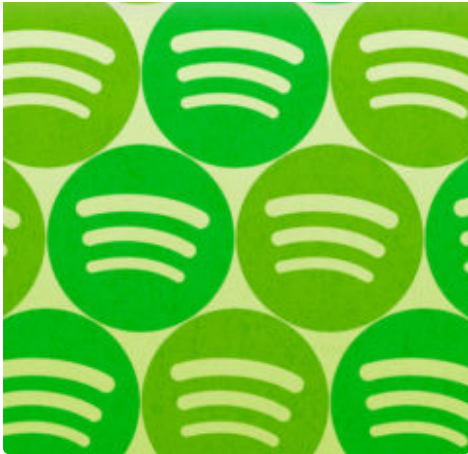




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# Spotify's Sorting Hat tool wants to help you make sense of new releases

Is an uptick in albums that help us relax a sign that we've gotten really bad at relaxing?

Feb 29, 2020, 8:09 pm\*

## Streaming



Audra Schroeder

[Spotify](#) is offering its users a new way to cut through the noise and see what's popular on the streaming service.

The company's new [Sorting Hat tool](#), part of the [Every Noise at Once](#) project that it bought in 2014, [offers a bit more insight](#) into the rankings and genres of newly released albums on Spotify.

Last week, Eliot Van Buskirk, Spotify's "[data storyteller](#)," [explained](#) exactly why users should check this organizational tool. He quoted data alchemist Glenn McDonald, the engineer behind Every Noise at Once: Sorting Hat, obviously named after the hat in [Harry Potter](#), is an "experimental attempt at an algorithmic organization

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of the week's new releases." Simply put, its purpose is to keep users in the loop about new music.

But one part of the service is seeing some particularly interesting activity.

We use the Internet for everything, so it makes sense that we often use it as a [sleeping aid](#) or to be more [mindful](#). A look at new albums for the week of Sept. 4 shows that, out of the more than 2,400 albums released, 282 of them fell into the environmental/sleep/relaxative genre.

282 × [environmental](#) · [sleep](#) · [relaxative](#) ...

Rain Sounds · [Calming Rain Sound](#) 37  
 Rain Sounds · [Listen to the Rain](#) 40  
 Rain Sounds · [Rain Meditation & Relaxation Sounds](#) 43  
 Rain Sounds · [Rainfall](#) 40  
 Nature Sounds · [Nature's Healing](#) 17  
 Baby Lullaby · [50 Classical Lullabies](#) 50  
 Baby Lullaby · [50 Classical Lullabies for Babies](#) 50  
 Sleep Baby Sleep · [Kids Songs](#) 39  
 Sleep Baby Sleep · [Waterfall](#) 35  
 White Noise For Baby Sleep · [White Noise for Baby Sleep](#) 42  
 Massage Tribe · [Massage Life](#) 50  
 Massage Tribe · [Massage Power](#) 50  
 Kundalini: Yoga, Meditation, Relaxation · [Relaxing Massage](#) 50  
 Kundalini: Yoga, Meditation, Relaxation · [Power of Yoga](#) 50  
 Classical Study Music · [Concierto Guitarra](#) 20  
 Classical Study Music · [Classical Music for Relaxation, Vol. 3](#) 48  
 Classical Study Music · [Back to School Study Music](#) 43  
 Meditation Spa · [Only Time \(The Best of Enya Themes - Relaxing Instrumental Versions\)](#) 20  
 Lounge Café · [Bar Hotel House](#) 28  
 Lullabies for Deep Meditation · [Moments of Meditation](#) 40  
 Lullabies for Deep Meditation · [Healing Sleep & Meditation](#) 35  
 Classical Lullabies · [Classical Relaxing Piano](#) 45  
 Spa · [Spa Sounds for Natural Relaxation](#) 41  
 Zen Meditation and Natural White Noise and New Age Deep Massage · [White Noise: Vivid Dreams](#) 37  
 New York Jazz Lounge · [Chill Out Café \(Deluxe Chill Lounge Selection\)](#) 35  
 New York Jazz Lounge · [Restaurant & Bar Music](#) 28  
 New York Jazz Lounge · [Chill Piano](#) 19  
 White Noise Therapy · [White Noise: Therapy & Meditation](#) 33  
 White Noise Therapy · [White Noise Sleep](#) 29

[everynoise.com](#)

*White Noise For Baby*  
*Sleep* was a solid pick, but

it also caused me to zone out and involuntarily drool a little bit while working. I can't say the same for *100 Chilled Cafe Beats* by Chill Music Universe. Their early stuff is better.

You might think that these types of albums are seeing a spike in popularity, but McDonald, the Spotify data engineer, told the Daily Dot in an email that he's "[n]ot sure 'popular' is the right term here!"

"I think it's more about ease of repackaging," McDonald said. "Soothing Piano for [study/sleep/meditation/babies/yoga/focus/concentration/relaxation]. You can take the same music and claim any of these purposes for it."

The insights gleaned from Sorting Hat, which updates every Friday, vary significantly from week to week, McDonald added.

"One week there'll be dozens of albums of rain sounds, the next week we'll

get a raft of archival folk collections, the next week there'll be a sudden blast of grisly death metal." he explained. "It's always interesting to scan down past the big-name stuff at the top to find out what else is happening somewhere in the world.

"If I had infinite time, I'd listen to a little of literally everything," McDonald said. "As it is, I spend a LOT of time scanning through a few seconds of many, many records both to see how the clustering is working and just to have a better personal sense of what it all means."

*H/T [The Guardian](#) /  
Illustration by Max  
Fleishman*

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Audra Schroeder is the Daily Dot's senior entertainment writer, and she focuses on streaming, comedy, and music. Her work has previously appeared in the Austin Chronicle, the Dallas Observer, NPR, ESPN, Bitch, and the Village Voice. She is based in Austin, Texas.



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