



WATCH & LEARN: ARTS & LIFESTYLE MUSIC, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION ABBA'S VOYAGER "CONCERT" (7:16 min) VIDEO Script & Vocabulary (page 1 of 3/v27669)

INTERMEDIATE (B1 - B2) AND ABOVE

- ◊ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◊ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◊ Prepare for the discussion questions

Starting Off

What does ABBA's Voyage Concert mean for the future of live music? Is ABBA Voyage going to change live music forever?

- 1 Read the **Video Script** below. The words in **bold** are defined in the **Vocabulary** section. Look up any new words in a dictionary.
- 2 Go to the **Your Turn** section at the end of this document. Practice using new words and expressions from the video script to prepare for your next class.
- 3 Look at the **Discussion Questions** and prepare your responses for the next class.

Video Script:

James Janson Young is an analyst/video producer (and musician): London, May 26th 2022. ABBA performed together in a way they haven't for over 40 years. However, ABBA didn't perform **in person** at all. Their digital **avatars** rocked up on stage instead. So, does this change **live music**, forever?



Many people were understandably **skeptical** about the concept: a big screen of the famous four holograms. No, no, no, they're *not* holograms, they're digital avatars. Completely different, and we'll get to that in a moment. But the verdict on this voyage of live music discovery, seems to be clear: (applause).

Other bands and artists may well be watching and thinking, hmmm, is this a **route we should be going down**? So, for all you live music fans out there, even those that don't like ABBA, or at least pretend not to in public, the key question is this: what does the ABBA Voyage concert mean for the future of the live music?

So, what is ABBA Voyage and what makes it different? Billed as an "immersive experience that **blurs** the lines between the physical and digital", this new series of concerts uses **state-of-the-art "motion capture technology"** to allow digital versions of Agnetha, Björn, Benny and Anni-Frid to perform a 90-minute **set** of 20 songs.

The **physical bits** of the concert are: A **purpose-built** stadium, or "ABBA Arena", in London's East-End that can hold 3,000 **fans** and can even be **flat-packed IKEA-style** and shipped to another location. A lighting **rig** of 500 lights and a 10-piece band, that by all accounts, are really quite good.

The digital bits are: The main vocals and Benny and Bjorn's piano and guitar which are drawn from the original recordings. The four's digital avatars, which perform centre stage on a 65 million pixel screen, buttressed by two floor-to-ceiling screens either side.

Video Script continued on next page...

Discussion Questions:

- ◊ Are you familiar with the 70's Swedish pop group ABBA?
- ◊ Would you be interested in seeing ABBA perform as virtual reality avatars at a concert hall in London?
- ◊ Do you think that digital recreations of famous music groups will become a popular attraction? What are some other acts you'd like to see be virtually recreated?

Vocabulary:

- **in person** - with the personal presence or action of the individual specified
- **avatar** - an icon or figure representing a particular person in a video game, internet forum, etc..
- **live music** - in concert; performed at the moment of listening
- **skeptical** - not easily convinced; having doubts or reservations
- **route we should be going down** - is this a course of action we should take as well?
- **blur** - make or become unclear or less distinct
- **state-of-the-art** - the most recent stage in the development of a product, incorporating the newest technology, ideas, and features
- **motion capture technology** - the process or technique of recording patterns of movement digitally, especially the recording of an actor's movements for the purpose of animating a digital character in a film or video game
- **set** - portion of a concert during which a number of songs are played consecutively
- **physical bits** - real life components
- **purpose-built** - constructed for the express activity for which it is used
- **fan** - someone who greatly admires the art or performance of another individual or group
- **flat-packed IKEA-style** - deconstructed into layers that can be easily stored in containers or boxes for transport to another location
- **rig** - a device or piece of equipment designed for a particular purpose

Vocabulary continued on next page...



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Video Script continued...

So what makes this concert different?

Whilst you might have **caught** Whitney Houston as a hologram in 2020, or Tupac as long ago as 2012, holograms are created by projecting light, whereas this project is something quite different. The technology behind Abba's digital avatars is similar to that used to create Hollywood's **CGI** creatures and beasts.

The group were required to **don** bodysuits **dotted** with sensors to capture their every move. And those moves were **coaxed** out of the four septuagenarians and choreographed by London Royal Ballet's Wayne McGregor. Over the course of 5 weeks, 160 cameras **scrutinized** band members' every **flinch** and facial expression. A **one-thousand-strong** army of visual effects artists from the George Lucas' company Light & Magic transformed all of this data into digital avatars, giving them the look and feel of ABBA in their 1970s' **prime**.

Which kind of acts would this motion capture technology work for?

Acts that are simply unable to perform in the way they did back in their prime, feel like **a natural fit** for this kind of technology. Few older musicians are willing or able to get up and perform night after night for several hours at a time. This kind of schedule is pretty **punishing**. But **digi-gigs** offer performers and fans an alternative that no one has any illusions about: because without the technology, watching ABBA perform like it was 1979 wouldn't be possible. There is no real-world substitute available.

But are there limits?

First of all, at present, the technology can only digitally capture those who are still alive. According to ABBA's Bjorn, the technical barrier to resurrecting artists **long since passed**, is that you need the precise measurements of their craniums in order for the process to really work. But, I can imagine that once **the void** between life and death has been digitally **bridged**, they'll be this irresistible **clamor** for the return of a very long list of lost idols, [Jim Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Aretha Franklin, George and John.] But this does pose an interesting question and a possible second limitation.

How could you digitally recreate virtuoso musicians like Led Zeppelin's late drummer, John Bonham or Jimi Hendrix?

Part of Hendrix's **enduring appeal** and mystique is simply, how on earth did he make a guitar sound the way he did? Re-creating singing and dancing is one thing, but digitally capturing the **virtuosity** and precision of playing an instrument? I'm open to be persuaded, but...

A third limitation relates to whether **punters** would be willing to pay to see their favorite band digitally when the band is **fit** and well, and still touring. The value and draw of a digital avatar concert is diminished when you could simply get a ticket to see the same band **in the flesh**. Contemporary acts thinking of performing in non-person, should consider whether they pass the PIP Test, where PIP stands for Play-in-Person.

The central question any performer should ask is: "If we decide to put on this digital concert, will our fans just think we **couldn't be bothered** to play in person?" But I suspect contemporary performers will be tempted, or even contractually obliged by their record companies, to step into a bodysuit to capture their "digital essence" for future possible revenue streams.

Vocabulary continued...

- **whilst** - whereas (indicating a contrast)
- **caught** - seen; to "catch" an act
- **CGI** - computer-generated imagery (special visual effects created using computer software)
- **don** - put on an article of clothing
- **dotted** - marked with or in the form of dots
- **coax** - obtain something from (someone) by gentle and persistent persuasion
- **scrutinize** - examine or inspect closely and thoroughly
- **flinch** - make a quick, nervous movement as an instinctive reaction to fear, pain, or surprise
- **one-thousand-strong** - composed of a thousand people
- **prime** - the state or time of greatest vigour or success in a person's life
- **a natural fit** - a very good match
- **Punishing** - extremely exhausting
- **digi-gigs** - digital concert
- **long since passed** - died long ago
- **bridge a void** - make a connection or solve a problem that hasn't yet been
- **clamor** - strong demand for something
- **enduring appeal** - describing something that has remained popular over a very long period of time
- **virtuosity** - great skill in music or another artistic pursuit
- **punter** - a customer or client, especially a member of an audience
- **fit** - in good physical condition
- **in the flesh** - in real life as opposed to digital or virtual reality
- **couldn't be bothered** - were too lazy or uninterested to something

Vocabulary continued on next page...

Video Script continued on next page...



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Video Script continued...

Think 10, 20, 30, 40 years **down the line** and the limitless possibilities for repurposing an artist's digital essence again and again in virtual tours or in a next generation of karaoke booths. You could see your favorite artists perform at different points in their career, perhaps even combining artists into new super-group **line-ups** – consisting of stars that never even met or lived at the same point in history.

And why stop with pop music. Or even the 20th century? What about re-creating Mozart, Mendelssohn or Mahler? Although, good luck trying to recreate people **from the depths of time** before film footage and photos were available.

So how does ABBA's Voyage of digital motion capture change live music?

ABBA Voyage fundamentally challenges and redefines what we think of as a 'live concert'. After all, what is the 'live' bit we're actually **buying into** here? It's all a bit blurred. But, this concert's initial run is the **proof of new concept**. It shows that digital visuals can be **woven almost seamlessly into** live elements to create something new and otherwise impossible to see in real life. And the fans seem to love it too.

Some music journalists have been **quick to point out** that this is going to be replicated by other acts in the near future, assuming they are lucky enough to find some time with Light and Magic, in the next decade. So, coming soon to a purpose-built **venue** near you, your favorite acts could be making an appearance, of sorts.

Of course, no one knows **what the future might hold**, and to find out what we get so wrong when we try and imagine what the future might look like, continue onto this video here. I'll see you there. Thanks for watching.

Vocabulary continued...

- **down the line** - in the future
- **line-ups** - a group of several musical acts for a festival type of concert
- **from the depths of time** - figures who lived many centuries ago
- **buying into** - paying for / accepting
- **proof of new concept** - demonstrates the success of a new idea
- **woven almost seamlessly into** - mixed or blended in a harmonious way
- **quick to point out** - express an opinion
- **venue** - building or location of an event
- **what the future might hold** - what may happen in the future

Your Turn! Using new vocabulary is the best way to learn and remember it.

- 1 Choose three words or expressions from the video that are new to you and write a sentence using each one in the box below.
- 2 Try to use them in a context that is familiar to you to help you retain them.
- 3 Please ask for feedback on your sentences in the next lesson.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

