

**DYST
OPIA
TO GO**

A long, long time ago

I can still remember

how that music

used to make me smile

Don McLean — American Pie

The Day the Music died

THE first time I heard music was at my eighteenth birthday. My parents had saved a lot of money to afford me this gift: a ten second excerpt from Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*. They chose a sequence with the chorus singing a part of the Friedrich Schiller poem *Ode to Joy*.

When I heard the music I was alone in my room and wow! I can tell you, this blew me away. I was overwhelmed with emotions. I couldn't sleep for a whole night. Always trying to recall the notes from memory. This happened about forty years ago and since then a lot has changed.

By the year 2100 technology had progressed so much that through advances in electronic manufacturing it was now possible to replace the entire hearing organ through a much more capable implant. Such implants enabled all kinds of improvements: one could now listen directly to audio files or radio without any loss in quality due to analog signal transfer. One could also just switch the device off and eliminate any environmental noise — no need for earplugs anymore! But most importantly, this led to the realization of a long awaited human dream: the chip had the capability to directly translate any foreign language into the individuals mother tongue. And all of that in real-time! There was no need to learn any new languages anymore. This was the breakthrough for the implants. In less than twenty years it was a very common surgery to substitute one's hearing organ with an electronic chip. Such a surgery would usually be performed on three-year olds, since it turned out to work best at that age.

Sure, at first there was a small percentage of the population who refused to participate in this surgery. It didn't take long until people who refused the implants were commonly considered somehow disabled. They even had to declare this "disability" in their passport, for others to recognize that they needed to be handled with special care. It took another decade for the implant manufacturers to find out how much profit they could

make from having successfully privatized hearing. At first it was just a marketing gag: certain bands released their music exclusively under the hearing implants of certain manufacturers. Through legal measures the manufacturers of other hearing implants were forbidden to play back these songs.

Of course there were some manufacturers who consciously or unconsciously violated these licensing terms. But after several major court cases a lot of fines had to be paid for such violations. From then on the devices started filtering, making only licensed and permitted signals audible. The court cases had started a rat race amongst manufacturers: they each made exclusive contracts with the record companies. In the end each individual had only a very limited choice of music. This was why after several years of hassle the manufacturers sat together to search for a better solution. In the end they came up with an ALL MUSIC FLATRATE™. To cover the licensing fees they made this offer available for a small monthly fee. To make the ALL MUSIC FLATRATE™ even more attractive, it was from then on only possible to listen to music at all once the flatrate was purchased. People were still able to play the guitar or whistle, but soon the companies also closed this last loophole and you just wouldn't hear the sound of the guitar or the sound produced by whistling. At first the signals of police or emergency cars were mistakenly filtered out by the implants. But the technology got better and certain adoptions had to be made within society. Emergency car sirens were changed to arhythmic, disharmonious noise and telephones stopped ringing.

After a while, the price was slowly increased, until music was a thing subject only to premium customers with enough money. Then, after a while, music became a luxury — something consumed only by the rich upper class. Amongst common people, music is now seen as somewhat

decadent. Many people don't even know someone who has ever heard music. They don't know what they are missing.

Today is my 60th birthday. A long time has passed since I have become an adult. Throughout my entire life I never again had the pleasure of listening to music. Though I have often recalled those memories of my eighteenth birthday. Whenever I felt down or became sentimental, I would try to recall the notes from my memory and oftentimes I couldn't help my eyes filling with tears. Listening to music was surely one of the most beautiful moments in my life.

Since my eighteenth birthday I started to save up money. I had this one dream in my mind, this dream for which I would finally, someday, have enough money. Today is the day. I have finally saved up enough. Today I will finally spend it on my life's dream.

Music wasn't the only thing that got lost, other senses were substituted as well. The companies limited other functionalities to premium customers as well. Today I have finally saved up enough money. Today I will finally buy myself the license for seeing colors.

Background Info

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I gave the story to two proof readers, both of whom returned helpful remarks. Thank you, Katja Rogers and Markus Schnalke.

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Michael Müller, July 2015

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Logbook

When?	Where?	Any thoughts?