

Walid Bendada — ML Researcher

98 rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud – 75011 Paris, France

☎ +33 6 50 53 09 75 • ✉ bendadaw@gmail.com • in walid-bendada-50b295132

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Summary

ML researcher with 9 years of expertise in building and deploying large-scale music recommendation systems. Track record on applying sequential and multi-modal machine learning models to real-world problems. Strong foundation in applied mathematics.

Technical Skills

Programming Languages: Python, Spark Scala, SQL & BigQuery, Java, Bash

Libraries and Frameworks: PyTorch, Numpy, Scipy, Scikit-Learn

Tools and Platforms: Google Cloud Platform (GCP), MLflow, Docker, Git, ONNX, LaTeX

Professional Experience

Deezer

Paris

Senior Research Scientist

2024–present

- Translated cutting-edge research, such as **Generative AI**, deep reinforcement learning and multi-modal models (audio, text), into app personalization features, resulting in measurable improvements in user engagement.

Deezer

Paris

Research Scientist

2021–2024

- Developed and deployed a scalable framework for large-scale automatic playlist continuation using **sequential neural networks** (e.g transformers), achieving a +70% engagement increase in A/B testing.
- Designed a novel exploration policy for **reinforcement learning**-based music recommendation, now serving millions of daily active users (DAU).
- Contributed to the theoretical understanding of sequential recommendation systems by analyzing the **mathematical properties** of embedding averages with a probabilistic approach.

Deezer

Paris

Machine Learning Engineer

2016–2020

- Built a large-scale **music recommender system** using collaborative filtering and vector search.
- Implemented **contextual bandit** models for optimizing user engagement on Deezer's homepage.
- Designed and deployed multi-modal neural networks to improve engagement for **cold start** users.
- Mentored interns and junior engineers, guiding them in deploying models to production.

Education

Paris Dauphine University

Paris

PhD in Machine Learning

2021–2024

Thesis: Sequential Learning For Industrial-Scale Music Recommendation.

Sorbonne University

Paris

Master's in Data Science

2015–2016

Centrale Paris Engineering School

Paris

Master's in Applied Mathematics

2011–2015

Selected Publications

- Walid Bendada, Guillaume Salha-Galvan, Romain Hennequin, Théo Bontempelli, Thomas Bouabça, Tristan

- Cazenave. *Exploring Large Action Sets with Hyperspherical Embeddings using von Mises-Fisher Sampling*. Proceedings of the 42nd International Conference on Machine Learning (**ICML 2025**).
- Mathieu Delcluze, Antoine Khoury, Clémence Vast, Valerio Arnaudo, Léa Briand, **Walid Bendada**, Thomas Bouabça. *Text2Playlist: Generating Personalized Playlists from Text on Deezer*. European Conference on Information Retrieval (**ECIR 2025**).
 - **Walid Bendada**, Théo Bontempelli, Mathieu Morlon, Benjamin Chapus, Thibault Cador, Thomas Bouabça, Guillaume Salha-Galvan. *Track Mix Generation on Music Streaming Services using Transformers*. Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Recommender Systems (**RecSys 2023**).
 - Léa Briand, Guillaume Salha-Galvan, **Walid Bendada**, Mathieu Morlon, Viet-Anh Tran. *A Semi-Personalized System for User Cold Start Recommendation on Music Streaming Apps*. Proceedings of the 27th ACM SIGKDD Conference on Knowledge Discovery & Data Mining (**KDD 2021**).
 - **Walid Bendada**, Guillaume Salha, Théo Bontempelli. *Carousel Personalization in Music Streaming Apps with Contextual Bandits*. Proceedings of the 14th ACM Conference on Recommender Systems (**RecSys 2020**).

Interests and Extracurriculars

Music: Co-founded a **brass band** of 15 musicians, performing regularly at local events.

Chess: Achieved a 1500 Elo rating on **Chess.com**.

Running: Paris half-marathon finisher.