

Analysis of Spotify playlist “*vlak voordat ik sterf...*”

Dataset overview

The JSON file describing the playlist contains **5 444 tracks** contributed by various users between 2018 and 2025. Each track entry includes the song title, artist name(s), album, the user who added it, the date it was added, a Spotify *popularity* score (0–100) and the track’s release date. After loading the data into a dataframe, there are **2 912 unique artists** in the playlist and release years ranging from **1900** to **2025**. The distribution of songs added per year shows how the playlist has grown:

| Year added (UTC) | Tracks added | Comments |
|-----------------------|--------------|--|
| 2018 | 829 | playlist launched; songs heavily drawn from the 1990s-2010s |
| 2019 | 576 | steady additions, average release year similar to 2018 |
| 2020 | 646 | marked dip toward earlier releases (average release year \approx 2003) |
| 2021 | 896 | additions increased; average release year rebounds (\approx 2008) |
| 2022 | 825 | more tracks from the 2010s and early 2020s |
| 2023 | 625 | modest drop in additions; average release year continues rising |
| 2024 | 705 | introduction of many 2020s songs |
| 2025 (Jan–Oct) | 342 | additions so far; average release year 2017.5 |

Overall, the earliest songs are early-20th-century jazz and classical recordings, but most tracks come from the 1990s onward. The number of songs added each year has fluctuated, with a noticeable surge in 2021 and 2024.

Evolution of song release years and addition patterns

To understand how the playlist curator’s taste has evolved, it helps to look at the average release year of songs added each year. **Figure 1** shows that songs added in 2018 and 2019 have average release years around **2006**, while songs added in 2020 dip to an average release year of \approx **2003**. From 2021 onward the average release year rises steadily, reaching \approx **2017** in 2025. This indicates a gradual shift toward more contemporary releases.

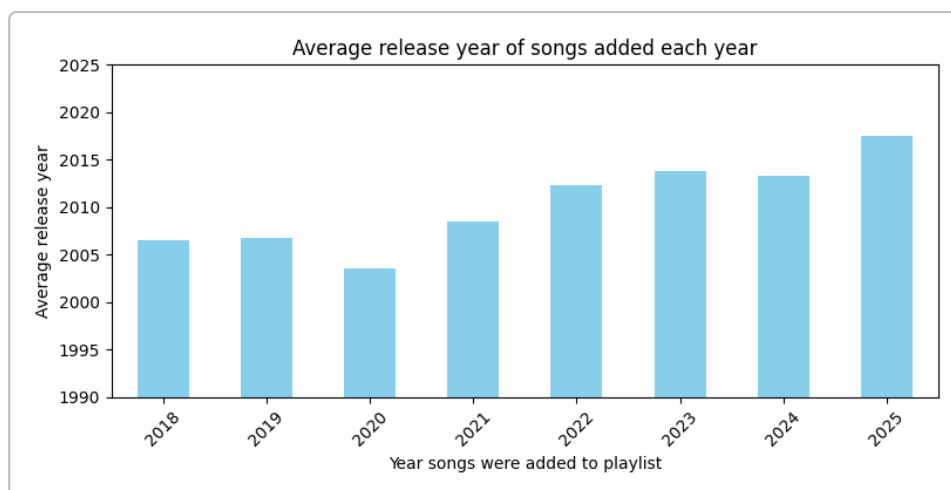


Figure 1 – Average release year of tracks added to the playlist each year. The most recent additions lean toward 2010s and 2020s releases.

Shift in release decades

When the release years are grouped into decades, a clearer pattern emerges. In 2018 and 2019 the playlist is dominated by songs released in the **2010s**, with substantial contributions from the **2000s** and **1990s**. By contrast, songs added in 2021–2025 increasingly come from the **2020s**. In 2025 almost 70 % of newly added songs were released during the 2020s, while the share of 2010s songs has dropped below 15 %. **Figure 2** visualises this shift using a 100 % stacked bar chart.

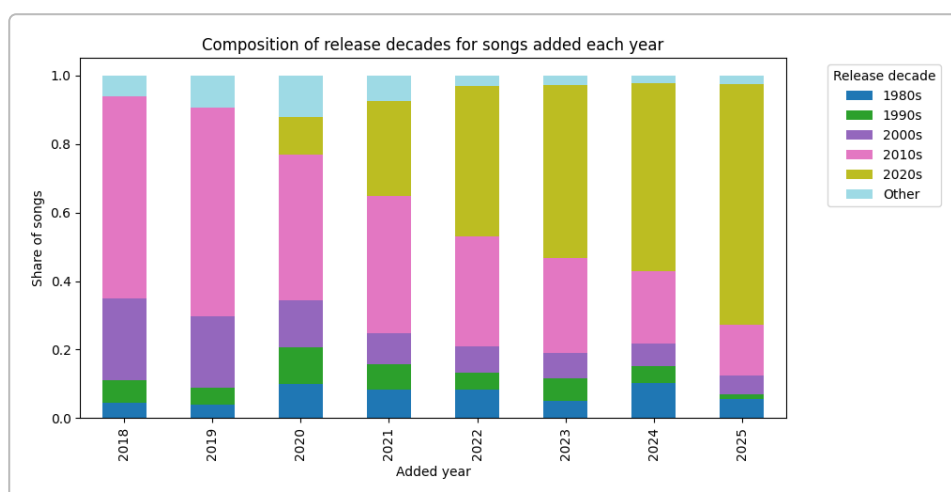


Figure 2 – Share of songs from major release decades among tracks added each year. The playlist moved from a 2010s-heavy mix toward music released in the 2020s.

The chart also highlights that earlier decades (e.g., 1980s, 1990s) remain present every year, reflecting the curator's continued appreciation of older music even as newer releases become more common.

Genre and regional diversity among top artists

Because the JSON file lacks explicit genre and nationality data, I researched the **20 most-frequent artists**. The table below summarises their region of origin and typical genres using authoritative

sources such as artist biographies, interviews and encyclopedias (citations refer to lines in the linked articles).

| Artist (track count) | Origin & notes (citations) | Dominant genres | Evidence |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| Fleet Foxes (34) | Indie-folk band from Seattle, Washington ¹ | Indie folk, chamber pop, folk-rock ¹ | The band's Wikipedia article states they are an American indie-folk band from Seattle and lists their genres ¹ . |
| John Maus (30) | American musician from Austin via Minnesota, active in LA ² | Synth-pop, lo-fi, hypnagogic pop, post-punk ² | Maus' biography notes he is an American musician whose style includes synth-pop, lo-fi and post-punk ² . |
| Dean Blunt (29) | English singer-songwriter from Hackney, London ³ | Art pop, avant-garde, hypnagogic pop, hip-hop ³ | The article on Dean Blunt calls him an English singer-songwriter and lists his genres ³ . |
| The Smiths (28) | English rock band formed in Manchester in 1982 ⁴ | Indie rock, post-punk ⁴ | The Smiths were an English rock band that fused 1960s rock and post-punk ⁴ . |
| Radiohead (24) | English rock band formed in Abingdon, Oxfordshire (1985) ⁵ | Alternative rock, art rock ⁵ | Radiohead's experimental approach broadened the scope of alternative rock ⁵ . |
| Panda Bear (22) | Solo alias of American musician Noah Lennox, born in Charlottesville, Virginia ⁶ | Indie rock, indie electronic, experimental pop ⁶ | AllMusic notes that Noah Lennox (Panda Bear) was born in Virginia and plays indie-rock/ indie-electronic music ⁶ . |
| Sade (22) | Nigerian-born British singer Helen Folasade Adu leads the band Sade ⁷ | Smooth soul, sophisti-pop, R&B | The article identifies Sade as a Nigerian-born British singer and leader of the band ⁷ . |

| Artist (track count) | Origin & notes (citations) | Dominant genres | Evidence |
|--|---|---|--|
| Interpol (21) | American rock band from New York City ⁸ | Indie rock, post-punk revival ⁸ | Interpol are described as an American indie-rock band associated with the post-punk revival ⁸ . |
| Beach House (20) | Indie duo formed in Baltimore, Maryland ⁹ | Dream pop, indie rock ⁹ | Beach House's biography notes that they are an American indie band whose music falls within dream-pop and indie ⁹ . |
| The Brian Jonestown Massacre (20) | Psychedelic rock band from San Francisco ¹⁰ | Psychedelic rock, garage rock, shoegaze ¹⁰ | Their page identifies them as an American band with genres including psychedelic rock and garage rock ¹⁰ . |
| Aphex Twin (18) | Richard D. James, born in Limerick, Ireland and raised in Cornwall, England ¹¹ | Electronic, techno, ambient, IDM ¹¹ | The biography lists his birthplace and genres such as electronic, techno, ambient and IDM ¹¹ . |
| Boards of Canada (18) | Scottish electronic music duo from Edinburgh ¹² | Downtempo electronic, IDM ¹² | Boards of Canada are described as a Scottish electronic duo from Edinburgh ¹² . |
| Amen Dunes (18) | Project of Damon McMahon, an American singer-songwriter from New York ¹³ | Folk, psychedelic rock, electronic ¹³ | A concert preview notes that Amen Dunes blends folk, psychedelic rock and electronic elements ¹³ . |
| Fontaines D.C. (18) | Irish post-punk band formed in Dublin ¹⁴ | Post-punk, indie rock ¹⁴ | Their biography notes they are an Irish post-punk band from Dublin ¹⁴ . |
| BEA1991 (17) | Multidisciplinary artist from Amsterdam; splits time between Amsterdam, London and New York ¹⁵ | Bedroom pop, folk, R&B, yacht rock ¹⁶ | An NBHAP interview states that BEA1991 hails from Amsterdam and combines bedroom pop with folk, R&B and yacht rock ¹⁵ . |

| Artist (track count) | Origin & notes (citations) | Dominant genres | Evidence |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Joy Division (16) | Post-punk band from Salford, Greater Manchester ¹⁷ | Post-punk ¹⁷ | The Music Fandom page lists their origin as Salford, England and their genre as post-punk ¹⁷ . |
| Tirzah (16) | English singer-songwriter born in Braintree, Essex; based in London ¹⁸ | Electronic, R&B, indie electronic ¹⁹ | Her biography notes she is an English singer-songwriter from Essex and identifies her genres as electronic and R&B ¹⁸ ¹⁹ . |
| De Ambassade (16) | Dutch cold-wave trio founded in Amsterdam ²⁰ | Cold wave, synth-wave, no-wave ²¹ ²² | Last.fm notes that De Ambassade is a cold-wave outfit from Amsterdam ²⁰ , while Le Guess Who? describes them as a trio (Pascal Pinkert, Aniek de Rooij, Jippe van Niel) producing reverb-soaked synth-wave tracks ²² . |
| Boy Harsher (15) | American electronic duo formed in Savannah, Georgia; now based in Northampton, Massachusetts ²³ | Dark wave, synth-pop, EBM, cold wave ²³ | The group's biography lists their origin and genres, noting that the band consists of vocalist Jae Matthews and producer Augustus Muller ²³ . |

| Artist (track count) | Origin & notes (citations) | Dominant genres | Evidence |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|
| Voice Actor (15) | Experimental project by Noa Kurzweil and Levi Lanser; releases on Belgian label Stroom ²⁴ ²⁵ | Ambient, spoken-word collage, outsider R&B, experimental | A review of their album <i>Sent From My Telephone</i> explains that Voice Actor is a collaboration between Noa Kurzweil and Levi Lanser and describes their work as blending spoken-word, plunderphonics, ambient drone and outsider R&B ²⁵ . Resident Advisor notes that their first album was sent to Belgian label Stroom and that they remain an elusive ambient duo ²⁴ . |

Observations on regional representation

From the table above, most of the top-ranked artists are **American** (Fleet Foxes, John Maus, Panda Bear, Interpol, Beach House, Brian Jonestown Massacre, Amen Dunes, Boy Harsher) or **British/Irish** (The Smiths, Radiohead, Dean Blunt, Sade, Joy Division, Tirzah, Fontaines D.C., Boards of Canada). **Dutch artists** (BEA1991 and De Ambassade) make a notable appearance, reflecting the curator's interest in their local scene. The playlist's eclecticism is further highlighted by the inclusion of a **Scottish electronic duo** (Boards of Canada), an **Irish-born electronic pioneer** (Aphex Twin) and a **Nigerian-born British singer** (Sade). These patterns suggest that while the core of the playlist draws from North American and British indie/alternative traditions, it also embraces experimental electronic music and European new-wave influences.

Popularity analysis

Spotify defines *popularity* as a score between 0 and 100, based on the total number of plays and how recent those plays are. A value of 100 indicates a track that is currently streamed very often. Figure 3 shows the average popularity of songs added each year. Until 2019 the playlist favoured obscure tracks (average popularity ≈ 14), but additions from 2020 onward have higher popularity scores. By 2025 the average popularity exceeds **27**, indicating that more recent additions include moderately popular songs.

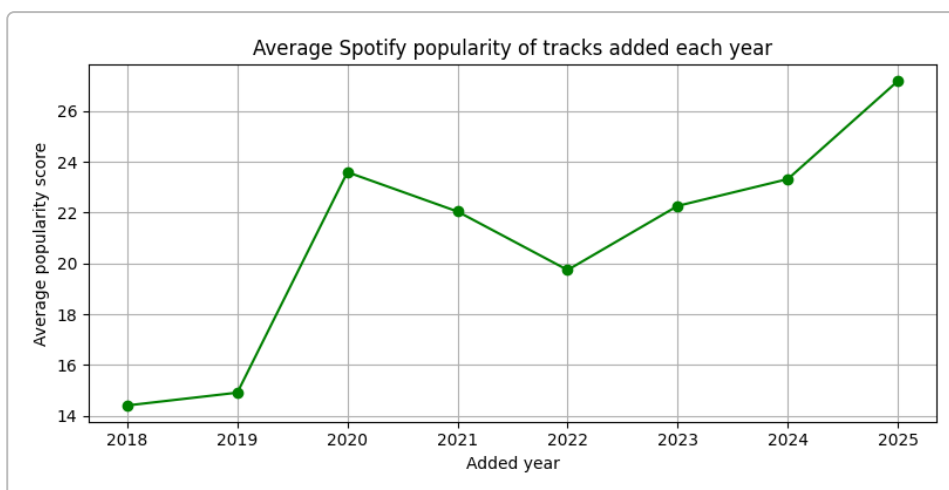


Figure 3 – Average Spotify popularity score of tracks by year added. The rising trend indicates that newer additions are more popular than earlier ones.

Looking at the **overall distribution of popularity** (Figure 4), over **41 %** of tracks have popularity below 10—suggesting many obscure or niche songs—while only around **4 %** exceed a popularity score of 60. The long tail of low-popularity tracks underscores the curator's preference for deep cuts and experimental music.

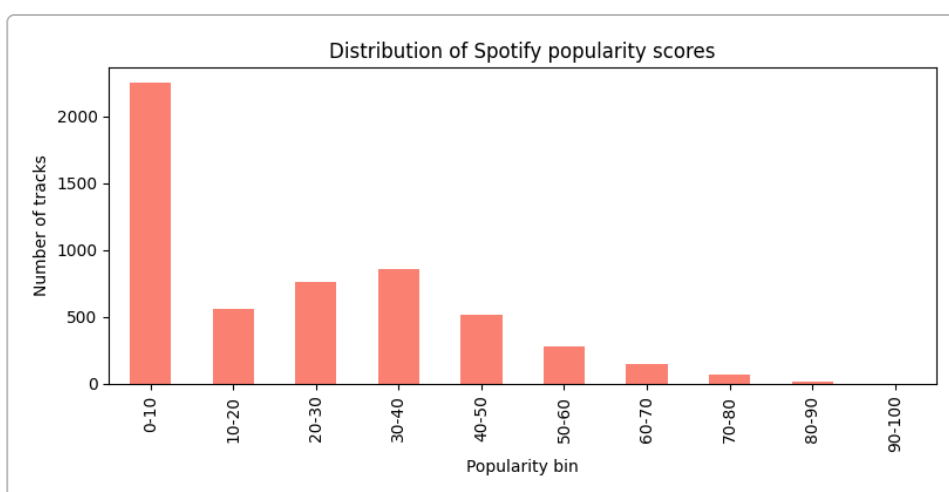


Figure 4 – Distribution of Spotify popularity scores across all 5444 tracks. Most songs have low popularity scores.

Popularity by release decade

When popularity is averaged by release decade, older decades (1950s and 1960s) show very high average popularity scores because they contain a few classic songs with enduring popularity. The 1980s and 1990s have moderate average popularity (~30), while music from the **2010s** and **2020s** averages below **20** because many songs are recent and still building streaming numbers. This illustrates that popularity scores are influenced by both historical significance and current streaming trends.

Trends in the curator's musical taste

The analysis reveals several patterns in the playlist curator's evolving taste:

1. **Shift toward contemporary releases.** In early years (2018–2019) most additions were from the 1990s and 2010s, but by 2025 the majority of newly added songs come from the **2020s**. This suggests a growing interest in recent music, possibly due to following new releases more closely.
2. **Broader acceptance of popular tracks.** The average popularity of added songs has more than doubled since 2018. While the playlist still favours obscure and experimental tracks (over 40 % of all songs have popularity <10), there is a clear trend toward including moderately popular songs, indicating a balance between underground discoveries and songs with wider appeal.
3. **Consistent interest in indie, post-punk and experimental genres.** Many top artists (The Smiths, Joy Division, Interpol, Radiohead, Fontaines D.C.) come from the post-punk and indie-rock continuum, while others (Dean Blunt, Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, Voice Actor) represent experimental electronic music. The presence of psychedelic/folk artists (Fleet Foxes, Amen Dunes) and smooth R&B/soul (Sade, Tirzah, BEA1991) shows that the curator values variety but gravitates toward introspective and atmospheric sounds.
4. **Regional diversity with a focus on the Anglo-American scene.** Although artists from the Netherlands and Ireland are included, most high-frequency artists are from the United States and the United Kingdom. This reflects the dominance of Anglo-American indie and alternative music in the curator's listening habits while still leaving room for local Dutch acts and continental European cold-wave (De Ambassade).
5. **Inclusion of emerging experimental projects.** The addition of Voice Actor—an enigmatic project blending spoken-word, ambient and plunderphonics—illustrates the curator's openness to avant-garde work. Reviews describe Voice Actor as a collaboration between Noa Kurzweil and Levi Lanser that blurs spoken-word, ambient drone and outsider R&B ²⁵, and their debut release was sent to Belgian label Stroom ²⁴. This willingness to include unconventional projects aligns with the large number of low-popularity tracks in the playlist.

Conclusion

The “**vlak voordat ik sterf...**” playlist is both expansive and eclectic. It began with a focus on late-20th-century indie and post-punk music but has gradually embraced more contemporary releases and slightly more popular songs. The curator maintains a strong affinity for introspective, atmospheric genres—ranging from indie folk and dream pop to cold wave and experimental electronic—and blends them with occasional soul/R&B tracks. The result is a playlist that offers deep musical discovery while increasingly reflecting current listening trends.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleet_Foxes
- 2 John Maus - Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Maus
- 3 Dean Blunt - Wikipedia
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- 4 The Smiths - Wikipedia
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- 5 Radiohead - Wikipedia
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- 6 Panda Bear Songs, Albums, Reviews, Bio & More ... | AllMusic
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- 7 Sade (singer) - Wikipedia
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sade_\(singer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sade_(singer))
- 8 Interpol (band) - Wikipedia
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- 9 Beach House - Wikipedia
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- 10 The Brian Jonestown Massacre - Wikipedia
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- 12 Boards of Canada - Wikipedia
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- 14 Fontaines D.C. - Wikipedia
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- 15 16 'Don't Get High In Amsterdam' - NBHAP meets Dutch newcomer BEA1991
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- 17 Joy Division | Music Hub | Fandom
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- 23 Boy Harsher - Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boy_Harsher

24 Voice Actor - Fake Sleep · Album Review / RA

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