After an AI Backlash, Spotify Wrapped Returns With a More Human Touch for 2025

After sparking backlash over its use of AI in last year's Wrapped, Spotify is returning to a more human-centered approach for the 2025 edition.

Today (Dec. 3), Spotify unveiled the 11th iteration of Wrapped, its annual analysis of users' listening habits. This year's campaign blends classic features with new additions, including a retro-inspired design, a refreshed user experience, and immersive fan destinations around the world.

Over the past decade, Wrapped has evolved into a highly anticipated cultural event and Spotify's biggest marketing moment of the year.

Last year, however, the company faced criticism from users for leaning too heavily on generative AI and removing some popular elements, like top genres, from the experience.

This time around, "We were aware of the AI criticism and went the other way," Jeremy Wirth, Spotify's global head of creative, told ADWEEK.

That shift included revamping Wrapped's visual identity from what Wirth described as previously "bright, super slick, and digital" into a design inspired by the way people used to share music before streaming: the mix-tape culture of the 1990s and early 2000s.

"We wanted something that felt more handmade and a bit more messy by design… to feel fresh and human," Wirth said.

Spotify also updated the user experience with new features

that capture people’s personalized listening habits, including listening age, top albums, a top song quiz, a fan leaderboard that ranks users among top artists’ listeners worldwide, and Clubs that represent communities of listening styles.

The only AI-powered part of Wrapped is the listening archive, which offers personalized snapshots of users’ most memorable streaming days.

A major new addition is Wrapped Party, an interactive feature that lets hosts invite up to nine friends to compare listening stats via a live competition.

The aim is to “bring a community feel” to Wrapped, said Lauren Solomon, senior director of global brand and marketing.

Audiobooks will be part of Wrapped for the first time to show Spotify’s full breadth of content.

Meanwhile, classic features, such as top genres and top song quiz, are back with a refreshed look.

The Wrapped advertising campaign will run in more than 30 markets worldwide.

Out-of-home takeovers are again central to the campaign. This year, however, Spotify will also host unique installations around the world dedicated to different fandoms, such as a Chappel Roan-themed pop-up in New York City.

For Bad Bunny—Spotify's 2025 global top artist—Spotify created a congratulatory video and will host experiences for fans in locations including Bogota, Madrid, and his home of Puerto Rico.

‘Criticism is part of it’

Spotify spends nearly a year developing Wrapped. “It’s a marathon,” Wirth said.

Despite last year’s criticism, one in three Spotify users participated in Wrapped in 2024, Solomon said.

With that popularity, however, the brand is also prepared for all kinds of feedback.

“Wrapped is part of culture, so criticism is part of it,” Wirth said. “The way people receive it is out of our control, but we listen to fans and try to tailor it to them. If people aren’t happy, we fail.”

Last year’s backlash drove Spotify to emphasize the human

creativity behind Wrapped.

“When it comes to the design and insights, everything is made by humans, by us. We are the experts,” Wirth said. “Music is the most unique and personal thing, whether you’re a teenager going to a concert or a family listening to a track in the car. It has to be and feel human.”

Spotify declined to share specific business goals for this year’s campaign, but Wirth said, “The ability to bring fans closer to the artists they love is beyond any business metric success.”

“We built something we believe in, and now we hand it over to the fans,” Solomon added. “We hope we get the same excitement back from them.”

Wrapped: The key stats

Global top global artist: Bad Bunny

Global top song: “Die with a Smile” by Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars

Global top album: DeBÍ TiRAR MáS FOToS by Bad Bunny

Global top podcast: The Joe Rogan Experience

Top audiobook: Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros

Recommended videos
https://www.adweek.com/creativity/after-an-ai-backlash-spotify-wrapped-returns-with-a-more-human-touch-for-2025/