

AEC Pop and Jazz Platform 2023  
Open Floor

**After fifty years of Smoke on the Water: What does it mean to make it?**  
**Moreover, what can we in higher music education learn from that song?**

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The song "Smoke on the Water", recorded by the British rock group Deep Purple in December 1971, had a global reach and contributed much to Deep Purple's success and fandom. The song was recorded during a sound check when the band was jamming and trying out a location for a recording session and was initially not intended to be released. However, a turning point was a successful live album, "Made in Japan", in 1972, including the song, and in 1973, Smoke on the Water became a worldwide hit. Furthermore, the song has retained its popularity over the years. Therefore, it is interesting to ask: how can the success of Smoke on the Water be explained? The study presented here includes interviews with music teachers, music directors, music students and musicians in different countries, as well as interviews with some original members of Deep Purple. The findings are empirically surprising and indicate tension regarding understanding what is most important in a specific musical performance and piece of music or recording, such as Smoke on the Water, between those who perform or produce and those who listen.

In short, for many of those who study music and music production, the details of the music and various intrinsic aspects of musical content seem to be more important, compared to those who are more average listeners who seem to pay more attention to how the lyrics and music speak to them. Therefore, the results highlight some possible areas of development. At least for those students who want to produce music and reach listeners who cannot analyse music and deeply understand various advanced musical aspects as well as they, as music students, can. Nevertheless, when we teach in higher music education, we can help our students develop their sensitivity and understanding of what is needed to reach the listeners. Then the students should have good conditions to open the gates to a great working life, acquire valuable international connections and build up fruitful artistry.

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