

The Headphone Jack Effect

I feel like I should explain a bit of my own personal philosophy that has informed some of my worldbuilding. It's something I like to call The Headphone Jack Effect, which is a reference to Apple's controversial removal of the headphone jack from the iPhone 7.

A person is a complex and sometimes contradictory mess of wants and needs and ideas. Everyone has their own goals and their own idea of how the world ought to be. If one person is already a mess, an organization, made of many messy people, is even more of a mess. Sometimes people want the same thing, but have very different motivations for doing so.

What does this have to do with Apple or headphone jacks? Apple is not a person, it's an organization made of many people, who, as above, are all straining in their own direction trying to accomplish their own goals. I have no doubt in my mind that some people at Apple wanted to get rid of the headphone jack to increase the sales of wireless headphones. However, there are also legitimate reasons why one might want to eliminate it. A jack is a potential ingress point for dust and liquid. The jack itself as well as the DAC it connects to take up room in an already cramped chassis. That same space-hogging hardware also adds manufacturing complexity to a device that already has a bluetooth radio which serves the same purpose.

I can see some engineer making a sincere and impassioned argument for the jack's removal just as much as I can see C suite executives tenting their fingers and salivating over the potential profits.

What does this have to do with the Lonely Galaxy? I sometimes feel like I make some groups out to be a lot worse than they actually are. For example, I made it sound like the founding of the Knights of the Sun was a cynical move to exploit the zeal of pious young men who were too stupid to realize they were being used. And yeah, some clerics were acting in bad faith, but plenty of others genuinely cared about the people who used the infrastructure the clergy controlled, and wanted to see them safe from harm. Were some knights hiding behind religion to go on a power trip? Sure. Were other knights trying to defend the weak and help the helpless because that's what their faith said was important? Also yes.

What do I think about the headphone jack? Honestly I think the increased liquid resistance isn't worth the loss of what was an inexpensive and simple solution that lasted for a hundred years precisely because it was a good idea.

Where am I going with this? I honestly don't know. It's just been on my mind for a while.

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