



Is Pitchfork Losing Its Edge?

An Analysis of Pitchfork Reviews Since Its 2015 Acquisition by Condé Nast

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SEARCH

Pitchfork Gives Music 6.8

SEPTEMBER 10, 2007 | ISSUE 43•37

CHICAGO—Music, a mode of creative expression consisting of sound and silence expressed through time, was given a 6.8 out of 10 rating in a review published Monday on Pitchfork Media, a well-known music-criticism website.



According to the review, authored by Pitchfork editor in chief Ryan Schreiber, the popular medium that predates the written word shows promise but nonetheless

"leaves the listener wanting more."



Arcade Fire

Funeral

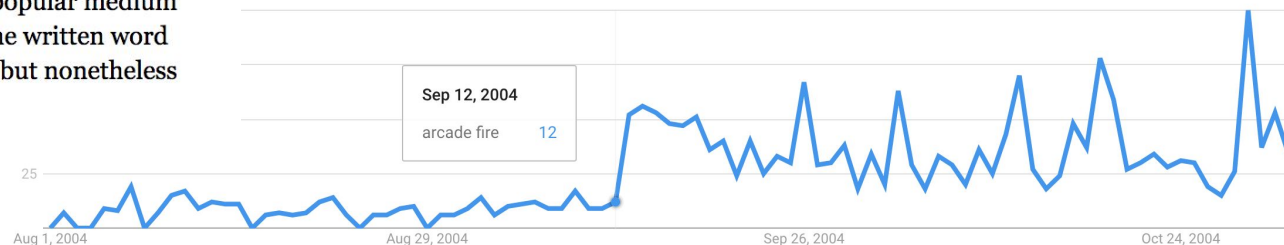
Merge; 2004

By David Moore; September 12, 2004

9.7 BEST NEW MUSIC

ARTISTS:
Arcade Fire

FIND IT AT:
Insound Vinyl | eMusic | Amazon MP3 & CD





[-] [Bladeis](#) 35 points 1 month ago

Longtime Pitchfork reader here! The lists this year felt different than usual, perhaps indicative of the music that came out, but also perhaps in part due to do the sites recent Condé Nast acquisition. Does the new ownership have any influence on list curation?

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[-] [PitchforkStaff](#) [S] 3 points 1 month ago

No, none at all, people at Conde Nast outside of Pitchfork learned of the list when it went live, the same time as our readers. -Mark

[permalink](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [report](#) [REPLY](#)

[-] [specialandfun](#) 34 points 1 month ago

you're still sell outs

[permalink](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [report](#) [REPLY](#)

the Atlantic

Pitchfork, the Reluctant Men's Magazine

Conde Nast says it bought the eclectic music-reviews site for its "Millennial males." What?

SPENCER KORNHABER | OCT 13, 2015 | MUSIC



Question:

Has Pitchfork changed its **scoring methodology** and **review content** since its acquisition?



Acquire
Data

Numeric Analysis

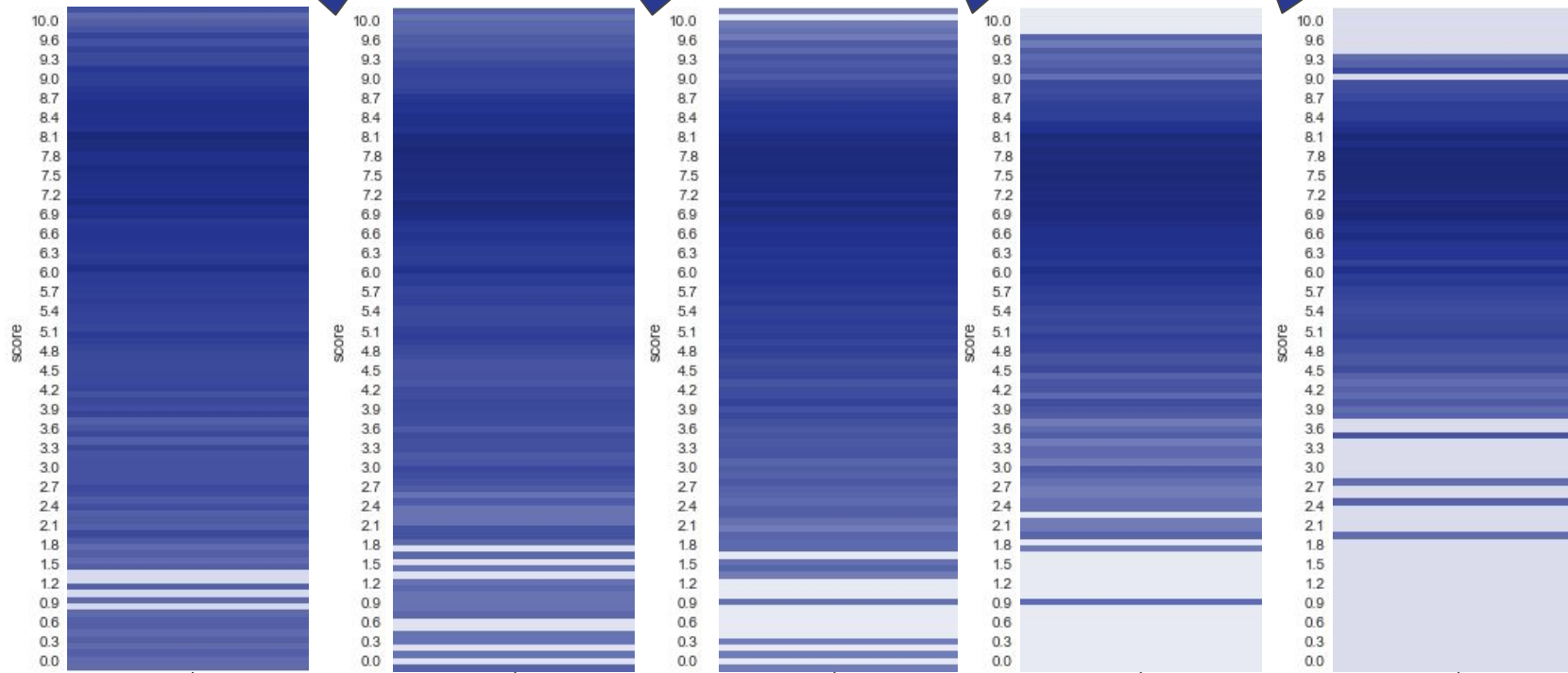
- Score
Distribution
over time
- Filter based
on number of
previous
reviews

"Best New Music"
Introduced

Launch of Pitchfork
Music Festival

Major Website
Redesign

Condé Nast
Acquisition



1999-2002

2003-2005

2006-2010

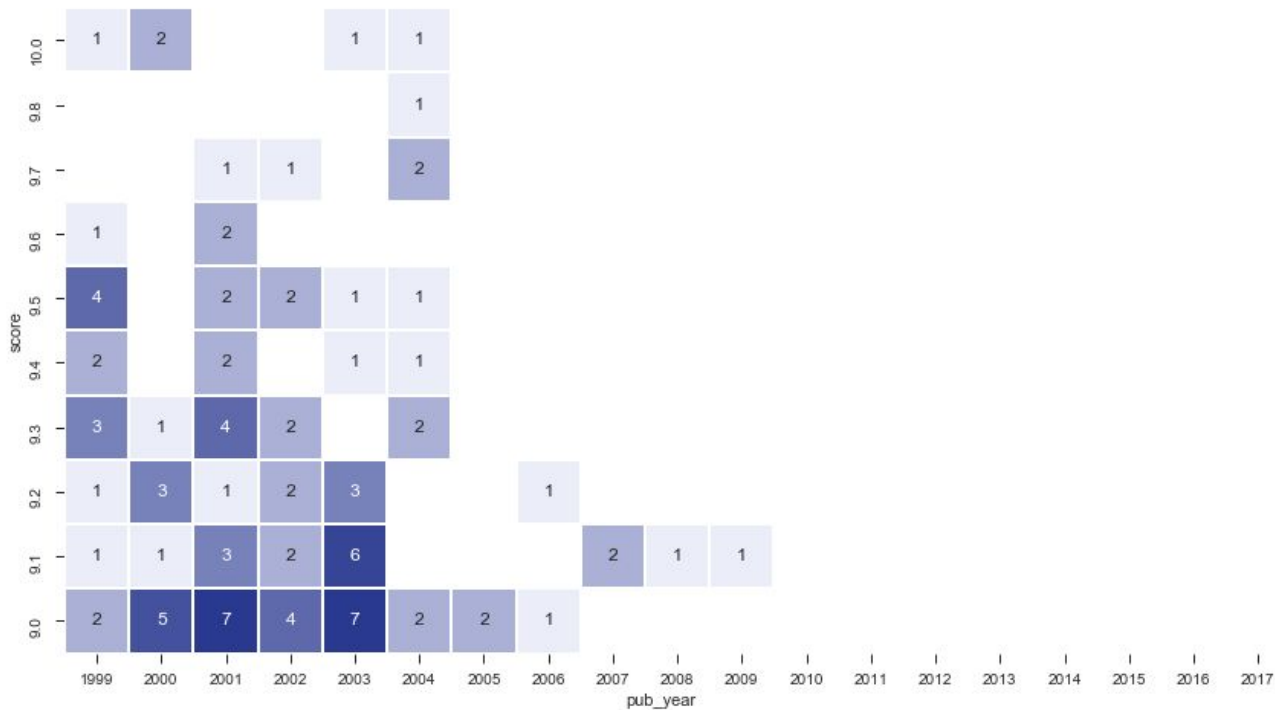
2011-2015

2016-2017



Does Pitchfork Still Gamble on New Artists?

Count of Albums Scoring +9.0 for New Artists*



* Artists with 0 previous reviews on Pitchfork at time of publication



- Score Distribution over time
- Filter based on number of previous reviews
- Part of Speech Tagging
- Sentiment Analysis

POS Tagging

```
abstract = """Sufjan Stevens has always written
personally, weaving his life story
into larger narratives, but here his
autobiography is front and center.
Carrie & Lowell is a return to the
stripped-back folk of Seven Swans but
with a decade's worth of refinement
and exploration packed into it."""

import spacy
nlp = spacy.load('en')
```

```
make_POS_df(abs_desc, nlp)
```

	word	POS	tag
0	has	VERB	VBZ
1	always	ADV	RB
2	personally	ADV	RB
3	weaving	VERB	VBG
4	larger	ADJ	JJR
5	here	ADV	RB
6	is	VERB	VBZ
7	front	ADJ	JJ

spaCy

Sentiment Analysis

```
abstract = """Sufjan Stevens has always written
personally, weaving his life story
into larger narratives, but here his
autobiography is front and center.
Carrie & Lowell is a return to the
stripped-back folk of Seven Swans but
with a decade's worth of refinement
and exploration packed into it."""

from textblob import TextBlob
TextBlob(abstract).sentiment
```

```
Sentiment(polarity=0.049999999999999996, subjectivity=0.25)
```

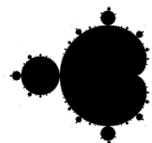
```
parse_sentiment(abstract)
```

```
personally,
Subjectivity: 0.3
```

```
larger
Subjectivity: 0.5
```

```
center.
Subjectivity: 0.1
```

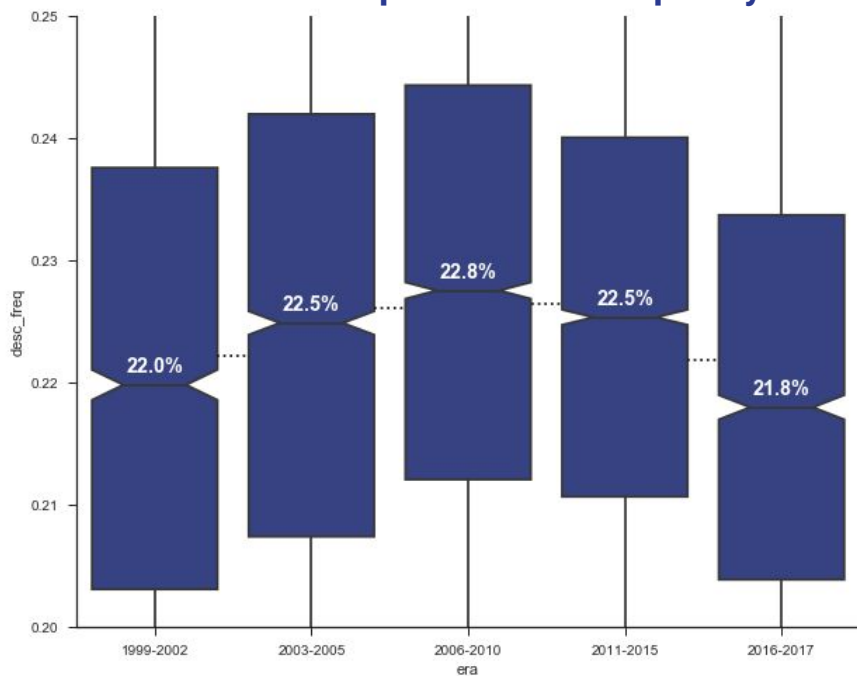
```
worth
Subjectivity: 0.1
```



TextBlob

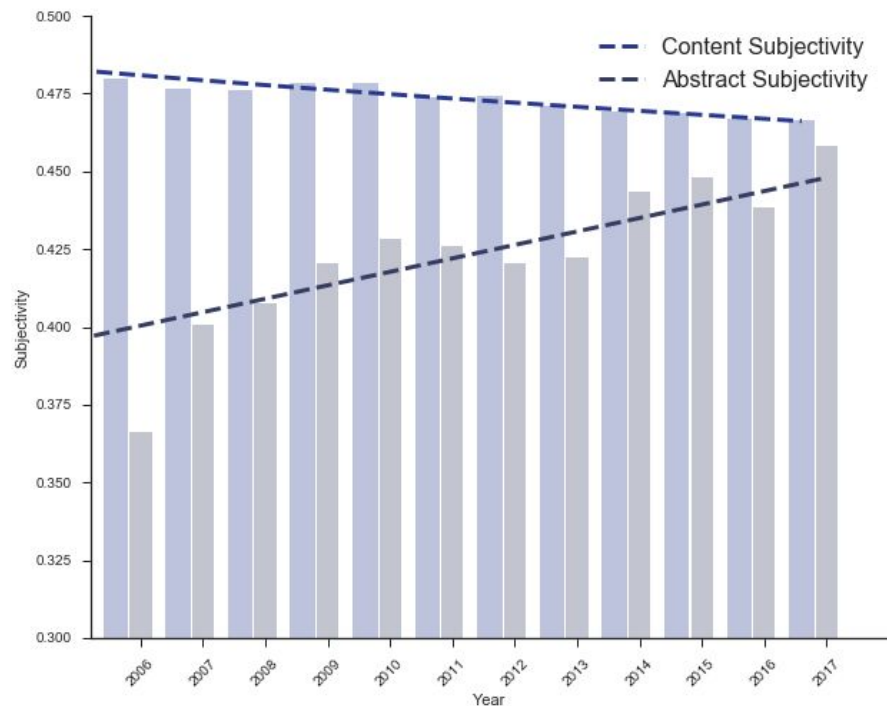
Part of Speech Tagging

Content Descriptive Words Frequency



* Notches indicate 95% confidence intervals for the median

Sentiment Analysis





Question:

Has Pitchfork changed its **scoring methodology** and **review content** since its acquisition? **Yes!**

- **The spread of the score distribution has tightened**
- **Pitchfork doesn't gamble big on new artists**
- **Pitchfork's language has become less descriptive and more objective**
- **Pitchfork has become more consistent in the Abstract**



- Score Distribution over time
- Filter based on number of previous reviews

- Part of Speech Tagging
- Sentiment Analysis

- How can I use my analysis to make Pitchfork a better tool for finding the Best New Music?



Pitchfork Review Recommender System

Need More Data!



spaCy



TextBlob

matplotlib

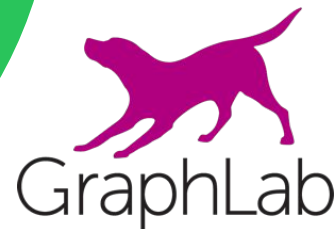
Pitchfork Data

- 19,620 Reviews
- 14,314,748 Words
- Average Score: 7.0
- 1,042 Best New Music
- 367 Best New Reissue

Matched 11,600
Reviews on
Spotify

Spotify Data

- Danceability
- Valence
- Energy
- Acousticness
- Release Year





Live Demo!



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LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/andybashford/>

