

This site uses cookies. By continuing to browse the site you are agreeing to our use of cookies. [Find out more here](#)

**FONIC  
Smart**

Keine  
Vertrags-  
bindung

Nur  
**16,95 €**  
/Monat

Jetzt bestellen

fonic.de

**theguardian**

Your search terms...

Culture

Search

[News](#) | [Sport](#) | [Comment](#) | [Culture](#) | [Business](#) | [Money](#) | [Life & style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Environment](#) | [Tech](#) | [TV](#) | [Video](#) | [Dating](#) | [Offers](#) | [Jobs](#)

[Culture](#)

[Manchester international festival 2013](#)

## Adam Curtis and Massive Attack: what is reality?

Look at the flickering video images that bombard your world. Do you trust them? Or have they stranded you in an 'enchanted cocoon'? Read an extract from Adam Curtis' video collaboration with Massive Attack from the Manchester international festival

Share 72

Tweet 25

0

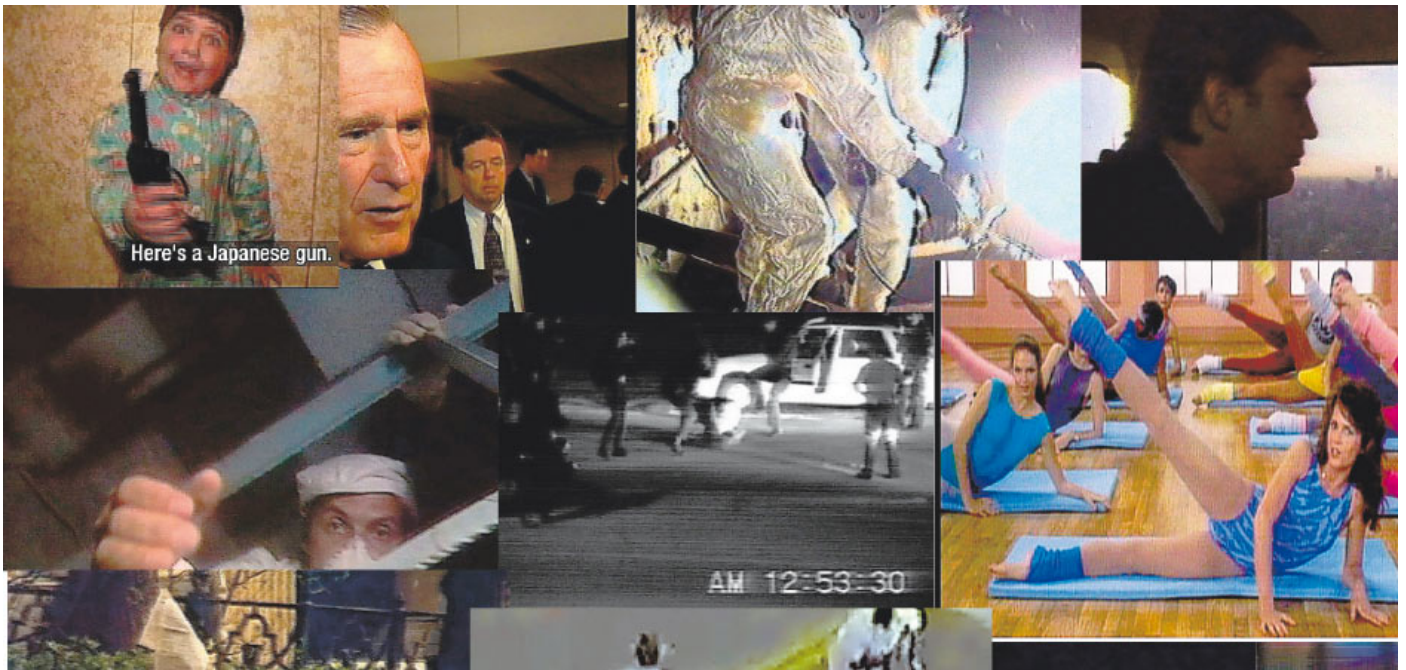
Share 0

Email



[Adam Curtis](#) and Massive Attack  
[The Guardian](#), Monday 8 July 2013 18.33 BST

[Jump to comments \(31\)](#)



We all live in two worlds.

One is the world of our own experience.

The other is created by the millions of flickering images recorded on film and video.

It is a strange world where the laws of time, space and mortality do not apply.

So many of the images are of people who died long ago. They are the modern ghosts who will never leave us.

It is a beautiful world. But it may not be as innocent as it seems.

It keeps us in an enchanted cocoon – a static world that suits the modern system of power.

This system reaches far beyond the old politics – into every part of our lives. It is a technocratic theory of management that wants to keep the world stable. It predicts what you want tomorrow on the basis of what you wanted in the past.

If you liked that – You will love this.

But it wasn't always like this.



[Pauline Boty](#) was a pop artist in London in the 1960s.

She loved America – the songs, the films, the advertisements.

She believed a magical new world could be conjured up out of these fragments.

GROB were the most famous punk band in the Soviet Union.

They came from Siberia and in the 1980s they used their songs to reflect back the absurdity of the Communist system.

The [Chernobyl disaster](#) destroyed the belief that new technologies could be used to build a better world.

RISK became a big word among politicians and technocrats in the west.

And a new idea rose up. You shouldn't try and change the world any longer. Instead you should manage it, to keep everyone safe from harm.



Jess Marcum helped invent THE NEUTRON BOMB. He worked out probability models that showed how the radiation could kill millions of people.

Then he went to Las Vegas and discovered that his models could predict what might happen in games of chance. That if you had enough data

about the past – you could predict the future.

And manage it.

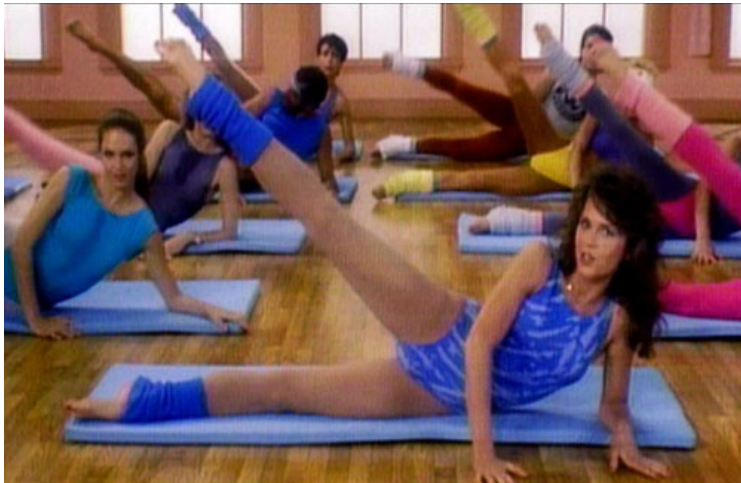


CLIVE GOODWIN was Pauline Boty's husband. He was a TV presenter. Then he went to Hollywood to work on the film Reds. He died there – alone in a police cell.

The LAPD thought he was drunk. But he had a brain hemorrhage.

People no longer believed in the dream of building a better world in the future.

New kinds of heroes rose up.



[JANE FONDA](#) gave up socialism and started another revolution.

BODY FASCISM.

You didn't try and change the world any longer. Instead you controlled your body with an iron will.

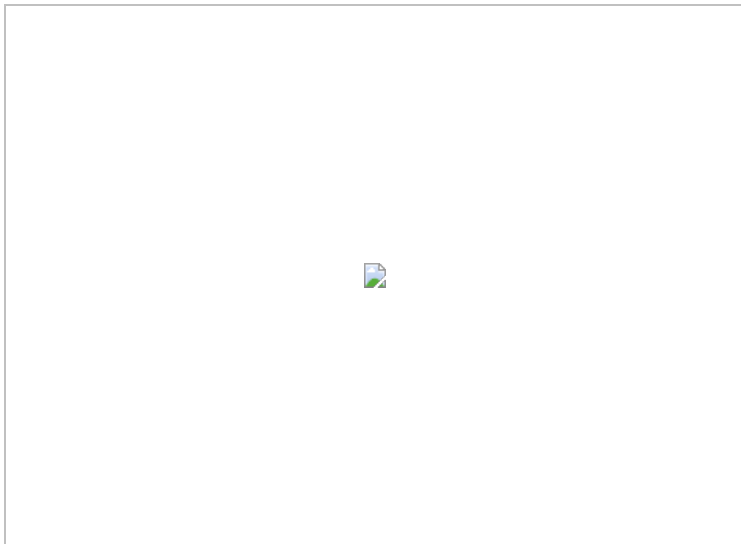
You managed yourself.





DONALD TRUMP had a vision of a new kind of city based round the media. He called it Television City.

He employed Jess Marcum in his casinos to predict when the high-rolling gamblers would lose. So he could manage them.



And the old order died. [Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu](#) were shot. Their execution was filmed so everyone could watch and know they were really dead.

And a new managed world rose up in the early 1990s. BODY MASS INDEX and MODERN BANKS.

A world in which everything is monitored and measured. From our bodies and the disorders of the mind – to the economy and the financial system. And all risk avoided.

But there were those who wouldn't be managed. And couldn't manage themselves.



Yanka Dyagileva had been one of the leaders of the Siberian punk movement. She and the others had parodied the absurdity of the Soviet system. But now it was gone they had no idea what they wanted in the future.

Her lover was Yegor Letov – the leader of GROB. He turned to the past – to Russian nationalism and a new kind of fascism.

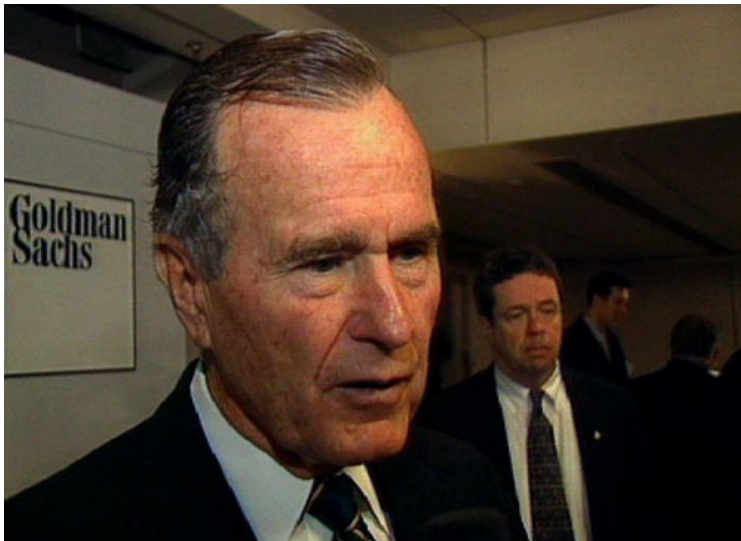
Yanka disappeared. Her body was found in a frozen river in Siberia.

Boty Goodwin was Pauline Boty's daughter.

She went to America. But found it was nothing like the country of her mother's dreams. Everyone had become obsessed with themselves. Their bodies and their minds.

She too retreated into the past – a vision of an old England.

She took heroin and died of an overdose.



The financial technocrats cut up the [toxic debt](#) and recombined it with other loans – to make it safe.

Hidden away with other investments as just another series of harmless numbers. But as they did this the connection of the debts to reality was broken.

But it wasn't just debt that could be cut up. The computers could also cut up images and sounds. And in a strange way the same thing began to happen to the way we saw reality.

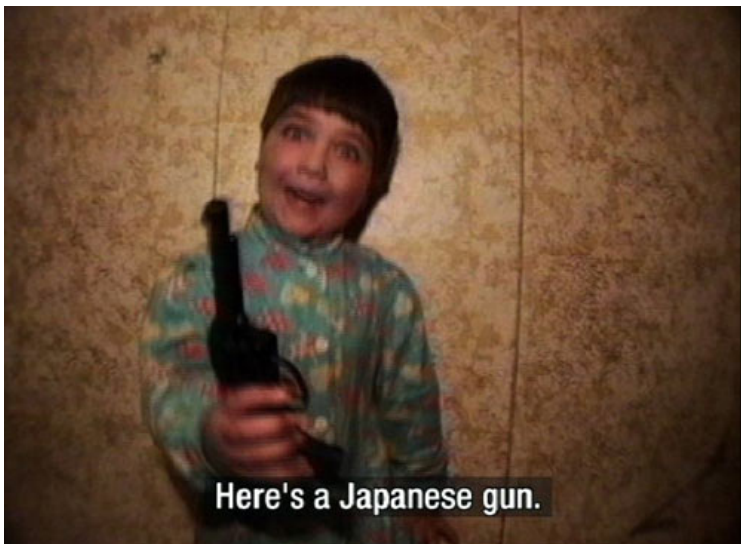
We became surrounded by fragmented and mixed up images of

The PAST.

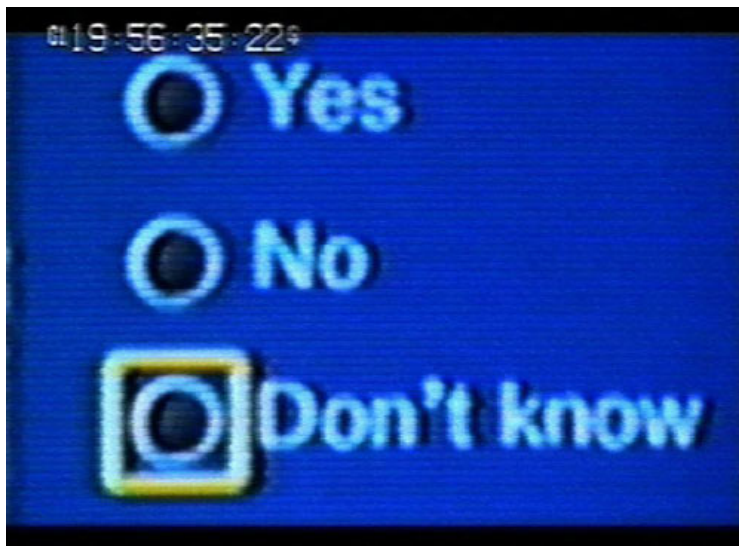
The PRESENT.



And the IMAGINARY.  
IN THIS TWO-DIMENSIONAL WORLD.  
THE LOGIC OF TIME AND SPACE BEGAN TO DISAPPEAR.  
Anything could be put with anything else.  
It was liberating and enchanting.  
But it also meant that



THE FAKE COULD BE JUST AS CONVINCING AS THE REAL.  
But the managed world says that everything must stay as it is.  
And the images play around us continually – ghosts from the past who will not let us go. Holding us here in a fake world. Stopping us from moving forward in the future – and building a better and more truthful world.



---

#### Culture

[Manchester international festival 2013](#) · [Manchester international festival](#)

---

#### Music

[Massive Attack](#)

[More features](#)

---

#### More on the Manchester international festival



[Abida Parveen: 'I'm not a man or a woman, I'm a vehicle for passion'](#)

Abida Parveen, the great female Sufi singer, talks to **Nosheen Iqbal** about sexism, Pakistani politics and why TV talent shows and devotional Islam aren't mutually exclusive

---

[Manchester International Festival: an urban farm aims to lure locals towards healthy eating](#)

---

[Nikhil Chopra's three-day industrial revolution](#)

---

[Anarchy in Peterloo: Shelley's poem unmasked](#)

Open for comments. [Sign in](#) or [create your Guardian account](#) to join the discussion.

31 comments. Showing  conversations, threads , sorted

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



**Vanillacide**

08 July 2013 6:44pm

15

Gotta love Adam Curtis, shame you can't get his documentaries on DVD.



**christopherfowler** Vanillacide

08 July 2013 6:56pm

1

You can - they're bootleg and come from US websites, but the quality's pretty good.



**GiuseppeH** Vanillacide

08 July 2013 7:36pm

1

Try Pirate Bay. Entire collection well worth having.



**FatNakago**

08 July 2013 6:48pm

3

As Benny Noakes would say in John Brunner's novel STAND ON ZANZIBAR: "Christ....what an IMAGINATION I have!!"



**TruculentSheep**

08 July 2013 6:59pm

4

We dance on a precipice. Our managed lives are just an illusion - but it will take the utter defeat of managerialism for us to realise this. In the meantime, we walk cautiously under the glare of CCTV and let ourselves get touched up in airports. It doesn't actually make us safer, but it does make us feel managed. For those in power, this is the same thing.



**CaptStraptin**

08 July 2013 7:00pm

1

acultural implosion...postmodernish arational mystic synchronicity is the only way of many...never allow the reduction of the unknowable mystery of your I amness...



**KleptocracyRules**

08 July 2013 7:03pm

1

I'd like to invite Adam Curtis over for dinner. I think we would have a nice chat.



**iwouldprefernotto**

08 July 2013 7:10pm

2

If anyone hasn't seen the show and is wondering whether to go - definitely do. I'm a big Adam Curtis fan, but I don't think you need to have seen any of his films to appreciate it.

Just be prepared for a audio-visual onslaught, and remember: this isn't a Massive Attack gig (there were a few people bemoaning that fact the night I went, basically demonstrating the fact they had failed to read the show's blurb before purchasing tickets. Schoolboy error.)

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



**tamrichie**

08 July 2013 7:12pm

6

Adam Curtis says things in dramatic, factual sentences. What he is saying is often true. And obvious. Sometimes it isn't true. For example Jane Fonda did not invent body fascism. Adam Curtis could start by looking at the history of the corset. Adam Curtis isn't very good. But he sounds as if he should be.





**CaptStraptin** tamrchie  
08 July 2013 7:28pm

10

He means 'Jane Fonda' as an appropriated sign, his whole discourse is semiotic, it's a profound meditation on the inherent power of imagery...be it pixel comprised or otherwise...



**conaldinho** CaptStraptin  
08 July 2013 7:31pm

You can't be both an I and an Amness unless you are a Cartesian. Are you?

Show 3 more replies

Last reply: 08 July 2013 7:42pm

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



**IndySWE**  
08 July 2013 7:30pm

6

I love ACs previous work but the piece above is bordering on parody.



**cjamcmahon** IndySWE  
08 July 2013 8:06pm

Beat me to it. I've used his previous work in lectures but this is gibberish.



**bbmatt**  
08 July 2013 7:33pm

2

It's a world where time outside our own experience seems to cease to exist - merging into itself, yet is measured so precisely. On this day, at this time, this event happened & here is the video to prove it.

I find myself forgetting which celebrities are alive and which are no longer with us.

We have facebook accounts from people who are no longer alive, the experiences and miniature of their lives digitally available for years after they are gone.

We fret over our digital 'storage' - backing up huge swathes of data we'll probably never need again, or that will be obsolete in 10 years.

Our precious photographic memories now so rarely available on paper, only accessible via electricity, which can be shared by a click with a billion potential viewers.

Our privacy is now privacy via obscurity, our lives invaded with countless millions of throw-away 'factoids', our minds stuffed with unimportant data.

We willfully share our lives with people we have never met and will never meet and will never be aware of.

We carry our digital selves around with us, "What would we do without it?", that digital data being slurped up and sifted through by artificial intelligence, against our will and best interests.

Billions upon billions of bytes of data, stored ready for access, ready to profile, to create our ultimate reality or experience, or to imprison us for thought crime.

Brave New World .. but ...

**If the lights go out, but if the lights go out ... it's all gone. In the blink of an eye, as the power fails, so does the illusion.**



**Daniel Simpson**  
08 July 2013 7:35pm

You shouldn't try and change the world any longer. Instead you should manage it, to keep everyone safe from harm.

Tell that to the Second Coming, Tony Blair, who still claims to be doing all three (most recently yesterday, via this website) while fomenting mass slaughter.



**ISO9001**  
08 July 2013 7:43pm



repetition, repetition, repetition.

hopefully i'll get to see this.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



**Alex Morgan**

08 July 2013 7:48pm

4

I totally read this in Adam Curtis's voice



**DeeLarke** Alex Morgan

08 July 2013 8:19pm

Me too.



**boiledcabbage**

08 July 2013 7:56pm

Highly amusing and great entertaining Curtis stuff - but ultimately just pre-garbage like all the other images. The ideas dont really hang together long-term.

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



**ID041252**

08 July 2013 7:59pm

Please could you review the following article; the case involves an illegal M15 research project; any help you could give me would be really appreciated. The events that I describe have ruined my life and have had a massive impact on the life of my 18 year old daughter. I would be extremely grateful if you would take the time to read it over. The article can be found here:  
<http://ricosquirrel.wordpress.com/>

Kind Regards

P.T Hopk



**smartacus** ID041252

08 July 2013 8:05pm

You're lucky I have nothing to do. Like the quote, I didn't realise Schopenhauer said that. Will report back...



**smartacus** ID041252

08 July 2013 8:16pm

Ok so you've failed to mention why you were targeted, or at least, why you think you are being harassed. Or do you think it is a case of them barking up the wrong tree?

You either have severe mental issues or you severely upset the wrong people for whatever reason.

Why didn't you call the police when the man and boy were in the van in broad daylight. If the police didn't turn up or left you could follow them whilst on the phone to the dispatcher.

You wrote so much I kind of skipped the middle, but if my browser was doing what your Google is doing to you, I would have shit myself.



**racetosavetheplanet**

08 July 2013 8:00pm

Like the point how we are anaesthetised by the entertainment industry. This all keeps us from seeing our own reality ie the poverty of who we are. Yes, our society makes us into little people who cannot face themselves. And so we escape into so many illusions of pleasure. We fool ourselves all the time, forever escaping from the 'boredom', which is actually who we are.

But there is good news.

Yes, what I have described above is the ego.

And we can go beyond the ego and all the nonsense it has created as described by Curtis very well above.

This process of Self discovery is what meditation, and self-enquiry is all about.

And this process is the true reality of who we really are.

And this uncovers the true reality of who we really are.  
Total peace and bliss.  
But you gotta have the courage to walk the path;  
avoid the distractions of the pleasures and pains  
and reach the goal.  
Many have done this, or are trying at least.  
Its called 'waking up'



**mrm55**

08 July 2013 8:06pm

2

'We live as we dream, alone.'

Joseph Conrad summarised all this some time ago



**daffyddw**

08 July 2013 8:17pm

Very disappointing- just another voice telling us what to think- Fuck off!



**KarlNaylor75**

08 July 2013 8:20pm

THE LOGIC OF TIME AND SPACE BEGAN TO DISAPPEAR.

Anything could be put with anything else.

It was liberating and enchanting.

But it also meant that

THE FAKE COULD BE JUST AS CONVINCING AS THE REAL.

But the managed world says that everything must stay as it is.

The symbol of this brave new world in Britain was the Tony Blair Product who acted as a sort of charismatic preacher and an megaphone for the life urges and aspirations of 'the people'. The soundbites were the death rattle of the British body politic.

Those who opined that critics of Blair should focus less on the style but on the substance ignored the fact that the style of the Blair Product was inextricably bound up with the substance. He always needed to convince himself the better to convince others that he was 'right' on such policies as invading Iraq.

With Tony it was all about how he appeared before 'the people'. Iain Sinclair's Hackney, That Rose Red Empire records that Blair was to be seen through a window in his Islington home watching clips of himself on television with enraptured fascination.

Though Blair is undead and he will remain like a 'modern ghost who will never leave us' while at present he appears, when he does, more like a Madame Tussaud's waxwork figure with an alarming ability to speak. He was a modern man in 1997 but today he is yesterday's man.

In fact he quickly became sol once saw Blair on Sky TV with the sound down in a cheap pub opposite the railway station at the top of Putney High Street. Blair was no longer to be leader and the television camera kept angling in on Blair's fidgety expanding and contracting hand movements as if to mock them.

If Blair had served his purpose it was to spin the necessary illusions that were to keep 'the people' in 'an enchanted cocoon – a static world that suits the modern system of power'. For the benefit of 'the people'. When he was no longer in power he had to fight against becoming obsolete.

Blair is obsessed with 'legacy', in controlling how posterity will think of him. Blair's entire 'post-political' career has been about a disturbed man trying to prove his relevance to a world that does not really need him any more and rationalising before the audience his decision to go to war in Iraq.

The fact Blair was and remains an authentic fake, a creation of a multimedia age who himself can no longer tell the clear boundaries between fact and fiction. People were prepared in number to collude in this fiction because they needed change they could believe in. Until they longer did.



**hacker**

08 July 2013 8:24pm

I have always found Adam Curtis to be quite beguiling to watch but if you stop to give his contentions any consideration they melt away. Presentation but no substance.

**hacker**



**Jamesro**

08 July 2013 8:24pm

Reality is what you feel when I punch you in the face

Open for comments. [Sign in](#) or [create your Guardian account](#) to join the discussion.

---

#### **Ads by Google**

---

##### **[British Expat in Italy?](#)**

Avoid Losing 55% of Your UK Pension  
Download a Free Expat Pension Guide  
[www.forthcapital.com/QROPS](http://www.forthcapital.com/QROPS)

---

##### **[British Expat In Italy?](#)**

£100k+ Pension? Over 25,000 Expats  
Have Downloaded Our Free Guides!  
[Your.QROPSchoices.com/HMRC-listed](http://Your.QROPSchoices.com/HMRC-listed)

---

##### **[Pullman per i concerti](#)**

Direttamente allo stadio o al  
Palazzetto.Partenze da tutta italia  
[eventinbus.com/pullman](http://eventinbus.com/pullman)

Hot topics

[Film reviews](#)

[Film news](#)

[Book reviews](#)

[Theatre reviews](#)

[Children's books](#)

---

[License/buy our content](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Terms & conditions](#) | [Advertising guide](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [A-Z index](#) | [Inside the Guardian blog](#) | [About us](#) | [Work for us](#) |  
[Join our dating site today](#)

© 2013 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.