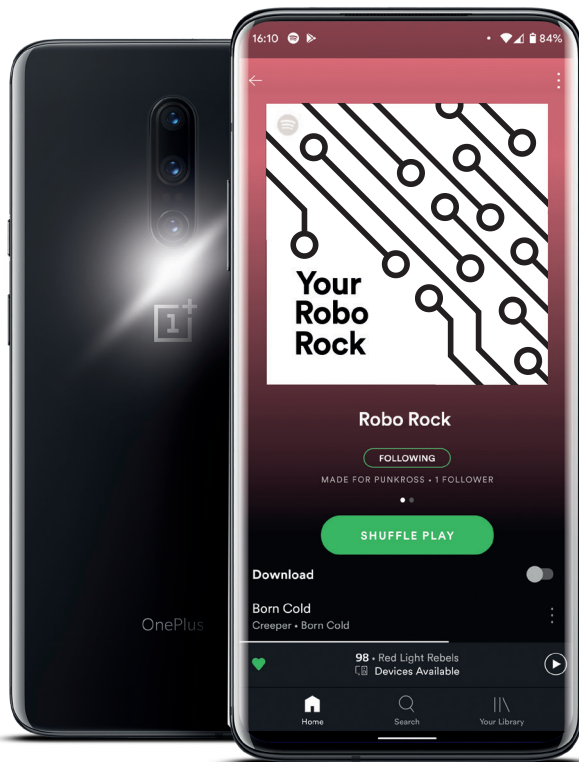




H O T S T U F F



THE FUTURIST

SPOTIFY THE DIFFERENCE

Stuff's new columnist says AI musicians and neural streaming will blow our minds



In our 250th-issue special edition, we asked award-winning futurist and tech advisor behind the tech advisors' Matthew Griffin to stick his neck on the line and tell us about the gadgets of the future. To be honest we felt he was a bit out of his tree, but it entertained us so much we thought to hell with it and handed him his very own column. This month, we ask him about the future of music and how holding your phone in a certain way could dictate what gets added to your streaming playlist.

Why are we talking about music, Mystic Matthew?

Firstly, you explicitly asked me to, and secondly, don't ever refer to me as that again. We're also approaching 15 years since the original and iconic iPod Shuffle (see p106), so now seemed as good an excuse as any. Obviously the iPod dramatically changed the way we bought and consumed music. That is, unless you were one of those

naughty individuals who pirated and streamed music from Napster or platforms on the dark web for nothing.

We were still trawling through Fopp. What about looking 15 years ahead, then?

While there's no denying that Apple changed the game, there's a delicious sense of irony in the fact that today, thanks to platforms like Spotify, we're streaming music for free again – although this time legally, complete with adverts and fancy subscription options. It's funny how history often repeats itself. So, as we look forward to the next 15 years and 2034, what does the future hold? Well, let's quickly talk about the rise of 'creative machines', or 'machines that create' – take your pick – plus

the rise of big brother and big data, sensors that sense your moods, and devices whose neural network brains are tethered to the cloud.

What's a creative machine? Bit like an Etch-a-Sketch?

Originally created by researchers in labs a few years back, creative machines are AIs, and now apps, that leverage a technology called generative adversarial networks, or GANs for short, to create a wide variety of increasingly realistic synthetic content – from articles, art, books, games and images through to music, scripts, videos and even VR worlds. They're also the same tech behind many of today's disruptive 'deepfakes'.

That's great, o wise one, but what's this got to do with *Top of the Pops 2034*?

Well, they're developing so fast and getting so good at creating content that AI algorithms are now landing record deals. Some of them have already been signed up by Sony and Warner Entertainment.

Like the Artificial Dodger, or something?

Pathetic. But yes, think of an AI version of Taylor Swift that can churn out thousands of new hit songs a minute and never get tired, and you have the gist.

Crumbs, how terrifying. So what sort of impact does that have on streaming services?

Combine these futuristic machines with information from the cameras and sensors in smartphones that can already sense your physical and mental health and moods, as well as other so-called 'big data' sources, and all of a sudden we enter a world where these machines – which can run in the cloud or on the neural computer chip brain in your future smartphone – can sense your mood and create unique content in real time specifically for you at that moment. In a way the Phil Collins back catalogue can already kind of do that, but Napster certainly never had anything like it.

CREATIVE MACHINES ARE MAKING A RANGE OF INCREASINGLY REALISTIC CONTENT, FROM GAMES TO MUSIC