



## Radiohead's Carbon Neutral World Tour

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Historically, artists have been the ones responsible for 'doing things' on the environment. Schemes have come in and out of fashion, all targeting high profile musicians to spread the word – it's the easiest way of getting people's attention.

But climate change science has been and still is changing rapidly. From offsetting, to bio-fuels, it has not been easy for any of us to find the right methods of reducing our carbon emissions – artists are often subject to heavy criticism if their choices turn out to be ill informed.

That is why artist PR led campaigns have their limitations; instead the music industry needs to come together, and using a combination of scientific, technical and behavioural research, develop clear guidelines for us all to work towards.

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Four years ago, Radiohead's Thom Yorke helped launch Friends of the Earth's campaign The Big Ask, which encouraged people to call on government for legally binding year on year cuts in carbon emissions. The world's first Climate Change Act came into being in the UK at the end of 2008 and now the Big Ask campaign continues in Europe.

Naturally, it was essential for Thom and the other members of Radiohead to address their own carbon footprint before embarking on their next record release and tour.

Not wanting to make token gestures that bore no relevance to real cuts in CO<sub>2</sub>, and conscious of the speed at which the science was changing, they commissioned their own touring carbon footprint analysis, by Oxford company Best Foot forward.

Armed with the results of the report, they were able to address the areas of concern in order of importance.

Some problem areas could be tackled directly as they fell within their control, such as making changes to transport and production. Other areas required a more influencing approach – fan travel being the most obvious one, but also, engaging with the venues and promoters on making CO<sub>2</sub> reductions, which more often than not they were happy to do.

Radiohead published a lot of this work on their website in the hope that it will be useful to others embarking on the same journey and that the positive publicity will encourage the suppliers to keep the changes they had implemented for Radiohead.

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Happily, what we can conclude from Radiohead's attempts over the last year in support of this guide is this:

### 1. Targets are achievable

Switching from air to sea freight gave us a 97% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Switching from a conventional lighting and LED mix to an all LED system meant a 75% reduction in power required compared with the 2003 tour.



## 2. Reducing CO2 can be financially rewarding

There are financial savings to be made. For example, sea freighting is a fraction of the cost of air-freighting. Admittedly, Radiohead did spend money on developing new technologies, but hopefully this investment has paved the way for greener possibilities for others, and will pay for itself in the long run.

## 3. If we renew our efforts and worked together across the whole music industry we will make environmental and financial savings even more achievable.

We recently heard the good news of the UK major labels' joint commitment to reducing emissions on their CD packaging. Hopefully this combined effort towards a common goal will give way to cheaper, mass-produced green alternatives and a permanent replacement to the jewel case.

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## In conclusion

We all know that we have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions sooner rather than later, and we have to get the wheels in motion now.

This is a fact.

However, making headway sooner rather than later means that we will have more control over how we do this, it will give us a competitive edge, and we can set an example for the whole of Industry.

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Thom's work for Friends of The Earth's climate change campaign prompted the band to look at their own touring Carbon Footprint: <http://thebigask.eu/>

Here is a link to the report commissioned by Radiohead to look into their touring Carbon and Environmental footprint, published on Radiohead's website:  
<http://www.radiohead.com/deadairspace/index.php?a=310>

The band's activity dealt with three areas:

1. **Encourage** fans to think about how they travel to the shows (press release and online carbon calculator)
2. Book shows and organise production in a way that **minimises** carbon output, WITHOUT compromising the quality of the shows.
3. **Engage** with venues and suppliers to develop more carbon friendly approaches (we had some money to throw at this) in the hope that the changes that they make for Radiohead will remain in place when Radiohead have moved on.

All this can be found here:

<http://www.radiohead.com/themostgiganticflyingmouthforsometime/>

And the venue auditing, reporting and forum can be found here (you have to join as a member, I'm afraid)

<http://www.waste-central.com/profile/TheMostGiganticFlyingMouth>

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