

'This song sucks': Nick Cave responds to ChatGPT song written in style of Nick Cave

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Nick Cave has dissected a song produced by the viral chatbot software ChatGPT “written in the style of Nick Cave”, calling it “bullshit” and “a grotesque mockery of what it is to be human”.

Writing in his newsletter the Red Hand Files on Monday, Cave responded to a fan called Mark in New Zealand, who had sent him a song written by ChatGPT. The artificial intelligence, which can be directed to impersonate the style of specific individuals, was used by Mark to create a song “in the style of Nick Cave”.

Filled with dark biblical imagery, ChatGPT’s song included the chorus: “I am the sinner, I am the saint / I am the darkness, I am the light / I am the hunter, I am the prey / I am the devil, I am the savior.”

The singer wrote back to Mark, saying that “dozens” of fans, “most buzzing with a kind of algorithmic awe”, had sent him songs produced by ChatGPT.

“Suffice to say, I do not feel the same enthusiasm around this technology,” he wrote. “I understand that ChatGPT is in its infancy but perhaps that is the emerging horror of AI – that it will forever be in its infancy, as it will always have further to go, and the direction is always forward, always faster.

“It can never be rolled back, or slowed down, as it moves us toward a utopian future, maybe, or our total destruction. Who can possibly say which? Judging by this song ‘in the style of Nick Cave’ though, it doesn’t look good, Mark. The apocalypse is well on its way. This song sucks.”

He called ChatGPT an exercise in “replication as travesty”.

“Writing a good song is not mimicry, or replication, or pastiche, it is the opposite,” he wrote. “It is an act of self-murder that destroys all one has strived to produce in the past. It is those dangerous, heart-stopping departures that catapult the artist beyond the limits of what he or she recognises as their known self.

“This is part of the authentic creative struggle that precedes the invention of a unique lyric of actual value; it is the breathless confrontation with one’s vulnerability, one’s perilousness, one’s smallness, pitted against a sense of sudden shocking discovery; it is the redemptive artistic act that stirs the heart of the listener, where the listener recognizes in the inner workings of the song their own blood, their own struggle, their own suffering.”

Cave, who is writing songs for a new album with the Bad Seeds, added: “It may sound like I’m taking all this a little too personally, but I’m a songwriter who is engaged, at this very moment, in the process of songwriting. It’s a blood and guts business, here at my desk, that requires something of me to initiate the new and fresh idea. It requires my humanness.”

He thanked Mark, but said: “With all the love and respect in the world, this song is bullshit, a grotesque mockery of what it is to be human, and, well, I don’t much like it.”

Cave’s previous studio album with the Bad Seeds, *Ghosteen*, came out in 2019. He recently gave an update on the new album, writing: “This is both good news and bad news. Good news because who doesn’t want a new Bad Seeds record? Bad news because I’ve got to write the bloody thing.”

(580 words)