# Evaluating Patterns in Critically Acclaimed Music

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## Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to identify relationships between musical genre of critically acclaimed albums and time. The dataset used for this analysis contains over 18,000 reviews from Pitchfork from January 5th, 1999 to January 8th, 2017. It contains important data including release year, artist name, genre, and a score ranging from 0.0-10.0. The findings may be useful for determining what the most successful genre of critically acclaimed music is for each of the last 18 years.

## 1. Description of Applied Problem

The trends of popular music can easily be attained through the various Billboard charts that have existed since 1955. A group of scientists from the University of London analysed around 17,000 songs that charted on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 over the last 50 years and created a visualization of the popularity of musical genres over time (Matthias Mauch and Leroi, 2015). The problem with getting data from these charts is that popular music generally isn't critically acclaimed, and is therefore not as interesting as data from sources that evaluate music more objectively. Another source that uses visualization of this problem well is musicmap (Crauwels, 2016). The website contains information about hundreds of genres of music and their history. It provides a great overview of all the popular strands of music, but doesn't go into too much depth about specific artists or albums. It does provide a good overview of all genres regardless of popularity, but I'm more interested in evaluating the history of the best albums created by artists. Using a dataset that includes over 18,000 reviews from Pitchfork, I will be going through the data to find how critically acclaimed music has changed over time. In addition, I will also be looking at which release from an artist is the most well received. A general pattern I've seen when listening to several albums from an artist is that the first 2-3 albums tend to be the best from their discography. I would like to use the data to confirm or deny this assumption.

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## 2. Description of Available Data

The dataset that I will be using is taken from Pitchfork. Pitchfork is an online magazine that focuses on reviewing both popular and independant music. The data set for Pitchfork Reviews from January 5th, 1999 to January 8th, 2017 is available on kaggle (Conaway, 2017). There are 18,393 reviews that include important data including release year, artist name, genre, and a score ranging from 0.0-10.0. Considering that Pitchfork is one of the longest running online review sites, it makes it a primary choice for useful data. The site features a section called "Best New Music" for highlighting recent releases that the staff found to stand out in a positive way. These albums generally have a minimum score of 8.0 and are another useful way for tracking the best music on the site. The dataset includes an identifier for "Best New Music", and would be a useful way to sort through the data. Unfortunately, this feature launched in 2003 so using it would leave out all the music before it was launched.

## References

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Mark Levy Matthias Mauch, Robert M. MacCallum and Armand M. Leroi. The evolution of popular music: Usa 1960–2010. 2015. URL http://pubmedcentralcanada.ca/pmcc/articles/PMC4453253/.