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Discovery in Streaming Music: Reclaiming tastemaking for listeners in the Spotify era.

Last week, Spotify users were treated to the service’s annual “[Spotify Wrapped](https://newsroom.spotify.com/2020-12-01/6-new-features-to-unwrap-in-your-spotify-2020-wrapped/)” feature: a visual summary of an account’s listening habits throughout the year, including their most listened-to artists. New for 2020 are “in-app quizzes,” a chronological “Story of Your 2020,” and detailed podcast listening statistics. For premium users, “badges” will “crown listeners with various titles based on the ways they listened.”

“For example, if a number of your playlists gained significant new followers, you’ll be a *Tastemaker.*If you listened to a song before it was cool (aka hit 50,000 streams), you’ll get the *Pioneer*badge. And based on the number of songs you added to playlists this year, you just might become a *Collector*."

Their use of the term *Tastemaker* is particularly interesting. “Tastemaking,” a function once relegated to magazines, has taken a concerning bent in the Algorithmic Age. Very much contemporary terms like “[filter bubble](https://megaphone.link/VMP4291212808)” and “echo chamber” – applied more and more often to social platforms like Facebook and Twitter, now – can also be associated with music streaming services like Spotify, who’s “playlistification” of content has had a number of alarming effects on American culture.

In 2018, *The Baffler*’s Liz Pelly explored Spotify playlists’ gender bias in “[Discover Weekly](https://thebaffler.com/latest/discover-weakly-pelly):”

“On Today’s Top Hits, I found that over the course of one month, 64.5 percent of the tracks were by men as the lead artist, with 20 percent by women and 15.5 percent relying on collaborations between men and women artists. When all features were taken into consideration, I found that 85.5 percent of tracks included men artists, while only 45.5 percent included women. This was one of the highest percentages of women artists out of all the playlists I examined.”