

Yacht or Nyacht?: An Analysis of SiriusXM's Yacht Rock Radio vs. the Yachtski Scale

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Objective

To determine if SiriusXM's Yacht Rock Radio is actually playing "Yacht Rock", as defined by the Yacht or Nyacht podcast's Yacht or Nyacht list. Songs with "Yachtski" scores of 50 and greater are certified yacht rock.

Methodology

Data collected using a Python script that scrapes SiriusXM's currently playing page for Yacht Rock Radio, keeping track of play counts and cross-checking with Yachtski Scale scores in the Yacht or Yacht database. This script ran continuously from August 19, 2018 to September 25, 2018, being stored in a PostgreSQL database along the way. There were a few hours of downtime, and some issues near the end with ballooning play counts due to bugs on SiriusXM's end, but the data has been cleaned and deemed valid.

Data

Basic Stats	
Songs In Rotation	205
Total # of Scored Songs Played	127
Total # of Unscored Songs Played	78
Total Plays	13567
Song Played per Day	366.6756757
Average - # of Plays	66.1804878
Median - # of Plays	66
Mode - # of Plays	67
Average Yachtski	51.6738189
Median Yachtski	45
% of Certified Yacht(50+) Among Songs Played	28.29%
% of Certified Yacht Songs Played	15.89%

Figure 1
General findings

Top 50 Stats (by # of Plays)	
Average Yachtski	62.57151163
Median Yachtski	71.5
% of Certified Yacht Among Top 50	52.00%
% of Scored Songs Among Top 50	86%
% of "Essential" Yacht (85+) Among Top 50	32.00%

Figure 2
Findings among the top 50 most-played songs

Top 10 Artists Played			
Average (of Averages) Yachtski	58.4025		
Median (of Averages) Yachtski	68.2085		
Artist	# of Plays	Average Yachtski	# of Songs In Rotation
Steely Dan	789	84.875	10
Toto	614	74.5	6
Christopher Cross	491	85.8	5
America	460	15.475	5
The Doobie Brothers	440	90.833	6
Boz Scaggs	435	69.25	4
Daryl Hall & John Oates	406	37.375	7
Ambrosia	393	67.167	3
Gerry Rafferty	356	30.75	3
Fleetwood Mac	322	28	5

Figure 3
Findings among the top 10 most-played artists

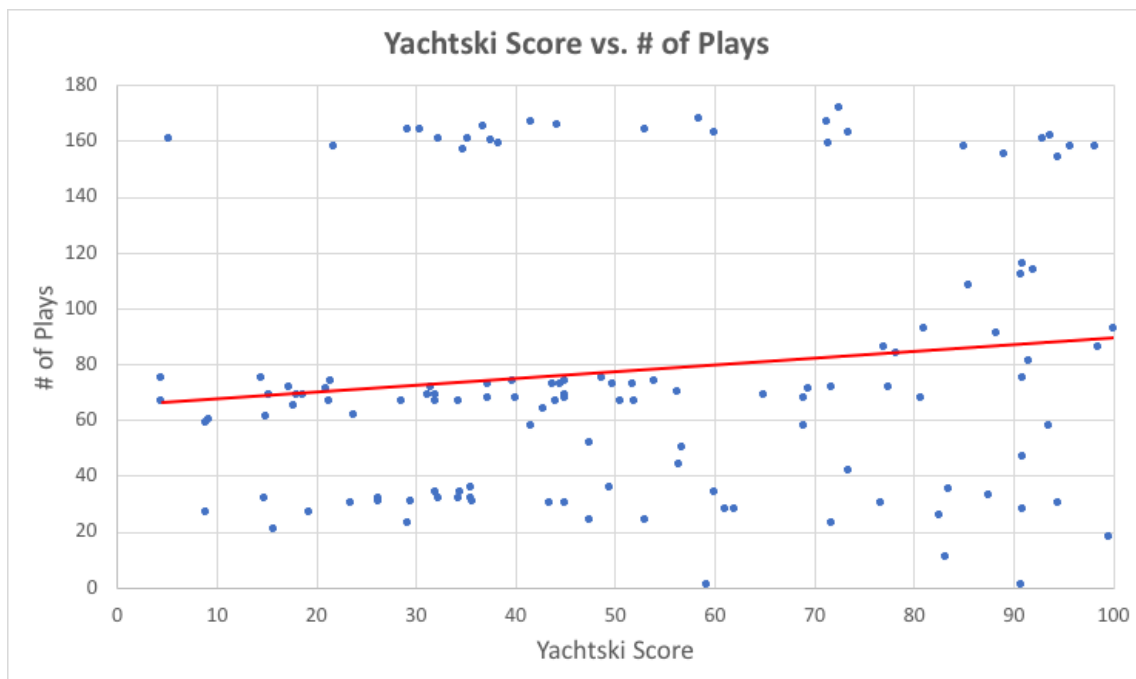


Figure 4
Scatter plot of Yachtski Score vs. # of Plays with trendline

Analysis

- Of the 205 songs on the station's playlist, 127 (~62%) are in the Yacht or Yacht database (whether scored as yacht or nyacht), only 58 (28.29%) of the songs in rotation are certified yacht rock. and a mere 15.89% (58/365) of certified yacht rock songs overall are in the station's playlist. [Figure 1]
 - This implies a less-than-strict adherence to the definitive Yacht Rock canon, as the playlist is small and includes many songs that aren't considered yacht rock. However, the fact that a majority of songs are at least scored in the YoN list does tell us that the songs that are played are generally in the consciousness of the genre's fans (who submit songs to the YoN list), who may feel that these songs are yacht even if they aren't exactly scored as such.
- Among the top 50 most-played songs, 43 (86%) are scored, 26 (52%) are certified yacht rock, and 16 (32%) are "essential" yacht rock (meaning Yachtski scores of 85 or higher – "Steal Away" by Robbie Dupree is my baseline here). [Figure 2]
 - This tells us that the station is "frontloaded," so to speak – many of the most popular songs are the yacht rock tracks that everyone knows and loves (or at least popular enough to be scored, and thus potentially contested as being yacht), but as you go further down the list, more unscored and nyacht tracks surface.
- 6/10 (60%) of the top 10 most-played artists have average Yachtski scores greater than 50. Of these six, four are widely considered to be "classic" yacht rock artists – Steely Dan, The Doobie Brothers (of the Michael McDonald era), Toto, and Christopher Cross. The four nyacht artists (America, Hall & Oates, Gerry Rafferty, and Fleetwood Mac) have very low averages. [Figure 3]
 - Hammering home the "frontloaded" point – the station seems to have a baseline knowledge of what defines yacht rock and "plays the hits", but also makes some big mistakes by heavily airing artists that are most definitely nyacht.
- Average Yachtski scores: 51.67 in general [Figure 1], 62.57 among top 50 [Figure 2], 58.4 among top 10 artists [Figure 3]
Median Yachtski scores: 45 in general [Figure 1], 71.5 among top 50 [Figure 2], 68 among top 10 artists [Figure 3]
 - Such scores are rather lukewarm, showing a large mix of both yacht and nyacht songs and indicating a more subjective perspective of what is yacht/nyacht on SiriusXM's behalf

- Very wide distribution of points when plotting Yachtski Score vs. # of plays, slightly positive trendline [Figure 4]
 - Backs up the previous statement of the wide range of yacht/nyacht songs being played – plenty of overlap between the station’s playlist and the Yacht or Nyacht list, but not enough to say the station is truly representing the genre by Yacht or Nyacht’s standards.

Conclusion

Overall, SiriusXM’s Yacht Rock Radio is not the best representation of what is yacht and/or nyacht, if we go by the canon set by the Yacht Rock podcast - arguably the gatekeepers of the genre. It “plays the hits,” but it also plays many tracks of dubious yacht rock merit. However, it must also be said that many songs played are unscored, and thus can’t be used for analysis – for all we know, they could all be scored later down the road and paint the station in a much better (or worse) light. But with the data we have, Yacht Rock Radio is more like a shallow, mildly controversial primer for the genre rather than a treasure trove for fans – you’re likely better off listening to a Spotify playlist.