The background features abstract geometric shapes. A large burnt orange semi-circle occupies the right side. In the upper left, there is a solid olive green circle. To its left are two vertical olive green dashed lines. Below the green circle are several short, curved olive green dashes. In the top center, a green line forms a partial square or corner shape. In the top right, a small olive green circle is partially visible.

A Linguistic Look Inside Outsider Music

Emma McKibbin



What is Outsider Music?

Outsider Art

Encyclopedia Britannica describes it as:

"any work of art produced by an **untrained** idiosyncratic artist who is typically **unconnected** to the conventional art world—not by choice but by **circumstance**."



© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo credit:
Collection Foundation Dubuffet, Paris
[Source Link](#)

Expanded to Music

Outsiders often
suffer from mental
illnesses

Works
characterized as
“childlike,”
“primitive”

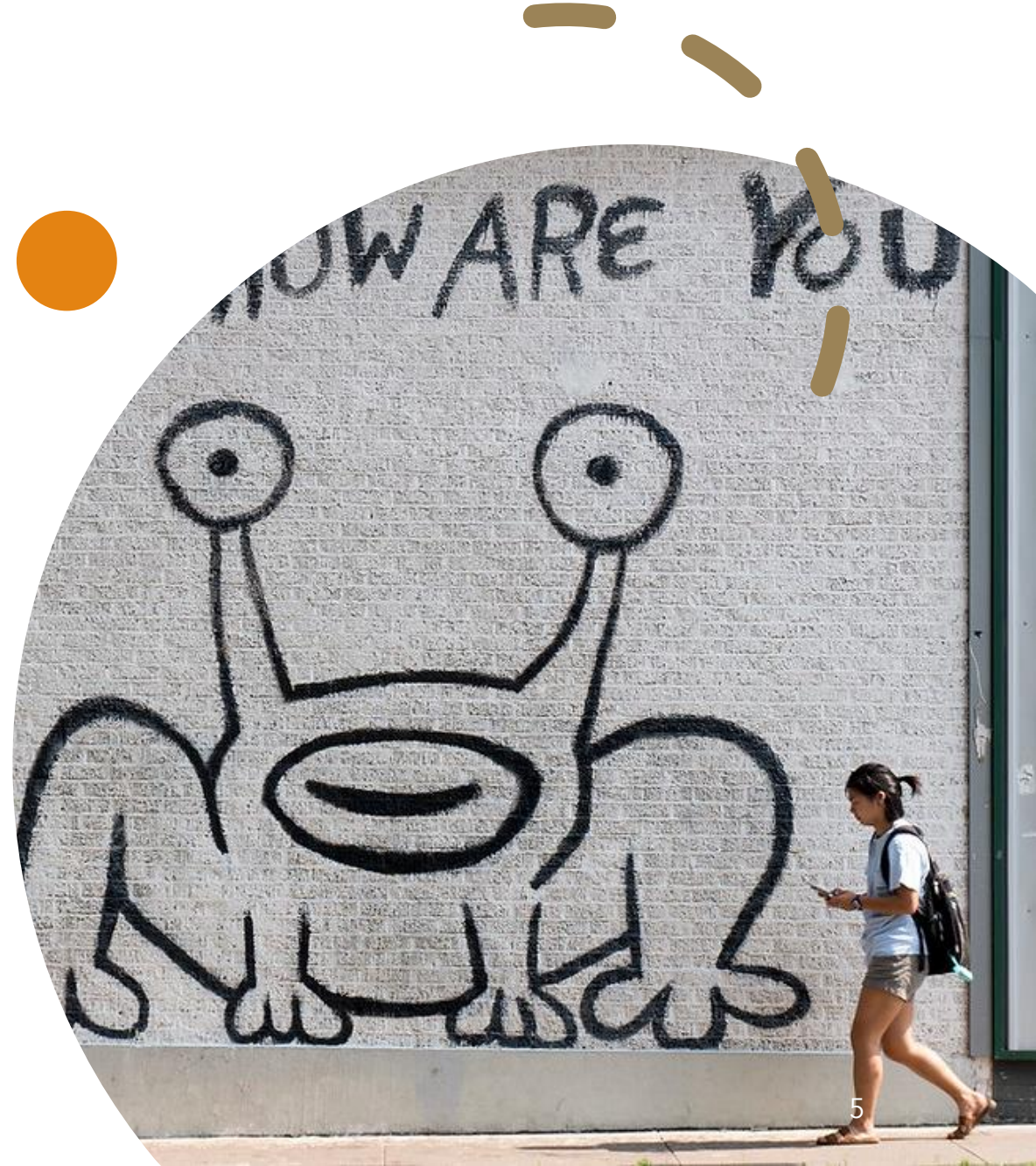
**“Not by choice but
by circumstance”**

- Self-taught, self-recorded, and self-produced

But it's hard to define...

Do these characteristics apply across the whole genre?

And can we determine that computationally?



Initial Research Questions



Looking within Outsider Music:

What linguistic trends exist within the genre?
*For example: repetition, nonsense lyrics, word
and text length, etc.*



Comparing Outsider and "Insider" Music:

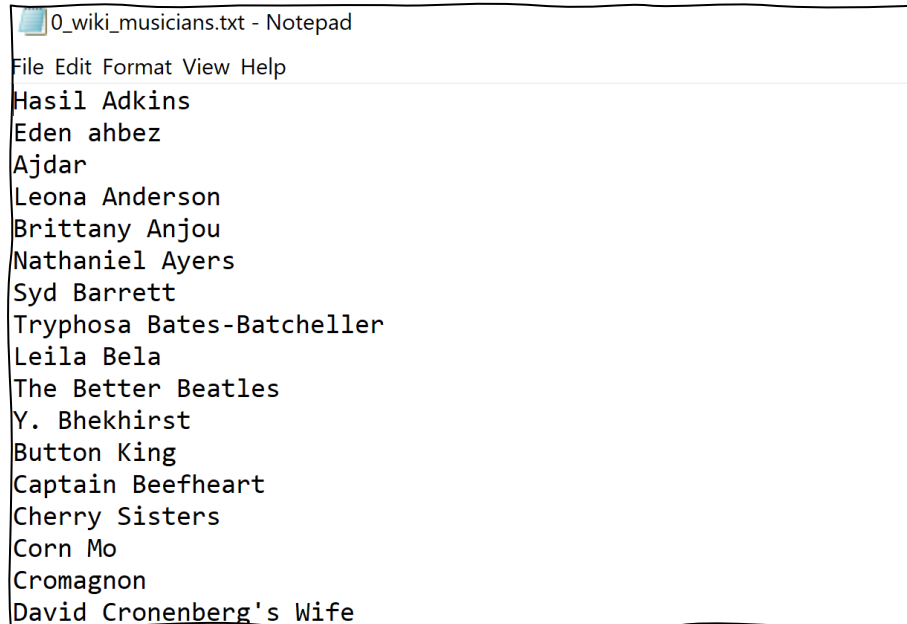
What characteristics distinguish outsider music
from popular music?
Binary classifier - *not included here*



The Data

Data Collection

Musician List



A screenshot of a Notepad window titled "0_wiki_musicians.txt - Notepad". The window displays a list of 111 musician names, one per line. The names are: Hasil Adkins, Eden ahbez, Ajdar, Leona Anderson, Brittany Anjou, Nathaniel Ayers, Syd Barrett, Tryphosa Bates-Batcheller, Leila Bela, The Better Beatles, Y. Bhekhirst, Button King, Captain Beefheart, Cherry Sisters, Corn Mo, Cromagnon, and David Cronenberg's Wife. The list is truncated in the image, indicating there are more names.

0_wiki_musicians.txt - Notepad

File Edit Format View Help

Hasil Adkins
Eden ahbez
Ajdar
Leona Anderson
Brittany Anjou
Nathaniel Ayers
Syd Barrett
Tryphosa Bates-Batcheller
Leila Bela
The Better Beatles
Y. Bhekhirst
Button King
Captain Beefheart
Cherry Sisters
Corn Mo
Cromagnon
David Cronenberg's Wife

- beautifulsoup4 and requests packages
- Retrieved from [Wikipedia](#)
111 artists
- Manually edited quotation marks and parentheticals

Data Collection

Genius Lyrics

- John W. Miller's lyricsgenius package and Genius API
 - Looped through musician list
 - Saved as JSON
- 40 artists were not found
 - 26 not found on Genius
 - 14 misidentified on Genius
- In the end, only 63 artists

- (F) Nat Ayer (Nathaniel Ayers)
- (F) Leia BLACKSWAN (Leila Bela) - this is K-Pop
- (F) LesCompagnonsDeLaChanson (Cromagnon)
- (F) DIVINE (Divine) - intended to be Pink Flamingos Divine
- (F) ROE (Marian Dora?)
- (F) Naomi Hale (Naomi Hall) - really wish I had these lyrics though
- (F) Lil Peep (Lil B) - This is popular Rap
- (F) Miguelito Angel Masso (Angela Masson)
- (F) Global Network Sophia Amato (Amaro Neto)
- (F) Sandra Phillips (Sondra Prill)
- (F) Smelly Ellie (Smelly)
- (T) Alexander Skip Spence (Skip Spence)
- (F) The Tillers (The Tinklers)
- (F) JPEGMAFIA (Wing)
- (F) John Reuben (Zapoppin')

Data Cleaning

- Load JSONs to data frame
- **What needed cleaning?**
 - "Song Title Lyrics"
 - "\dEmbed"
 - "Transcription in progress..."
- Stripping whitespace
- Replace "\n" and other formatting characters
- Remove empty strings or "instrumental"

	artist	title	lyrics
0	Abner Jay	Bring It When You Come	Bring It When You Come Lyrics\nTerrible things...
1	Abner Jay	Cocaine	Cocaine Lyrics\nFolk music is high-class music...
2	Abner Jay	Cocaine Blues	Cocaine Blues LyricsCocaine, Cocaine\nRunning ...
3	Abner Jay	Don't Mess with Me Baby	Don't Mess with Me Baby Lyrics\nTerrible thing...
4	Abner Jay	I cried	I cried LyricsI, I cried\nI cried in the ni-g...

t be a lover then I'll be a pest

Yes, I will4Embed

ake me

Leave me where I am, I'm only sleepingEmbed

the man on the border

Hey ho, huff the TalbotEmbed

ything

Cathy please come south and be my mateEmbed

solidarity is historical leadership identityEmbed

Transcription in progress by Viper Crackposting admins
Transcription in progress by Viper Crackposting admins
Transcription in progress by Viper Crackposting admins
Transcription in progress by Viper Crackposting admins
Transcription in progress by Viper Crackposting admins
Transcription in progress by Viper Crackposting admins

What did NOT need cleaning?

Foreign language data.

Language Detection!

Rudimentary Version:

- Detecting characters that can't be encoded in ASCII
 - Bad precision *and* recall
 - Found formatting errors

spaCy Language Detector:

- Better at guaranteeing a fully English dataset
 - However, many false positives →
 - Removed Swedish and Japanese

language: es

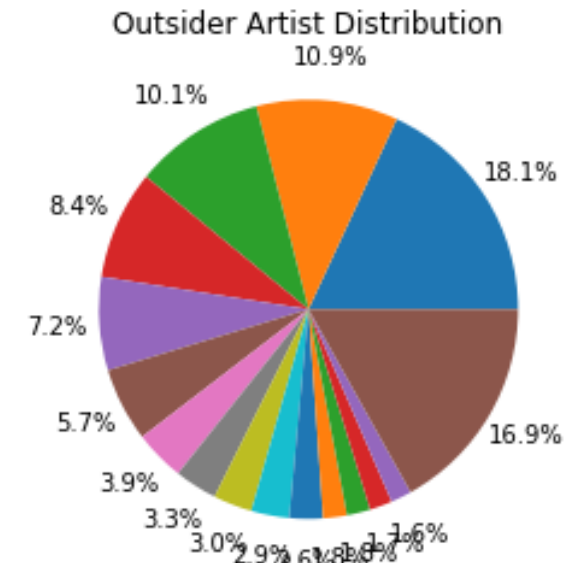
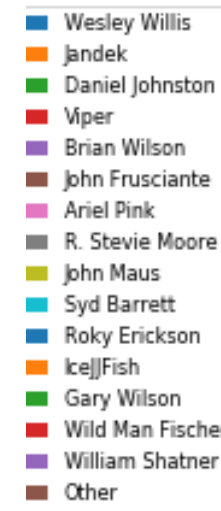
Deck the halls with boughs of holly Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la
'Tis the season to be jolly Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Don we now
our gay apparel Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Troll the ancient Yule
tide carol Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la See the blazing Yule before
us Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Strike the harp and join the chorus
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Follow me in merry measure Fa, la, la,
la, la, la, la, la, la While I tell of Yule tide treasure Fa, la, la, la,
la, la, la, la, la Fast away the old year passes Fa, la, la, la, la, la,
la, la, la Hail the new, ye lads and lasses Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, l
a, la Sing we joyous, all together Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Hee
dless of the wind and weather Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Deck the
halls with boughs of holly Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la 'Tis the se
ason to be jolly Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Don we now our gay ap
parel Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Troll the ancient Yule tide caro
l Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Fa,
a, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Fa,
la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la



Analysis

Beginning Analysis

- 3,102 lyric entries
- 62 unique artists
 - 561 songs by Wesley Willis (18.1%)



Popular Music

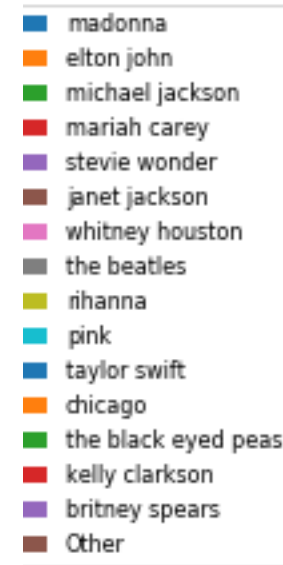
- Using Kaylin Pavlik's "50 Years of Pop Music"
 - [Billboard Hot 100 Dataset](#)
- Caveats:
 - Only the most popular music from many subgenres
 - Different cleaning schema
 - Apostrophes and newlines

Beginning Analysis

Popular Music

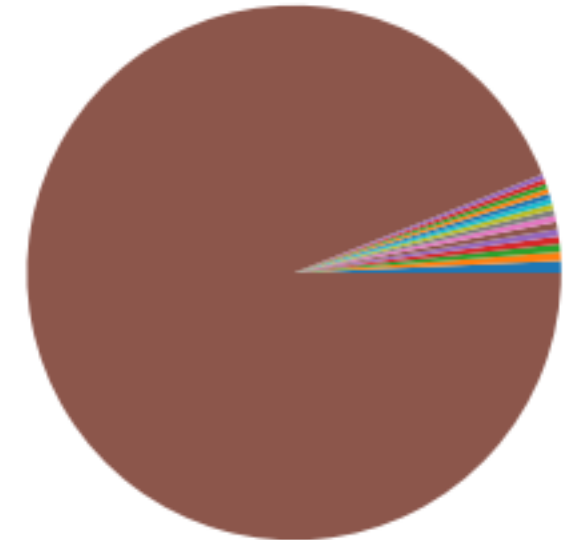
- 4,627 lyric entries
- 2,335 unique artists
 - 33 songs by Madonna (<1%)

No one artist dominates this data.

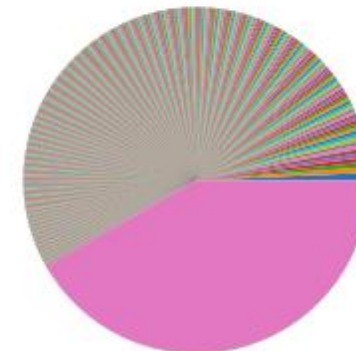


Top 15 Pop Artists Distribution

15 artists represent 6% of the data



Top 556 Pop Artists - Proportional Pie Chart

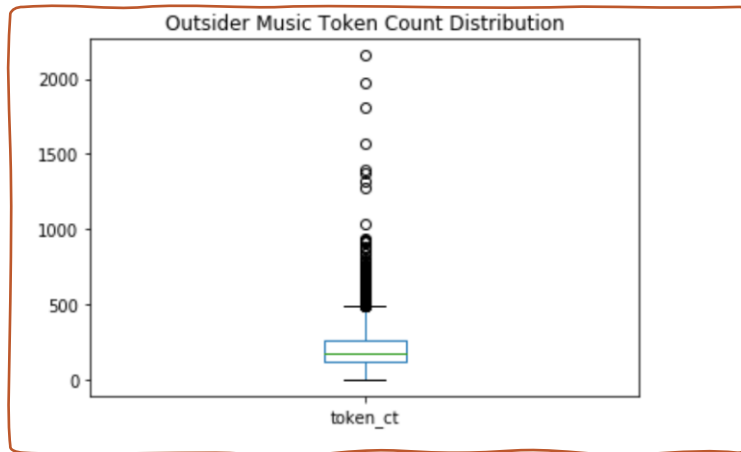


Top 24% of artists represent
58.3% of the data

Token Count Distribution

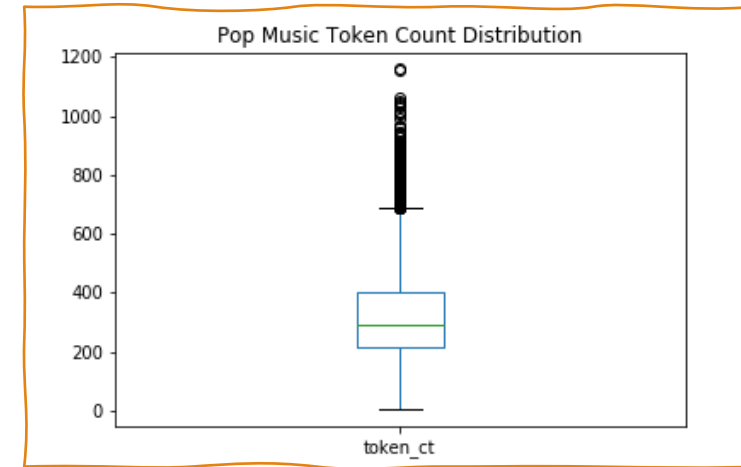
*Note scale differences**

OUTSIDER MUSIC



- Mean = 215
- Min = 1
- Max = 2155 (30 minutes long)
- 50% of data within 119-267 tokens

POPULAR MUSIC

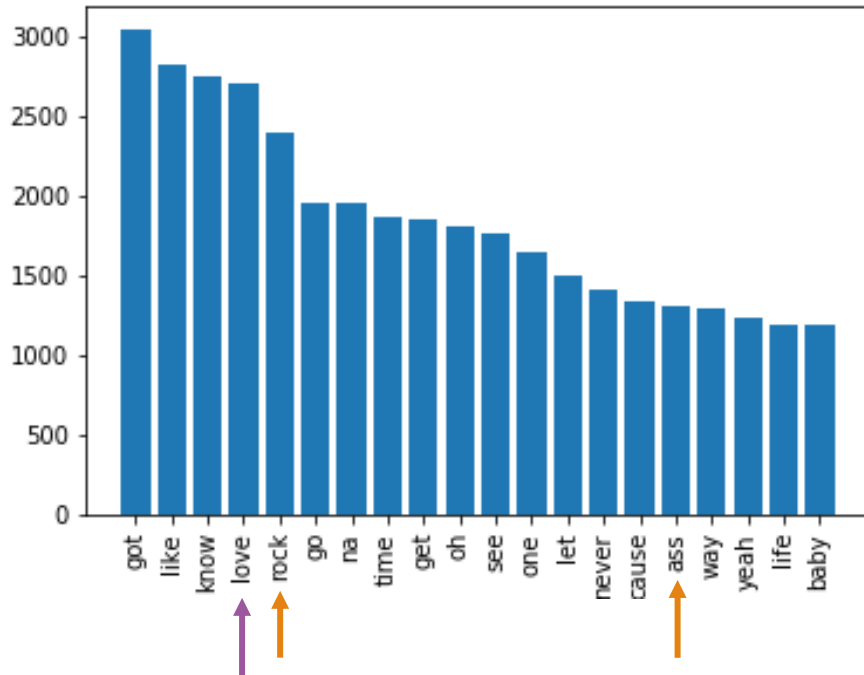


- Mean = 330
- Min = 5
- Max = 1158
- 50% of data within 214-403 tokens long

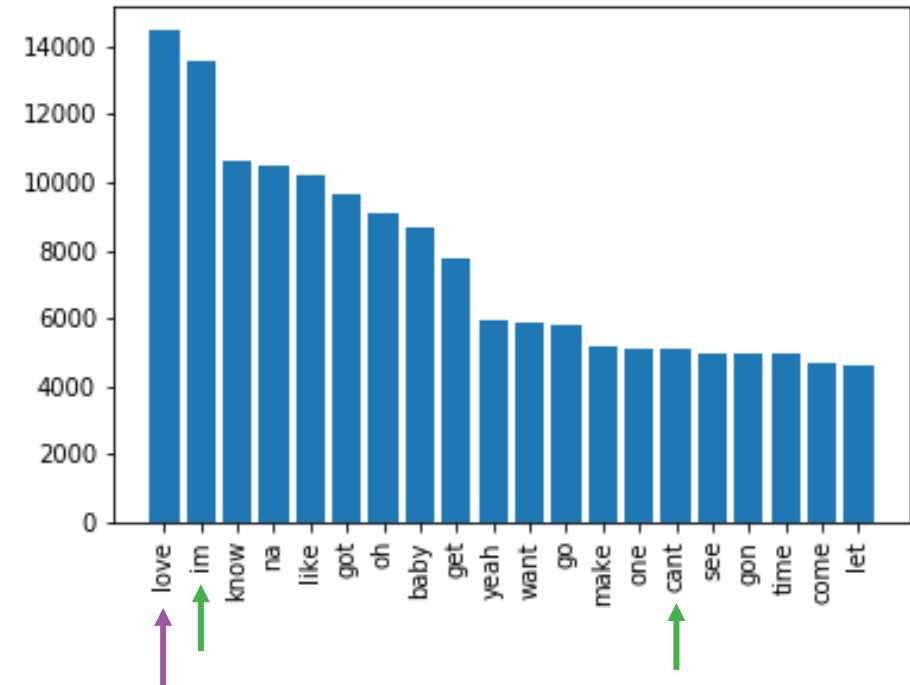
Most Common Words

without stopwords

OUTSIDER MUSIC



POPULAR MUSIC



So far... OUTSIDER vs. POP

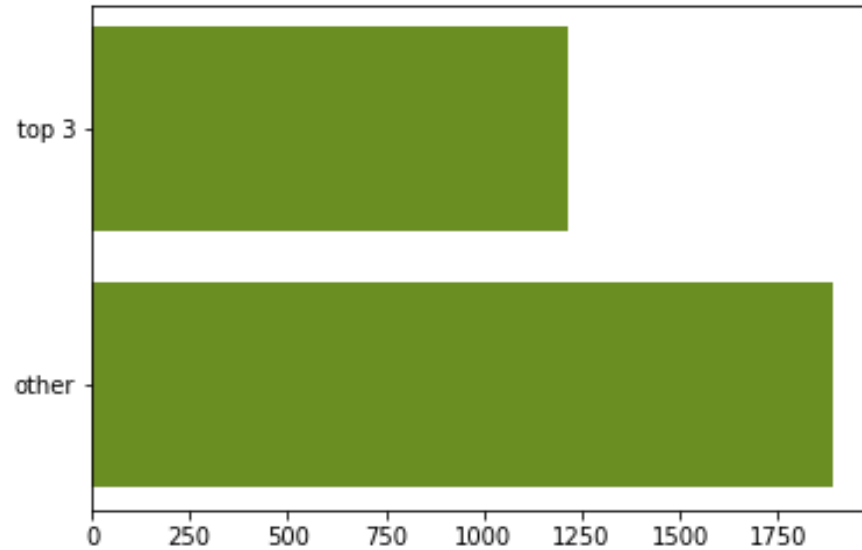
- There is some disparity in average text length
- Notable difference in most common words, BUT:
 - The artist distribution is very different for the two datasets
 - Pop is more representative
 - Outsider is more idiosyncratic and skewed



The Faces of Outsider Music

The Top 3 Artists

Wesley Willis, Jandek, and Daniel Johnston Songs vs. Other Artists



In the cleaned dataset, these 3 artists make up nearly 40% of the data.

- Three very well-known artists in the genre with idiosyncratic styles:
 - **Wesley Willis**
 - Jandek
 - Daniel Johnston

Rock N Roll McDonalds

Wesley Willis

[Verse 1]

McDonald's is the place to rock
It is a restaurant where they buy food to eat
It is a good place to listen to the music
People flock here to get down to the rock music

[Chorus]

Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's

[Verse 2]

McDonald's will make you fat
They serve Big Macs
They serve Quarter-Pounders
They will put pounds on you

[Chorus]

Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's

[Verse 3]

McDonald's hamburgers are the worst
They are worse than Burger King
A Big Mac has 26g of fat
A Quarter-Pounder has 28g of fat

[Chorus]

Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's
Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's

[Outro]

Rock over London
Rock on, Chicago
Wheaties, breakfast of champions

I Whipped Batman's Ass Wesley Willis

[Verse 1]

Batman got on my nerves
He was messing my day up
He was running me amok
He ridiculed me by calling me a bum

[Chorus]

I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass

[Verse 2]

Batman thought he was bad
He was a real stupid jerk
He was a real asshole
He got knocked to the floor by me

[Chorus]

I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass

[Verse 3]

Batman beat the hell out of me
He knocked me to the floor
I got back up and knocked him to the floor
Batman was being such a jack-off

[Chorus]

I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass
I whipped Batman's ass

Does this look familiar?

[Outro]

Rock over London, rock on, Chicago
RadioShack - "It's the technology store"



What's the Problem?

Perhaps if we were to only look at the top artists, existing generalizations would apply.

But what about IceJFish?

On the Floor

IceJJFish

[Intro]

You rockin' to a Headshots production

[Verse 1]

It's something about ya', girl

That just makes my head wanna twirl

You got me wanting to tell all them other girls

"There's nothing else better on this world"

The moment I seen her, I was in shock

So shocked you would've think that I've just been shot

Shot down right down in this spot

But too bad this doesn't happen a lot

Oh, girl, you got me visualizing me on top

On top of your hot body while we're sweating a lot

A lot of time on the clock before we would have to stop

Too bad she's not into that stuff a lot

Oh man, she's just super hot

Hotter than the sun that's right on top

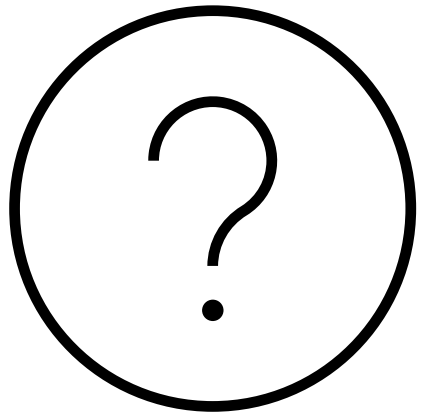
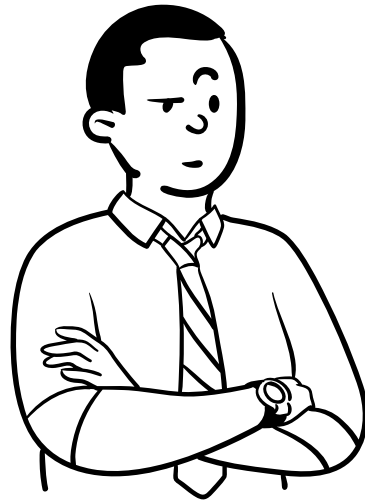
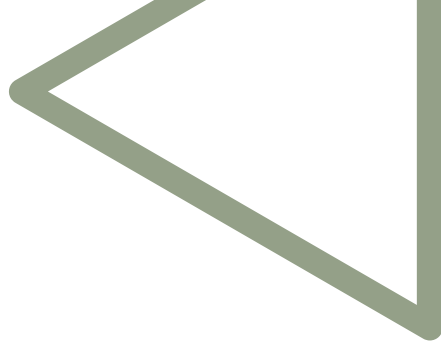
On top of our heads, oh man, there she goes, so I had to stop

And ask her some questions that I had in stock

- Represents only **1.8%** of the data
 - Many other artists with low representation
- Totally different subgenre

In the Future...

- Excerpt *at least* the Wesley Willis data
 - Analyze the possible effects of skew in the full dataset
 - Re-analyze the dataset with new distribution
 - How much do the trends change with less of a skew toward Willis's music?



Thank you!

Feel free to ask any questions