**How will football cope without the spiteful rants of this humourless, angry little man?**

**Some joyous news from Queens Park Rangers this week, amid the gloom of a relegation battle.**

After being booed off by his own fans before his team-mates staged a remarkable comeback against Liverpool, then dropped for the 3-1 defeat by Sunderland on Saturday, Joey Barton has decided to take a ‘little Twitter sabbatical’.

The midfielder tells us he is anxious to avoid saying something he’ll ‘end up regretting’. Presumably he didn’t intend this to be a joke, but it is very funny. After 4,598 tweets it’s a bit late for that, Joseph.

We shall miss him, of course. We will pine for the incessant, sanctimonious musings of Twitter’s self-appointed sage. As Lent draws to a close, it is we who will be cast out into the wilderness without football’s unofficial spokesman and resident philosopher to show us the light.

Will the game be able to cope without born-again Barton taking a sip from his cappuccino and casting judgment on the burning issues of the day, trampling over those who disagree and basking in the unashamedly ego-stroking nonsense of it all? We may not function properly without our all-seeing overlord.

In his attack on the media, published in The Times this year, a comically oblivious Barton wrote: ‘This is the medium of Generation Y, the kids today that will become tomorrow’s leaders. These are my people… I want to be one of them.’

It was a statement of such misguided arrogance it would have been amusing if it wasn’t so scary. Joey Barton, a convicted thug, the spokesman for my generation? What a depressing thought. This is a man who wants desperately to be a football thinker, a voice of authority who speaks and people listen. But, instead of replicating the enigmatic brilliance of Eric Cantona, another footballer with a violent past, he is often just Vinnie Jones with Wi-Fi.

Barton has tried hard, too hard, to shed the skin of the man who stabbed a lit cigar into a team-mate’s face at a Christmas party, served 74 days in Manchester’s Strangeways prison for assault and left another team-mate unconscious after a training-ground attack. The fact we still give his opinions credence is itself remarkable, but also a testament to his intelligence, determination and sheer gall. But, even today, it still takes more than a username, a password and a BlackBerry to change the world — and the world’s perception of you.

**WHAT IMPRESSION IS GIVEN OF JOEY BARTON IN THIS ARTICLE? (10)**

[](http://www.sabotagetimes.com/wp-content/uploads/thevoice_williamfull.jpg)**He may be responsible for some howling songs yet Will.I.Am's unintentional ridiculousness makes compulsive viewing on The Voice.**

Something has gone seriously wrong with [The Voice](http://www.sabotagetimes.com/tv-film/the-voice-lord-reith-would-be-proud/). It was supposed to be an innovative new platform to launch a previously undiscovered talent. I don’t know about you, but I couldn’t care less about the contestants, since most of them sing with all the tenderness of Ian Paisley shouting at a careless waiter. Instead, the only true star emerging from this ear-punishing ego-fest is a man who doesn’t just murder music, he destroys its corpse in a manner that would make Buffalo Bill want to sleep with a night light.

And yet here we are, celebrating the man who once thought nothing of punishing the world with the one-two assault of Meet Me Halfway and Boom, Boom, Pow. To be fair to the BBC, scoring a mentor of Mr I.Am’s status was something of a achievement, especially when compared with the usual level of influence exerted by talent show judges. As a multi-million selling, Grammy-winning singer, songwriter and producer, he certainly casts a significant shadow over the music industry, albeit one that looks as though a corner of his head has been cut out. The papers have been full of revelations recently that Will was angling for a permanent role on one of [Cowell’s](http://www.sabotagetimes.com/tv-film/simon-cowell-8-ways-to-impress-mr-nasty-in-bed/) ratings juggernauts. But since we now understand a little more about how his preferred judges get their space on the desk, Will was unlikely to do what was needed to secure a spot. Still, Simon’s loss is the BBC’s gain as Will’s appointment as a mentor on The Voice has single-handedly turned an overly worthy talent show into must-see TV.

Will has surprised viewers with a far more cuddly and accessible persona than anyone was expecting. Perched in his high chair, with his legs barely making it to the studio floor, he’s more like the Bo’ Selecta bear, but without any of that unsavoury tail business. Over the course of the last few weeks, he’s also revealed an uncanny knack for humour, although the jukebox jury’s still out with regards to how much of it is intentional. Either way, comments like “Wowsers, those are some pretty dope trousers,” and “You got soul in a bowl, you got soul on a pole” are still a lot more interesting than the tedious platitudes and half-hearted compliments that the other mentors manage to muster. Even if it does sometimes sound as though he’s channeling the spirit of Dr Zeuss. Whether he’s commending contestants on improving a “katrillion per cent” or flirting with a Glaswegian granny by telling her that he was “on the edge of [his] seat like melted chocolate” – there’s no denying that Will’s the real star of the show. That ridiculous Go Hard Or Go Home jacket might make him look like the Jetsons’ microwave, but it’s all part of his quirky appeal.

So who cares if he spends half his time Tweeting, when he’s supposed to be watching the performances? Once my ears start ringing, I tune out too. Or perhaps he’s just as underwhelmed as the rest of us by Reggie Yates’ chatter. He’s taking part, adding to the conversation and connecting with the viewers. Which has to be more fun than sitting through the performances. So I salute you will.i.am. I’ll never grow tired of your incessant ‘whoop whoop whoop’ noises. Because as long as the camera’s on you, I’m spared another shot of Danny’s rock-n-roll duckface, Tom’s occasional lapses into bewilderment or Jessie’s constant spotlight seeking. And don’t worry about the haters – they’re so two thousand and late.

**WHAT ARE THE WRITERS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT WILL.I.AM IN THIS ARTICLE? (10)**