

Why We Dance: A Model on Spotify R&B Artists

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1. Introduction

People listen to music for a variety of reasons. Colley et al. (2022) looked into what descriptive features of the song contribute to its popularity. Their finding suggests that higher energy and danceability generally lead to higher appeals across platforms. Duman et al. (2022) investigated what factors lead people to listen to dance music. They found that dance music has, among other things, significantly higher levels of energy and loudness. While we do not have direct data indicating a song's popularity, we are interested in something similar. Namely, we want to see if energy and loudness contribute to danceability in any way for specific R&B artists that we are interested in: Gladys Knight & The Pips, Stevie Wonder, and The Temptations.²

2. Methods

a. Data

In this short report, we continued using data sourced from [Spotify](#), a widely used music streaming platform, focusing on R&B music. We highlight the crossover variable. It indicates whether a song ranked in the top 20 on both the Pop and R&B charts, meaning it was successful in both genres or "crossed over." See Appendix A for variable descriptions.

b. Exploratory Analysis

In order to explore the relationship between explanatory variables (Loudness, Energy, and Crossover category) and the response variable (Danceability), we generated scatterplots to visually check these relationships.

We plot the danceability of a song against its energy and loudness, respectively, in Figure 1 and 2, both separated by if a song is a crossover hit. This allows us to investigate whether the Crossover Category affects the relationship between Energy and Danceability. From Figure 1, while we do not see clear line trends, the relationship between Energy and Danceability seems more positive on non-crossover songs compared to crossover songs. We hypothesize that there is an association between energy and danceability. Furthermore, the effect of energy depends on if a song is a crossover hit.

Figure 2 is the scatterplots of Loudness versus Danceability, separated by Crossover Category (Y/N). On the two scatterplots, there appears to be some weak negative relationship between Loudness and Danceability. Unlike Figure 1, however, we do not see a systematic difference between whether or not a song is a crossover hit. We, therefore, hypothesize that loudness affects danceability, to some extent.

¹ The R code used for this project can be found on this [GitHub Repository](#).

² We used artists that our R&B class partners were assigned (Gladys Knight & The Pips from Kunwu's partner and Stevie Wonder & The Temptations from Dongyoung's partner).

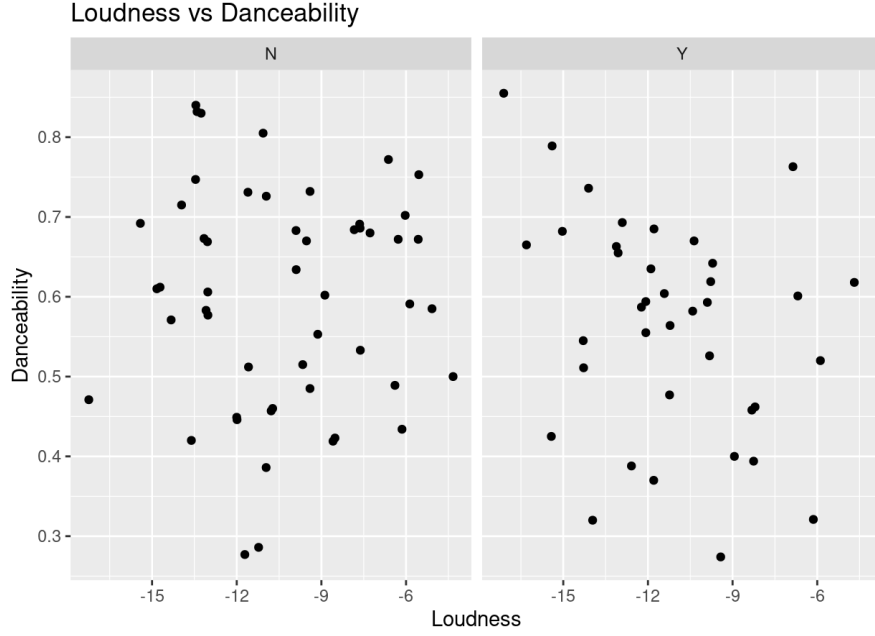


Figure 1: Danceability vs. Loudness

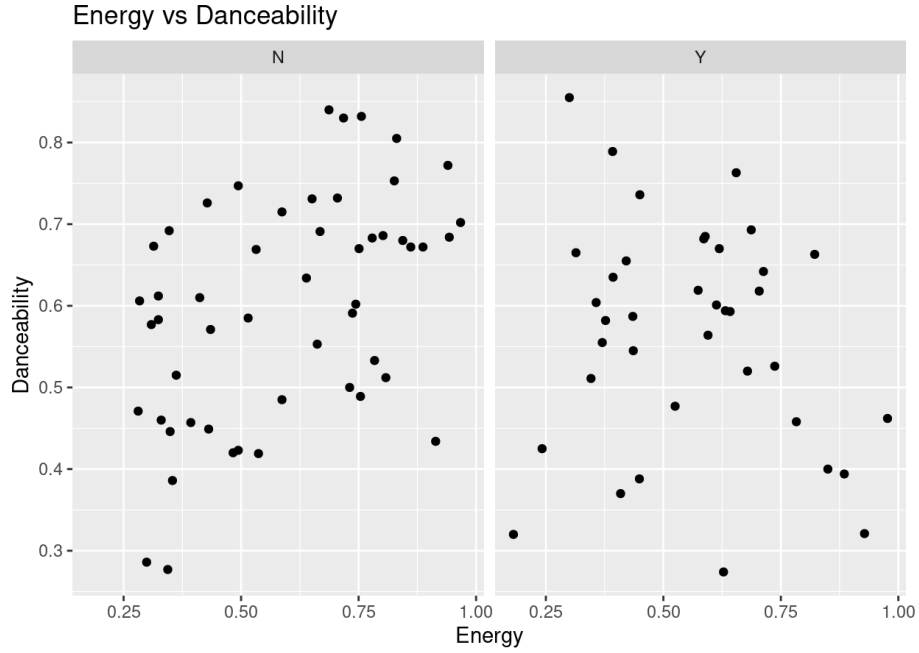


Figure 2: Danceability vs. Energy

c. Multiple Linear Regression

We give the proposed multiple regression model as follows:

$$\text{Danceability} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Loudness} + \beta_2 \text{Energy} + \beta_3 \mathbb{1}(\text{Crossover} = \text{"Yes"}) + \beta_4 \mathbb{1}(\text{Crossover} = \text{"Yes"}) \times \text{Loudness} + \epsilon, \epsilon \stackrel{\text{i.i.d.}}{\sim} N(0, 1).$$

3. Results

Our model shows good signs of overall fit ($F(4, 58) = 8.72, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.29$).

a. Assumption Checking

We perform a residual analysis to verify our least squares assumptions. From Figure 3, we see that the residuals of both of our explanatory variables and the fitted values show signs of random scatter, indicating that the linearity and homoskedasticity assumptions are satisfied. From the normal $Q-Q$ plot, we see that the normality assumption is satisfied.³

As for the independence assumption, we grouped the residuals by artists and years to check for cluster and serial dependence. From Figure 4, we do not see evidence that the residuals depend on artists. Similar for years, the residuals show signs of random scatter. Therefore, our model assumptions are satisfied, and there is no need for transformations.

Residual Plot and Normal Q-Q Plot of Spotify MLR

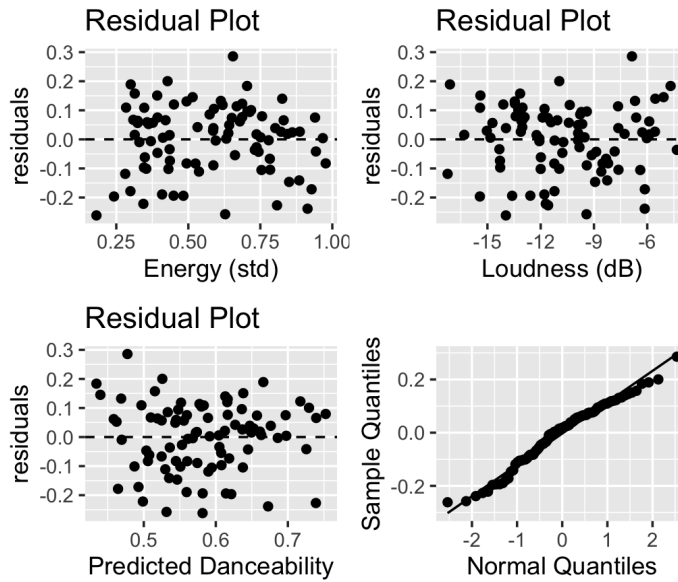
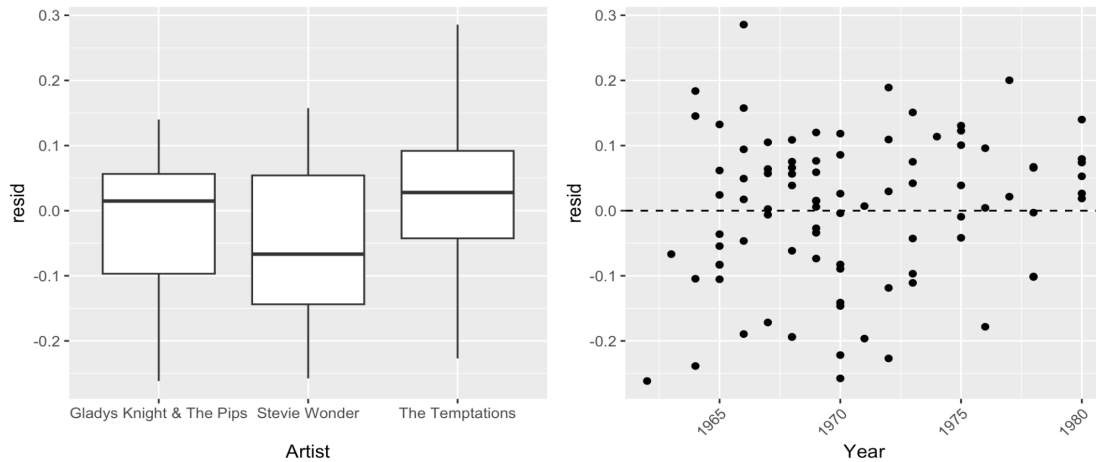


Figure 3: Residual Plots and Normal $Q-Q$ Plots



³ Though it is a bit heavy-tailed, our sample size ($N = 90$) ensures that this is not a concern.

Figure 4: Residuals by Artists and Year

b. Interpretation

The results of our regression coefficients are given in Table 1. We have strong evidence that increasing loudness by one decibel is associated with a mean *decrease* of 0.02 in danceability, after controlling for energy, whether or not a song is a crossover, and their interactions ($t = -4$, $p < 0.001$).⁴ Similarly for energy, there is strong evidence that a unit increase in energy is associated with a mean increase of 0.52 units in danceability, controlling other variables ($t = 5.5$, $p < 0.001$). This is a very large effect, considering that danceability ranges from 0 to 1. Interestingly, we also found moderately significant evidence that the effect of energy on danceability depends on whether or not this is a crossover song ($t = -3.2$, $p < 0.01$), confirming our conjecture earlier in section 2. A one-way ANOVA also reveals that the effect of energy does depend on whether the song is a crossover hit ($F = 6.67$, $d.f. = 2, 85$, $p = 0.002$). Specifically, the effect of energy on danceability increases when it is a crossover hit. There is also some evidence that fixing loudness and energy, whether or not this is a crossover song is associated with danceability ($t = 2.5$, $p < 0.05$).

	Estimate	Standard Error	t value	p -value (two-sided)
Intercept	0.056	0.103	0.548	0.585
Loudness	-0.022	0.006	-4.025	1×10^{-4} ***
Energy	0.524	0.095	5.503	3.88×10^{-7} ***
Crossover (Y)	0.192	0.077	2.501	0.014 *
Energy * Crossover (Y)	-0.408	0.126	-3.245	0.002 **

Table 1. Regression Coefficients

4. Discussion

As you can see from Appendix A, the concept of Energy includes that of Loudness, so it is not a big surprise that they showed similar results. We can say these two variables are dependent. One way to improve this report would be to choose another explanatory variable and observe its relationship with Danceability.

Appendix A

Variable	Description
Danceability	How well a track is suited for dancing, determined by various musical factors like tempo, rhythm stability, beat strength, and overall consistency. It is measured on a scale

⁴ It is important to note that while this is a statistically significant effect, its effect seems largely marginal. It is hard to predict anything without looking into how the danceability variable is defined.

	from 0.0 (least danceable) to 1.0 (most danceable).
Energy	Rated between 0.0 and 1.0, representing the perceived intensity and activity of a song. High-energy tracks are often fast, loud, and dynamic. For instance, death metal has high energy, whereas a Bach prelude has low energy. Factors influencing this measure include dynamic range, perceived loudness, timbre, onset rate, and overall entropy.
Loudness	Measured in decibels (dB), is the average volume level of a track throughout its duration. It helps in comparing the relative loudness between tracks. Loudness is related to the amplitude of sound and typically ranges from -60 to 0 dB.

Reference

- Colley, Laura, Andrew Dybka, Adam Gauthier, Jacob Laboissonniere, Alexandre Mougéot, Nayeeb Mowla, Kevin Dick, Hoda Khalil, and Gabriel Wainer. 2022. "Elucidation of the Relationship Between a Song's Spotify Descriptive Metrics and Its Popularity on Various Platforms." In *2022 IEEE 46th Annual Computers, Software, and Applications Conference (COMPSAC)*, 241–49. <https://doi.org/10.1109/COMPSAC54236.2022.00042>.
- Duman, Deniz, Pedro Neto, Anastasios Mavrolampados, Petri Toiviainen, and Geoff Luck. 2022. "Music We Move to: Spotify Audio Features and Reasons for Listening." *PLOS ONE* 17 (9): e0275228. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0275228>.