

4 Takeaways From Spotify Wrapped on Staying Fresh and Timeless

With great power comes great responsibility.

Let's start by restating the obvious. Every December, Spotify Wrapped is a highly anticipated cultural phenomenon. While the 2025 Wrapped is better than the AI fiasco of 2024 Wrapped, we've seen better wraps. We just need to compare Wrapped to Wrapped itself.

We miss lines like "Dear person in the theatre district who listened to Hamilton soundtrack 5,376 times this year, can you get us tickets?" or "1983. UB40, Red Red Wine. 2019. You be forty, red red wine." And so many others. Spotify, you've been so incredibly hyperpersonal, insightful, and clever. You created your own bar for comparison.

Getting up there is hard, staying up there is harder.

It's been 10 years since the original "Year in Music" in 2015 and nine years since the first "Wrapped" in 2016. "Wrapped" is one of our industry's best examples of a unique, ownable, flexible, long-term brand platform, alongside Apple's "Shot on iPhone" and Dove's "Real Beauty." The challenge for all of them is the same: how to keep it fresh over time while maintaining what works? How to say the same thing in a thousand different ways? It's a delicate balance between finding your "timeless" and your "timely." But hey, it's a great problem to have.

There's still nothing like an out-of-home takeover.

Glad to see Spotify sticking to billboards. If Wrapped is, at

its core, a global cringy collective experience, there's no better medium to express this feeling. It's as close as we'll ever get to shouting from the middle of the public square. There's something really refreshing to see digital brands and apps embracing such a traditional medium, like the 2017 Cannes Lions Grand Prix winner, "Hashtag Billboards," from a time when Twitter was cool.

Write down your formula for success and stick to it.

I know, I know. "There are no formulas for success, blah blah blah." But sometimes there is. Or, at least for Wrapped, I think there might be one. It'd be something like this: (Classic & New Features) + Personalized Data + Current Insights x (Gorgeous Design + Clever Copy) – AI (when it replaces, not enhances) = Successful Spotify Wrapped. Here's the mathematical version of the formula: $(Cl + N) + P + I \times (D + Co) - AI = SSW$. You're welcome, Spotify.

Note: I may not be the best person to write this ad critique. Apparently, my Listening Age is 79 ("You're an old soul," Spotify told me). And my 2025 Top Artist is Hans Zimmer, which shows that while I do enjoy music, I prefer it when it comes accompanied by moving images.

It's a wrap.

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