A six-year-old reminds us that Granny needs her music more than the John Lewis Dad needs a vinyl

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John Lewis may have got the message right, but Music for Dementia's Christmas ad, shot on a shoestring budget, reveals the missing audience

Music for Dementia has today released a powerful new Christmas film. Inspired by the John Lewis ad, the film demonstrates the unspoken power of music, but this time in the lives of families impacted by dementia. The Music for Dementia campaign conceived and shot the film in just ten days on a shoestring budget, casting friends and family in the film to show how music can connect generations.

The film opens with an old woman isolated and locked out of technology as she fumbles with a vinyl record and in a poignant moment, she contemplates putting CDs into her toaster. She is handed a children's audio player by her six-year-old granddaughter. With the simple inserted of a card, the Yoto Player (designed for kids but brilliantly easy to use for all ages), instantly connects her with m4dRADIO, a radio station specifically designed to give those living with dementia non-stop access to music from different decades. Immediately, the family shares a special moment of connection across three generations, and the woman's world becomes instantly brighter.

The six-year-old star of the film is Aria Wheele, whose mother, Peyton, works for Music for Dementia. Aria, who has no previous activating experience, says: "Being on set was like stepping into a giant storybook. I got to wear a costume, and help everyone smile with music, it was cool."

Amy Shackleton, Project Lead at Music for Dementia says: "John Lewis's Christmas campaign articulates something Music for Dementia has been advocating for years – that music connects us. It's great that they are helping shine a light on the power of music, but we're mindful that the people that need music the most often find it hardest to listen to because of barriers with technology. That's why we decided to make our own Christmas film - albeit in just a few days and with a tiny budget! We think it packs an emotional punch and hope it encourages families to help their loved ones enjoy the gift of music this Christmas."

Recent Music for Dementia research with 1,000 family carers of people living with dementia reveals the scale of the problem: only three in ten older family carers are able to stream music with their loved one [1]. Age UK research paints a similar picture – they found that six in ten internet users aged 65 or over never use the internet to stream music or videos [2].

Music for Dementia spent the last year working with families living with dementia to understand why they struggle to listen to music, redesigning its m4dRADIO interface in order to make it easier. It's part of the charity's Music Made Easy campaign launched earlier this year, calling on tech companies and music streamers to help older generations access their music.

It discovered that children's tech is leading the way in creating screen-free, tactile, intuitive devices. In May of this year Music for Dementia ran a pilot trial with 180 families affected by dementia, giving them each a children's Yoto Player and a Yoto card that when inserted, plays automatically, allowing them to listen to m4dRADIO in one simple move. 80% of families said the Yoto Player increased the amount that they were able to listen to music, and 92% of participating families would recommend screen-free music devices for older people.

Following the success of the Yoto trial, Music for Dementia is giving away 500 free Yoto kits, which include a 20% discount code for a Yoto Player, Yoto cards which give access to m4dRADIOs six non-stop music channels and handy stickers to attach to the device with easy-to-read instructions. To apply for a free Yoto kit visit https://www.musicfordementia.org.uk/yoto

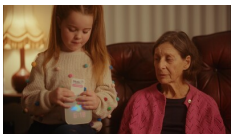
Dom Hodge, Head of Music and Sound at Yoto, commented: "Yoto's screen-free, intuitive technology was designed to empower children as young as three to access audio independently, and this pilot with Music for Dementia showed that it's equally effective at connecting people living with dementia to the music they love simply and easily without screens or complicated mechanisms. This powerful film perfectly highlights how simple, accessible tech can break down barriers and bring joy to families through the universal power of music."

In the UK there are 940,000 people living with dementia, and this figure is projected to rise to 1.5million

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by 2040. Research shows music can manage dementia symptoms such as agitation and distress, bring back memories and even abilities thought lost, create moments of joy and overcome isolation.

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