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ALGORITHMIC PLAYLIST 1 Confessions, or My Most Played Videos on YouTube

When Adele paid tribute to George Michael at the 2017 Grammy Awards, I was devastated and subsequently moved by her ethereal, slowed-down take of the late singer's spirited hit "Fastlove." A song about quick hookups and hard sex became a song of constant longing to be noticed and desired by someone, anyone. On morning and evening runs down my street in Chicago, toward the cemetery at the end of North Glenwood Avenue in Edgewater, I would loop a YouTube upload of Adele's cover, the only high-quality audio version I could find, to play over and over. In the space of six months, I had listened to the song over 500 times, which added up to roughly 2,500 minutes, nearly 42 hours, almost 2 days. As crazy as that seems, all that time was, of course, spent running. Surely a good thing!

I point this out because not only do I know that Adele's cover of "Fastlove" is my most played online video, YouTube knows this too. Everyone has online habits that can be broken down and analyzed, even by external sources. In fact, Spotify has made an ad campaign based on

extreme plays. On a billboard in Times Square, one reads: "Dear person who played 'Sorry' 42 times on Valentine's Day, what did you do?" Data crunching is no longer the province of statisticians, it has become cultural, allowing users an objective look at their tastes and engagements. For example, looking at some of my most streamed YouTube videos for music, it is obvious that my musical preferences gravitate toward saccharine, retro, and reverential compositions; not exactly the kinds of tunes that personal trainers encourage to put on to rev you up for aerobic activity. But whenever I plugged in my ear buds, these were the songs in which I wanted to lose myself, imagining how I would perform them at some Las Vegas lounge.

After "Fastlove," my second-most played YouTube music video was a smartphone-recorded rendition of Prince's "Purple Rain" performed impromptu by the cast of *The Color Purple* days after the artist's death. It was one of Jennifer Hudson's last performances with that cast and she killed it! I played that recording, despite its poor lo-fi quality, 377 times, roughly 1,885 minutes, or 31 hours, enraptured without fail every single time.

But I didn't always play these songs from beginning to end. Sometimes I jumped ahead to hear a specific high note or climax. This process of dragging a cursor or pin along a segment of the waveform is called "scrubbing," and out

of my most played videos, most of the ones included on that list were ones I visited just to scrub to a specific note from a beloved song, often from studio tracks, but also to nuances that appear in live performances, late-night show appearances, reality-TV auditions, or anything else that had been unofficially recorded.

Here are eleven selections from my "Most Played" playlist:

1. Adele, "Fastlove." Written by George Michael. Recorded live at the 2017 Grammy Awards.
2. The cast of the Broadway musical *The Color Purple* (feat. Jennifer Hudson and Cynthia Erivo), "Purple Rain." Written by Prince. Recorded live at Bernard B. Jacobs Theater, New York City, April 21, 2016.
2. Sam Smith, "Writing's on the Wall." Written by Sam Smith and Jimmy Napes. Recorded live on the *Graham Norton Show*, 2015.
3. Sheryl Crow, "Safe and Sound." Written by Sheryl Crow. Recorded live at the Nippon Budokan, Tokyo, 2002.
4. Christina Aguilera, "At Last." Written by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren. Based on a cover by Etta James. Recorded live at VH1's TV special "Men Strike Back," 2000.
5. Idina Menzel, "Defying Gravity." Written by Stephen Schwartz. Recorded on the "Live: Barefoot at the Symphony" tour, 2012.

6. Trent Harmon, "Chandelier." Written by Sia. Recorded live for *American Idol*'s 14th season, 2015.
7. Kelly Clarkson, "Piece by Piece." Written by Greg Kurstin. Recorded live for *American Idol*'s "Farewell Season," 2016.
8. Patti Smith, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall." Written by Bob Dylan. Recorded live at the 2016 Nobel Prize ceremony, Stockholm.
9. Mariah Carey, "Vision of Love." Written by Mariah Carey and Ben Margulies. Recorded live on *Saturday Night Live*, October 27, 1990.
10. Whitney Houston, "Star-Spangled Banner." Written by Francis Scott Key and John Stafford Smith. Recorded live at Super Bowl XXV in Tampa, Florida, 1991.

There you go. I have no shame in reliving Mariah's big-hair days, no shame in listening to Whitney belt out the American national anthem, no shame in losing hours of my life to hearing Jennifer Hudson sing Prince, no shame in replaying Sheryl Crow's howling-till-it-cracks performances, no shame in loving Sam Smith's gentle vocal lisp, no shame in reliving Kelly Clarkson's most famous *American Idol* moments. This is my meme culture. This is my playlist. You're welcome to test it out, maybe something new will have taken its place by the time you are reading this book, something just as ostentatiously sentimental. I don't care. May all my street credibility blow up into thin ringlets of smoke!

ALGORITHMIC PLAYLIST 2

What Should I Watch?

It's a Friday morning and I am at home, having taken the day off to rest a sprained back muscle. I am sitting on my swivel lounge chair, something I probably shouldn't do, as I have been advised to lay flat on my back and to get up only to occasionally perform stretch exercises. But I want to be able to sit up and watch TV. Ten years ago, this would have involved flipping through channels, but now broadcast television has given way to streaming networks. With my Amazon Fire TV streaming device I have been able to aggregate my accounts with Amazon Prime, Netflix, HBO, and whatever else I would like to view on demand.

Here is a list of what I view during a morning of streaming surfing:

I Love Dick

I've been reading this book by Chris Kraus twenty years too late. She's a genius of the most epic proportions. She articulates very female but also very queer expressions of sexuality and desire. Jill Soloway's adaptation is commendable in many respects, but Kevin Bacon as Dick Hebdige, the infamous media scholar—why, oh why? He has the sexiness of an infomercial actor and the brains of a slab of bacon. Bad casting call.

Into the Forest

Too creepy; didn't watch.

Westworld

I don't mind science fiction so long as it's set in the future. I have no love for ultra-masculine cowboys or the Wild West.

Feud

What a divine portrayal of one of my favorite Hollywood rivalries, Joan Crawford and Bette Davis. I think that Jessica Lange whoops Susan Sarandon's ass in this depiction.

I forgot she was even acting. Ryan Murphy is genius. Who would have thought he would ever ascend beyond his former FX series, *Nip/Tuck*?

Big Little Lies

I would never live in Monterey, California, after this, or maybe I would. I was so seduced by the seascapes, but couldn't stop shirking from the violent, passive aggressiveness of seaside society. Getting to know Nicole Kidman over seven hours gave me a newfound love for her. As an abused spouse, she was pitch perfect. Reese Witherspoon was unlike I had ever seen her. Biting. Laura Dern made me compassionate about even the toughest of ice queens. Recommend!

Catastrophe

Bumbling husband Rob Delaney is the perfect counterpart to Sharon Horgan's lacerating Irish witticisms. Isn't he everyone's perfect husband? Don't we all want to spend quality time on the toilet quietly releasing our bowels, uninterrupted, with newspaper in hand?

RuPaul's Drag Race

Who said reality TV was dead? *RuPaul's Drag Race* is a mash-up of *America's Next Top Model* meets *Project Runway* meets *The Real World* with a heavy dose of identity politics thrown in.

Veep

Julia Louis-Dreyfus. Enough said.

The Good Fight

Part of the reason I moved to Chicago was because of how glamorized it was in *The Good Wife*. Alicia Florrick's facial expressions, which could move from desire to fear to anger in seconds, stirred feelings in me that are impossible to put into words. *The Good Fight*, its recent spin-off, is just about fine. We are lucky to have lawyer Diane Lockhart still being played by Christine Baranski.

Broad City

Rerun. Re-watch.

America's Next Top Model: Cycle 22

I got bored of this show after *Cycle 7*, that is until the producers started pitting

boys against girls to create sexual dynamism and dramatic dynamo that added an intriguing layer of narrative. I was truly inspired and in love with just about all of it, especially this season's winner, Nyle, a gorgeous deaf activist.

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt

Titus Andromedon's "Lemonade-ing" post-cruise-ship tour was one of the greatest moments in TV history. "I'm pretty but tough, like a diamond," he says. "Or beef jerky in a ball gown."

Sense 8

The Wachowski sisters! My heart breaks that this show is gone, canceled. I wanted to be part of the "Sensates," to be a member of their cluster.

Glow

I don't know what Netflix was thinking with this female boxing drama. I can't believe this was recommended to me and that I watched four episodes. I want my 3.5 hours back. Delete.

ALGORITHMIC PLAYLIST 3

Top Ten Social-Media "Friend" Suggestions

Facebook

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| 1. Andy Sawyer, librarian at the Science-Fiction Foundation, University of Liverpool (1 mutual friend) | person however, only four days before writing this. Creepy!) |
| 2. Paul Hewitt (4 mutual friends) | 6. Krista Thompson (3 mutual friends) (friended) (real-life friend) |
| 3. Bruce Munro Wright (6 mutual friends) (friended) (real-life friend) | 7. Teju Cole, writer (1 mutual friend) (not sure if it's a fake profile or not) |
| 4. Nick Leech, columnist and feature writer at the <i>National</i> (15 mutual friends) | 8. Christopher Griffin, Courtauld Institute (6 mutual friends) |
| 5. Ann Webb (no mutual friends) (I did meet this | 9. Esther May Campbell (13 mutual friends) |
| | 10. Eric Liknaitzky (no mutual friends) (creepy, he's a high school student) |

Instagram

1. defneayas_, followed by antoniamcarver +7 more
2. theneurologist, followed by milovanfarronato
3. kpp305, followed by monieulitz
4. sculptinator, followed by victoriamaysiddall
5. ghawde, follows you
6. capriceh55, followed by mbkayne
7. studioteresacol-lins, followed by mrbenstephenson
8. eatsecondbreak-fasts, new to Instagram
9. garyfmetzner, follows you
10. alfredtarazi, followed by antoniamcarver +7 more

Twitter

1. @urbananalytics
2. @guardian
3. @ToyotaSD
4. @udibc
5. @michaelgeller
6. @chefdannygrant
7. @IntracorpCanada
8. @NewYorker
9. @eightbar_chi
10. @dzeij_dii

LinkedIn

1. Rachel Coker (intern where I work)
2. Juliane Victor
3. Arnout Mampaey
4. Amanprit Sandhu (went to college with her)
5. Paul Kelly
6. Allan Sekula (dead)
7. Chang Sun
8. Jussi Parikka
9. Miriam Sakwa
10. Victoria Beesley (went to college with her)

ALGORITHMIC PLAYLIST 4

Myself

Most searched keywords for those stalking Omar Kholeif on Google: Art After the Internet, age, MCA Chicago, born, email, books, Jeddah childhood, circa 1994, Instagram, bio

People who search for Omar Kholeif also search for: James Richards, Sarah Perks,

Jason Wood, Sophia Al-Maria

Number of results for Omar Kholeif on Google: 27,100 results

Number of results for Omar Kholeif on Yahoo: 3,920 results

Number of results for Omar Kholeif on Duck Duck Go: 79

Number of results for Omar Kholeif on Bing: 442

ALGORITHMIC PLAYLIST 5

Suggestions from Amazon That Appeared as I Wrote This Book

More items to consider

- *The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything = Have Everything* by Neil Pasricha
- *The Seventh Sense: Power, Fortune, and Survival in the Age of Networks* by Joshua Cooper Ramo
- *Pause: Harnessing the Life-Changing Power of Giving Yourself a Break* by Rachael O'Meara
- *Bad Choices: How Algorithms Can Help You Think Smarter and Happier* by Ali Almossawi

- *The School of Greatness: A Real-World Guide to Living Bigger, Loving Deeper, and Leaving a Legacy* by Lewis Howes
- *Stick with It: A Scientifically Proven Process for Changing Your Life—for Good* by Sean Young
- *Simply Brilliant: How Great Organizations Do Ordinary Things In Extraordinary Ways* by William C. Taylor

Inspired by my shopping trends

- *The Liberal Imagination* by Lionel Trilling
- *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* by Erich Auerbach
- *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* by Max Weber
- *Young Radicals: In the War for American Ideals* by Jeremy McCarter
- *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* by Mark Lilla
- *Escape from Freedom* by Erich Fromm

Recommendations for you

- *Time* by Amelia Groom
- *The Transhumanist Wager* by Zoltan Istvan

- *The Body Builders: Inside the Science of the Engineered Human* by Adam Piore
- *Heart of the Machine: Our Future in a World of Artificial Emotional Intelligence* by Richard Yonck

For a night in

- *Queen Sugar*
- *Love & Hip Hop: Hollywood*
- *The Truman Show*
- *Daughters of the Dust*

New for you

- *Famously Single*
- *Claws*
- *Face Off: Divide & Conquer*
- *Big Brother*

(Am I a reality-TV whore?)