfying when we invented flat-screen TV, flat-screen TV will only become unsatisfying when they invent 3D TV. **The key**



**point** is - if you can measure the satisfaction of a person in 1990 watching their TV and the person in 2011 with their flat-screen TV, there'd be no difference.

At the moment, I'm talking to you thanks to the technology of podcasting and the technology of iTunes, so I should perhaps shut the fuck up and not be so ungrateful. The truth is I love my ipod and you would have to **chop** my right arm off to get it from me. But I think in all the extreme excitement that surrounds the release of new technology – we should be more **discerning**. What's more important... that we can now listen store a billion songs instead half a billion songs or developments in renewable energy and medicine? And lastly, maybe we should return to an appreciation of what's on the device... the music... instead of the device itself.

This my friends is **art for arts sake**, instead of **technology for technology's sake**.

**Meeting up:** *Don't forget that there's 'meet' – when you meet someone for the first time (conocer) and then there's 'meet up' which is to see a friend for coffee or something like that.*

**I'm stuck in traffic:** *I'm in the car, in a long line of cars, and the line's not moving.*

**Occasioned by:** *caused by.*

**Unsuccessful:** *Sin éxito. Not the result you wanted. You haven't done what you wanted to... you were unsuccessful.*

**Scouts:** *in an army the 'scouts' are the soldiers who go ahead of the army to investigate the land, movements of the enemy, and gain intelligence and information.*

**Troops:** *tropas – another word for soldiers,*

**Straightforward:** *simple, sencillo.*

**Your nut:** *a colloquial term for your 'head' or 'brain.'*

**Tape:** *cassette.*

**Overrated:** *sobreestimado. It has a better reputation than it should have.*

**Pointless:** *there is no point to the action; there is no sense to it. It's not logical and will bring no result.*

**Chunky:** *big, bulky, not smooth and portable but difficult to hold or carry.*

**Fingertips:** *the ends of your fingers. But not your uñas (not your nails).*

**Lasted:** *duró. A verb used to say the amount of time something was*



*used or occurred for. The film lasted for two hours.*

**Undeniable:** *indisputable, it can't be denied, it's definite.*

**Track:** *another word for 'song'.*

**Bestows:** *Gives. Conferir. For example... the queen has bestowed a new title on her son.. he is now also the duke of Cambridge (she gave him a new dukedom).*

**Tribesmen:** *The members of a tribe.*

**Short-lived buzz:** *'short-lived' means – it doesn't last long, and 'buzz' – is the stimulation or excitement that results from a drug or something very new.*

**The key point:** *the most important aspect of an argument.*

**Chop:** *cut.*

**Discerning:** *to cultivate better taste and to think more before choosing. For example, James will drink any type of wine as long as it has alcohol... he's not very discerning.*