

# How rockstars and peacocks attract the ladies

July 21 2014, by Malcolm P Forbes And Ryan Anderson

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Gaudy appearance, cocky sashay, singing voice ... peacock or Jagger? Credit: EPA/Facundo Arrizabalaga

What is it that makes rockstars so attractive to the opposite sex? Turns out Charles Darwin had it pegged hundreds of years ago – and it has a lot to do with peacocks.

In *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), [Darwin suggested](#) natural selection can occur by individuals out-producing others in a population, through enhanced ability to secure a mate.

Darwin used the ornate [peacock](#) plumage and bird songs to exemplify this concept.

Peacocks are best known for flaunting their brightly coloured and sizable tails. Yet the tail is cumbersome and expends energy.

In addition, its extravagance makes the peacock conspicuous to predators and less able to escape them, reducing its survival prospects. Why then has the tail not been [bred out of existence](#)?

The existence of the tail reflects the fact that it plays a major role in attracting the peahen, allowing greater numbers of offspring that inherit the genes for a long colourful tail from their father.

Not only does the peacock enjoy [greater reproductive success](#), his sons are likely to inherit a similar capacity for increased reproductive success.

## **Shake your tail feathers**

Sexual selection in humans, as in peacocks, is predominantly at the discretion of females.

The prevailing explanation behind this is the [Bateman Principle](#) – male reproductive success increases with the number of mates, whereas female [reproductive success](#) does not.

Thus males compete with each other for female mates and females mate only with the males they prefer. This mechanism of [sexual selection](#) is termed intersexual selection.

The tail of a peacock is an example of intersexual selection. Conflict and physical violence between male members of a species is called [intrasexual selection](#).

## **Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?**

Studies conducted in the [United States](#) and [France](#), where male and female confederates approached members of the opposite sex and requested "Will you come over to my apartment?" and "Would you go to bed with me?", found that the majority of male respondents were willing to comply with a sexual proposition from an averagely attractive female.

But zero of the female respondents in the American study and only one of the female respondents in the French study were willing to go to bed with a male they had just met.

The authors interpret the findings as evidence of men's eagerness for sexual relationships, and women's association of higher risk with having a sexual liaison.

But it seems men can increase their chances by holding a guitar.

A recently published [study](#) had male confederates approach women in the street holding a guitar, a sports bag or nothing, and ask for their phone number.

Significantly greater compliance was elicited by men merely holding a guitar.

Additionally, when asked to rate men as potential partners for a short-term relationship, women at peak fertility [preferred creativity](#) (including musical creativity) over wealth in prospective partners.

A 2014 British [study](#) of 1,500 women with an average age of 28 replicated this finding, showing that women have sexual preferences for composers of complex music during peak conception times, but not outside this time.

Finally, of interest, studies suggest that higher levels of [narcissism](#) in

men correlated with improved prospects in courting a woman.

## Swapping the tail for a guitar

Harvard cognitive psychologist [Steven Pinker](#) has referred to music as: "auditory cheesecake, an exquisite confection crafted to tickle [...] our mental faculties".

[Evidence](#) suggests that this is the case, with music arousing feelings of euphoria and craving through dopamine release in the striatal system.

[Researchers](#) suggest that men who can play music display specific adaptive qualities, demonstrating excellent physical coordination and learning capacity.

Akin to a peacock ostentatiously fanning its brilliant plumage or a songbird vocalising a pleasant harmony, a strutting male rockstar generates an aesthetically and aurally pleasing performance.

Rather than demonstrating his capacity for survival, he is producing something that is mentally gratifying to others, and appealing to the opposite sex.

[Mick Jagger](#) and [Jimi Hendrix](#) were known for their musical ability, narcissism and sexual escapades.

Before the advent of birth control, these men would have fathered many offspring. Their genes would have multiplied in frequency through the power of attracting members of the opposite sex.

Charles Darwin's words from 1871 appear to ring true for male rockstars:

*musical notes and rhythm were first acquired by the male or female progenitors of mankind for the sake of charming the opposite sex.*

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