

## .a wolf at the

On my desktop a picture of the book *The Road Ahead*, by Bill Gates, is floating around. The nerdy face of Bill is looking at me, trying to communicate *something*, while a long desert highway is disappearing into the infinite mist of freedom behind his back. Could be Arizona, Nevada or Utah, it's not important. What's relevant here is that *the road ahead* is decided, certain and unavoidable. A straight line from A to B, without drifts or checkpoints. It's there, Bill is generously giving it to us as a present, and all we have to do is jump into a pink Cadillac and go for it. *Life is a bitch / And then you die / Don't waste your time / To wonder why*, was singing Robin Proper-Sheppard in a beautiful song of his one man band Sophia.

But then, for a second, imagine.

Imagine that we jumped into that Cadillac and started the journey. Direction Las Vegas, what else? But instead of pursuing the american dream *on the road*, we actually *started to wonder why*. Why we have to go this way? Why it must be like this? What if we drive down the road we like more? Behind the border of the highway, there is the desert - a beautiful, dangerous and wild space - and what we started to do, at some point, was discovering new tracks off road. A car u-turn, and a witless boost into the land of possibilities.

What I'm talking about is the revolution music has undergone while we were too busy fixing things in our lives or trying to pass that *damn* exam. I was speaking to a friend of mine some days ago, and he stated something that, in it's naive and absolutely logic evidence, really impressed me: «the indie scene outcropped thanks to broadband connections».

I'm thinking at how much communities like last.fm or myspace changed the way I (and most of you) listen to music nowadays: if I feel like discovering someone new, I just start AudioScrobbler and see what last.fm is suggesting according to my mood and my tastes. If I need to know if tonight's ticket to Semifinal is worth the price, first I check the bands on myspace, and only then I start to dress the appropriate t-shirt.

Radiohead decided to break through the system. Certainly they are not the first band trying to do so, but it's sure as the monthly rent of your apartment that if they succeed, then for the majors will be the day of reckoning.

The band is uncommonly worshipped both from the masses and the distinguished listeners of *not-very-known-music*, and, unfortunately for the majors, they always tried alternative ways to distribute their stuff, with different degrees of success.

This time, they are probably sweeping the board: you want to download the new album *In Rainbows*? Then go to their website and the price...*it's up to you*, like the very minimalist instructions say. It's a brilliant initiative that can seriously revolutionize the way bands promote their music. It's a wonderful statement of good will from a band that was always a step ahead, and a potential - and highly destructive - avalanche that might sweep away the entire economic model of the industry. Sounds like a good solution for everyone: long term fans can always purchase a deluxe edition including a double cd, a double LP, artworks and various extra crap; all the others are left alone with their decency: *am I really such a basket case to not pay them even, let's say, three or four pounds?*

The answer most of the people will give to themselves is unknown by now, but I made my part and I would be really happy to know that most of what I "donated" will end up directly in the band's wallet and not in someone else's pockets. Don't you, after years spent complaining about the unjustifiable high price of CDs?

Executives are shivering, like the wolf scratching at their door finally managed to use the handle: «This feels like yet another death knell,» said an A&R executive, «If the best band in the world doesn't want a part of us, I'm not sure what's left for this business.»

The way we will decide to ride that anarchic Cadillac is still blurred, uncertain, and maybe it will led us (and the part of economy based on cultural production) eventually into a cliff. But it smells the same scent of freedom, of bloodless revolutions, of mentality shifting. It's an earthquake that we deeply lasted

for, because from the ruins of copyright and status quo in media distribution a better and most fair culture might arise. Bjork would say: *raise the flag / declare independence / don't let them do that to you!*

So, aware of the dangers we may face, we should push deeper that accelerator pedal and keep going at maximum speed.

- Tommaso De Benetti

phone: 0449445305

email: [tommaso.debenetti@helsinki.fi](mailto:tommaso.debenetti@helsinki.fi)