

fashions will begin to revolve ever faster. In the end we'll have to wear all the clothes from each period at the same time. It will be hot. Everyone will be good looking.

In 2021, the term "world music" will refer to any music made outside London or Brooklyn and everyone will have their own independent record label, which they will use to put out a daily album of everything they have said in the last 24 hours. These will be put into a chart, which will become the main focus of the evening news, with some celebrities paying vast teams of script writers to make sure that their mutterings get into the top ten. At one point Madonna stays on the top of the chart for a full two weeks for not saying a word. When she does finally say a word it is "child"; the world weeps and she goes straight back to the number one spot.

Coldplay's Chris Martin and Beyoncé Knowles will have opened academies named after themselves where they'll grow musical stars. These offspring will eventually take over from the "super groups." Ultimately, everyone is desperate for punk to come along again and wipe the slate clean; but we have already had "post-punk" and "post-post-punk" sounds too stupid.

Tom Ravenscroft is a BBC 6 Music radio DJ

Simon Baron-Cohen

The science of empathy sheds light on morality

Who would have thought scientists could study something as fuzzy as empathy? When we empathise, we enter the mind of the other person, experiencing an emotion triggered by the other person's state of mind. Surely this couldn't be the stuff of science?

It turns out that neuroscience has been making great strides in understanding this process, and I expect this to continue. By 2021 we will understand more about the causes of individual differences in empathy. We already know that biological factors (genes, hormones, neurotransmitters) and environmental factors (parenting) have an influence on empathy levels in later life. With the increasing research efforts in genetics and developmen-

tal cognitive neuroscience, empathy will reveal more of its secrets.

We know the brain regions involved in empathy. Brain scanning (fMRI) has enabled the process of empathy to be observed in action. By 2021 we will be able to image how the workings of these brain regions are changed by both our experience and our biology.

We are beginning to understand different kinds of empathy difficulties. Psychopaths for example can imagine what someone else thinks or feels ("cognitive empathy"), but lack the emotional reaction to these ("affective empathy"). People with Asperger Syndrome show the opposite pattern: they struggle to understand what someone else might think or feel, but do react emotionally to someone else's distress. By 2021 we will better understand the importance of affective empathy in the development of morality, and how the absence of affective empathy can leave an individual capable of hurting others.

Simon Baron-Cohen is professor of developmental psychopathology and director of the Autism Research Centre, Cambridge University. His latest book, "Zero Degrees of Empathy," is published by Penguin

Lucy Prebble

Prepare to become both artist and audience

A century ago, those attending the theatre paid to sit in a box. Their view of the stage was obscured, but their view of others—and others' of them—was enhanced. Art has always seeped into the social fabric. Now, we display ourselves online as our own work of art; while also being an audience for others. However, we engage with the screen individually. In ten years there'll be a further move towards creating an illusion of community while consuming art solitarily.

A new artistic form may spin itself out of the web. The human urge to create and build will combine entertainment with communication. Gaming will become a recognised art form, and will go in search of a wider audience in order to generate the revenues it will need to flourish.

In ten years, TV boxsets will continue to hold couples together, but rather than being shown on television, each season of a ▶

OUR READERS' PREDICTIONS

Prospect asked its Twitter followers what they thought Britain would be like in 2021:

Amanda Craig

Overcrowded, shabby, depressed public spaces, but for the rich, the opposite. Private wealth and public squalor—like the US.

[AmandaPCraig](#)

Thierry Gregorius

The Big Society will have appointed its own government, possibly via X Factor.

[Thierry_G](#)

Natalie Day

Twitter will be today's beta video.

[natalieday1](#)

Bob Gibson

Fewer high street areas—some small towns will die unless they create their own niche market or reason to survive.

[Venonis](#)

Sue Radcliffe

We will mine landfill sites for plastics and other recoverables.

[Gone2plot](#)

Kathleen Richardson

Online social networks will become more important as they become legal proxies of individuals (like signatures).

[robotanth](#)

Londiniensis

Chinese billionaire's horse beats the King's horse at The Derby.

[Londiniensis](#)

Elizabeth Hunter

The nation's academics are the only people still transmitting or digesting text longer than 140 characters.

[TheosElizabeth](#)

Scott Jordan Harris

The way my eyes are going, dim and blurry.

[ScottFilmCritic](#)

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