

# Reversing the decline of Australian music

## Australia's 'one way valve' dilemma

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*Australia's recorded music industry is making more money, but less of it is staying in Australia. Fewer new artists are achieving lasting success because, on streaming services, they must compete on an uneven playing field with international and established acts. This paper suggests two ways that new artists could be better supported: by supporting local content curators on radio and streaming services; and by providing grants to enable touring artists to extend their tours. These initiatives could help raise the profile of Australian artists, and their streams.*

Discussion paper

Will Page with Morgan Harrington

Foreword by The Hon Malcolm Turnbull AC

November 2025

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PO Box 3839

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ACT 2603

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# Foreword

Australia's musicians have never lacked talent, only opportunity. Yet in the age of streaming, where the algorithm replaces the DJ, our cultural voice risks being drowned out. As Will Page shows in this thoughtful paper, the streaming algorithms are penalising Australian artists, and Australia, for speaking English.

As Will Page shows, nations which don't speak English have charts dominated by artists who sing in their own national language – this applies to Brazil as it does to Denmark. But nations like Australia, Canada and the UK which share a language with the United States are being disadvantaged. The digital tide is flowing outward while our own artists struggle for recognition at home.

Streaming platforms have turned discovery into a global contest in which Australian artists singing in English are competing with the vast American catalogue. This digital “one-way valve” that sends our listening offshore reflects a broader challenge of sovereignty in the digital age.

But decline is not destiny. Australia can, and should, act to restore balance. Supporting local curators would reconnect listeners to Australian artists. And adopting a Canadian-style model to extend the tours of promising artists would help them break through internationally, building the kind of global recognition that strengthens success at home.

The wider lesson is that creativity is a strategic asset. Just as we invest in technology, energy, and defence, we must invest in culture — because identity is the foundation of confidence. The streaming age does not have to erase national character; it can amplify it, and it should.

Will Page's paper sets out the problem and the paradox of streaming's impact on Australian music. He sets out some good ideas to address it. I hope this paper prompts a wide discussion on how we can ensure that the sound of our music is Australian.

**Malcolm Turnbull AC**

**Sydney, November 2025**

# Summary

In the past few years, Australian recorded music revenues have risen by an impressive 25% — from USD\$417.5m in 2021 to \$534m in 2024. But the share going to local artists has shrunk by almost a third. So, although Australian music is making more money, less of it is staying inside Australia. There are multiple reasons for this, but streaming is the big one.

This report studied the top 10,000 artists being streamed inside Australia from 2021 to 2024. It shows that the presence of Australian artists has been declining, both in terms of the total number of artists, and the number of streams. In 2021, 932 in every 10,000 artists streamed were Australian, but by 2024 that had fallen to just 773 in 10,000. Over the same period, streamshare — the number of times those Australian artists inside their top 10,000 artists have been streamed — declined from 12% to 8% (a 30% drop off). And a closer look at the numbers shows that many of Australia's most streamed artists are 'heritage' acts — in 2024, Australia's most streamed local act was The Wiggles.

Australia has a 'one-way valve' dilemma: Australian consumers are increasingly streaming international artists (which is crowding out domestic artists) and Australian artists are struggling with the costs of touring overseas. But what makes this Australian 'one-way valve' dilemma' so perplexing is that most other countries are experiencing the opposite.

Streaming services have allowed local music to rise to the top of local markets around the world. Bigger European countries like Italy, Germany, and France have each seen increased domestic prominence of local artists. Even countries as small as Denmark, which has just 5.5 million people speaking the same language, are seeing Danish-language artists dominate their charts. This is because the algorithms used by streaming services are partly based on language, which means people listening in a certain language are recommended content in that language. The same process that is working in favour of smaller national languages is working against countries in which English is the dominant language (other than the USA). Artists from countries like Australia, the UK, and Canada must now compete against an avalanche of American superstars (and each other) for an audience on the same handful of streaming services. Moving away from algorithmic models and back to curation by locally based human beings engaged with regional music communities would help.

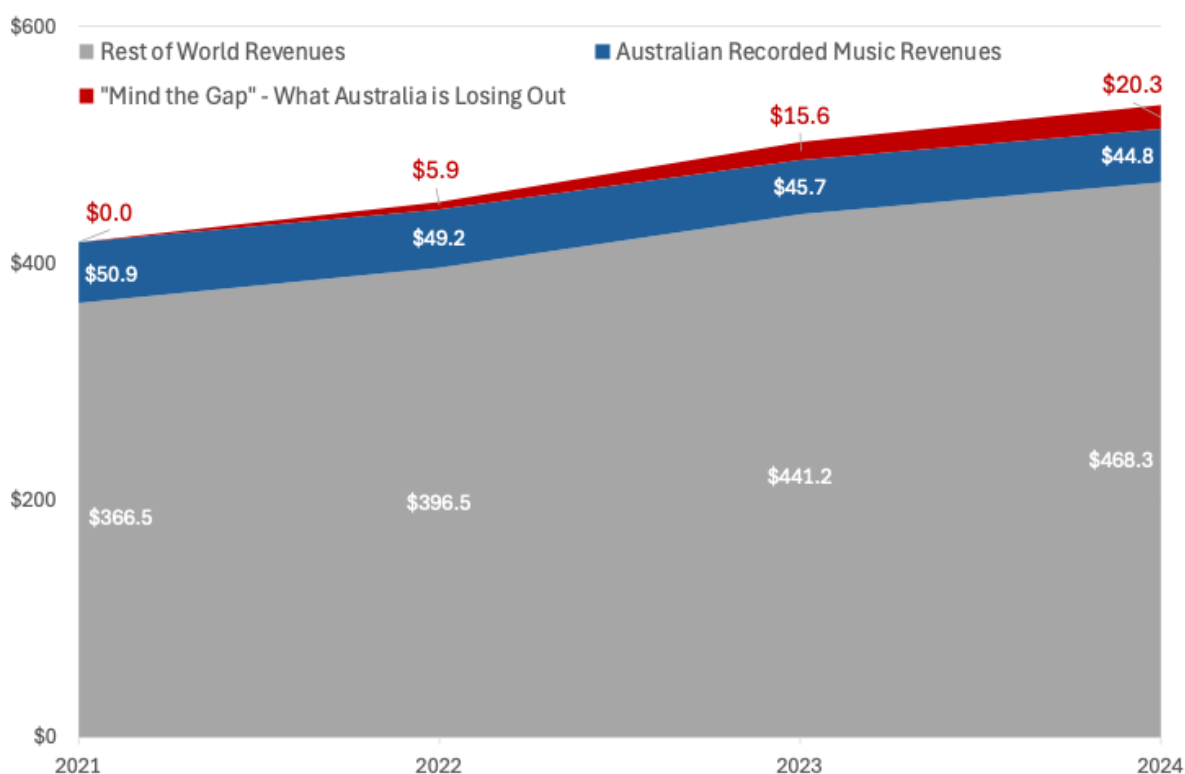
Aside from fostering the curation of Australian content, more can be done to support Australian artists to reach a level of popularity overseas that will reinforce their popularity domestically. Without action, listenership will probably continue to decline. Solutions that have already been proposed include tax incentives to encourage businesses to host live music; reforming radio quotas for Australian music; and "Michael's rule", which would require international tours to include Australian support artists. This paper contributes two additional ideas: encouraging closer engagement between radio and streaming services to

enhance local content curation, and providing grants to touring artists similar to Canada's Starmaker Fund.

# Introduction

Thanks to streaming, the Australian music industry is making more money than ever before – but less is going to Australian artists. In the past few years, Australian recorded music revenues have risen by an impressive 25% — from USD\$417.5m in 2021 to \$534m in 2024.<sup>1</sup> Yet the estimated share that went to Australian artists fell from \$50m (a 12% market share) to \$44m (an 8% market share). So, if the 12% share had held constant, as opposed to the grim reality of both absolute and relative declines, then a further USD\$40m would have flowed back to the domestic industry in just three years. The accumulated opportunity cost over these three years was worth almost as much as Australia earned in 2024.

**Figure 1: The decline in the popularity of Australian music is costing millions**



Source: IFPI, and authors calculations based on Luminate data

Although streaming is leading to an increase in recorded music revenue in Australia, the number of Australian artists being streamed by Australian listeners is in decline. Why are so few Australian artists reaching the charts? A flurry of pessimistic headlines have documented this debacle throughout this decade.

<sup>1</sup> International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (2025) *Global Music Report 2025*, <https://globalmusicreport.ifpi.org/>

In 2021, the Sydney Morning Herald noted: *Australian acts missing as ARIA charts reveal what we listened to in 2020*.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, the ABC asked: *The number of Australian musicians in the local charts has plummeted. Why?*<sup>3</sup> Jeff Jenkins, of trade publication *The Music*, has, with every passing year, echoed the struggles with titles such as *Like, Wow, Wipeout*<sup>4</sup> and *Australian Music's Annus Horribilis*.<sup>5</sup> More recently, Tyler Jenke picked up on the annual celebration of the Hot 100 as *The Worst Result For Aussies In Almost Three Decades, So What Can We Do?*<sup>6</sup>

Today's Australian charts (and large Australian stadiums) are dominated by North Americans — that is, the United States, Canada, and in the case of Rihanna, the Bahamas. Homegrown Australian talent lags behind. Why? To find out, this paper dissects Luminate's official streaming data on Australia from 2021 to 2024 across all the major platforms — including YouTube, Apple, and Amazon. To ensure transparency and incentivise the search for solutions, the source data is provided as Appendix A.<sup>7</sup>

This is not an unrecognised problem. In 2023, Minister for the Arts Tony Burke questioned why algorithms recommend American content.<sup>8</sup> And the music industry's peak bodies have all proposed ideas about how to address the declining domestic market.

Earlier this year, the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) reformed their charts, partly to filter out older music that is still popular on streaming services as a way of highlighting new releases.<sup>9</sup> ARIA has also called for reforms to the way radio stations comply

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<sup>2</sup> Zuel (2021) 'Australian acts missing as ARIA charts reveal what we listened to in 2020', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/music/australian-acts-missing-as-aria-charts-reveal-what-we-listened-to-in-2020-20210114-p56u1r.html>

<sup>3</sup> Briggs (2023) 'The number of Australian musicians in the local charts has plummeted. Why?', *Australian Broadcasting Commission*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-09/australian-music-in-aria-charts-has-plummeted-heres-why/102575198>

<sup>4</sup> Jenkins, 2023; 'Like Wow, Wipeout: Aus Artists Struggle In 2022 ARIA Charts: Things were bad in 2021. They got worse in 2022' (*The Music*) <https://themusic.com.au/news/2022-australian-artist-aria-chart-wipeout/INs4MjUONzY/05-01-23>

<sup>5</sup> Jenkins (2024) 'Australian Music's Annus Horribilis: No 2023 Local Releases Make End Of Year ARIA Charts'. *The Music*, <https://themusic.com.au/industry/australian-music-s-annus-horribilis-no-2023-local-releases-make-end-of-year-aria-charts/hF06lpmYm5o/12-01-24>

<sup>6</sup> Jenke (2025) 'This Year's Hottest 100 Is The Worst Result For Aussies In Almost Three Decades, So What Can We Do?', *The Music*, <https://themusic.com.au/features/2024-hottest-100-worst-result-aussies-almost-three-decades-so-what-can-we-do/UAnuQkVER0Y/25-01-25>

<sup>7</sup> Luminate (2025) <https://luminatedata.com/>

<sup>8</sup> Quinn and Crowe (2023) 'Hey Spotify, the Australian government could be coming for you next', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/music/hey-spotify-the-australian-government-could-be-coming-for-you-next-20230201-p5ch85.html>

<sup>9</sup> ARIA (2025) *The ARIA Charts are changing*, <https://www.aria.com.au/charts/news/the-aria-charts-are-changing>

with Australian music quotas,<sup>10</sup> and for caps to be removed on how much radio stations pay for Australian music.<sup>11</sup>

The Australasian Performing Right Association Limited (APRA) and Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society (AMCOS) - who represent songwriters and music publishers – have called for tax offsets to be given to venues that host live music.<sup>12</sup> The Association of Artists Managers (AAM) has proposed an initiative called “Michael’s Rule,” which seeks to ensure that international headline tours feature at least one Australian act as an opener.<sup>13</sup> This paper provides two additional suggestions: an investment in local content curators, and subsidies for touring musicians.

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<sup>10</sup> Green (2025) ‘Industry Concerns As Radio Airplay Charts Show No Australians In The Top 10’, *The Music*, <https://themusic.com.au/industry/industry-concerns-as-radio-airplay-charts-show-no-australians-in-the-top-10/1V9rycjLys0/08-10-25>

<sup>11</sup> ARIA (2023) *ARIA and PPCA provide submissions in support of the Copyright Legislation Amendment (Fair Pay for Radio Play) Bill 2023*, <https://www.aria.com.au/industry/news/aria-and-ppca-provide-submissions-in-support-of-the-copyright-legislation-amendment-fair-pay-for-radio-play-bill-2023>

<sup>12</sup> APRA AMCOS (2022) *Economic impact of tax offsets on the live music industry*, <https://www.apraamcos.com.au/about/supporting-the-industry/research-papers/economic-impact-of-tax-offsets-on-the-live-music-industry>

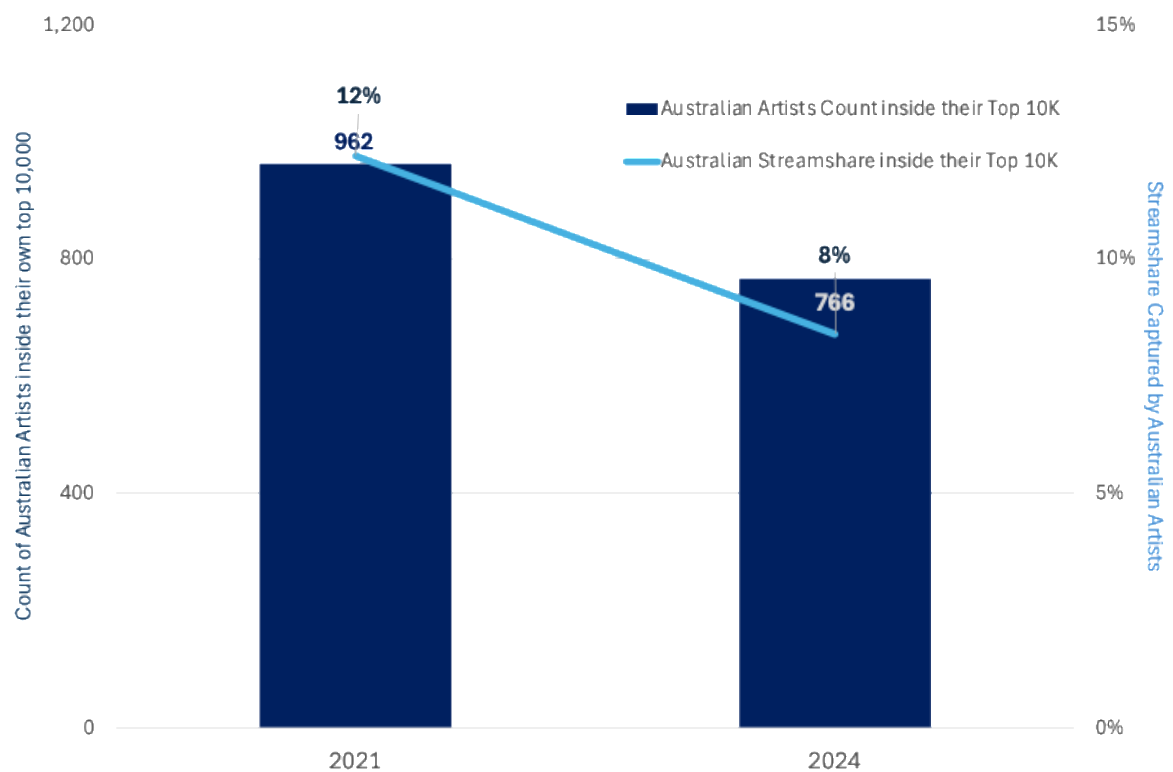
<sup>13</sup> AAM (2025) *Michael’s Rule*, <https://www.aam.org.au/michaelsrule>

# Aussie artists struggle to be heard

To understand what's beneath the top-line symptom of Australia's prolonged global music drought, this report studied the top 10,000 artists being streamed inside Australia from 2021 to 2024. This sizable subset, capturing almost 90% of all domestic demand, allows us to unpack two key indicators: presence (the extent to which Australian artists show up in this sample) and prominence (where they are positioned within it, relative to other artists).

Over the last four years, the presence of Australian artists has been declining, both in terms of the total number of artists, and the number of times the artists that are present are streamed. Back in 2021, just under one-in-ten artists (962) were Australian, but by 2024 that had fallen by almost a fifth, to just 766.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 2: Presence of Australian Artists inside Australian streaming services**



Source: Luminate

Streamshare – the number of times those Australian artists inside their top 10,000 artists have been streamed – is falling faster. The streamshare of Australian artists declined from 12% to 8% (a 30% drop off) over the same period, suggesting the artists who remain in the

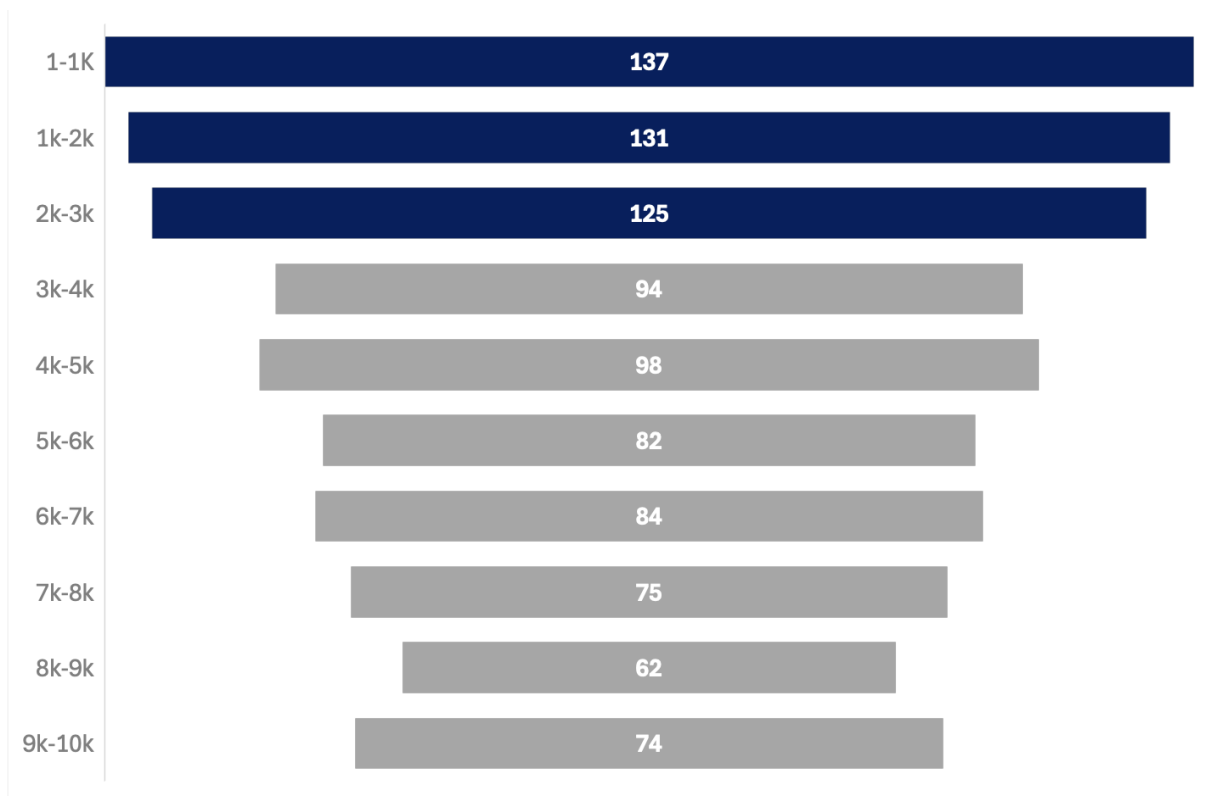
<sup>14</sup> Luminate (2025) <https://luminatedata.com/>

mix are no longer punching above their weight. The APRA-AMCOS 2024-25 Year in Review similarly found a 31% reduction in local content consumption on streaming services between 2021 and 2025.<sup>15</sup>

In the same period, the prominence of Australian artists shrank at every level within the top 10,000. Slicing this data into deciles with the help of ‘tornado charts’ (Figures 3 and 4) shows where those Aussies are to be found: up in the top of the charts or down in the ‘long tail’.

The 2021 tornado chart (Figure 3) shows that only three deciles had over 100 Australian artists (or 1 in 10) present, and thankfully they are the top three deciles. This bulge at the top means more representation in the more popular upper deciles (and a closer resemblance to a ‘tornado’) which is a sign of relatively good health.

**Figure 3: The streaming of Australian artists by Australian audiences, 2021**

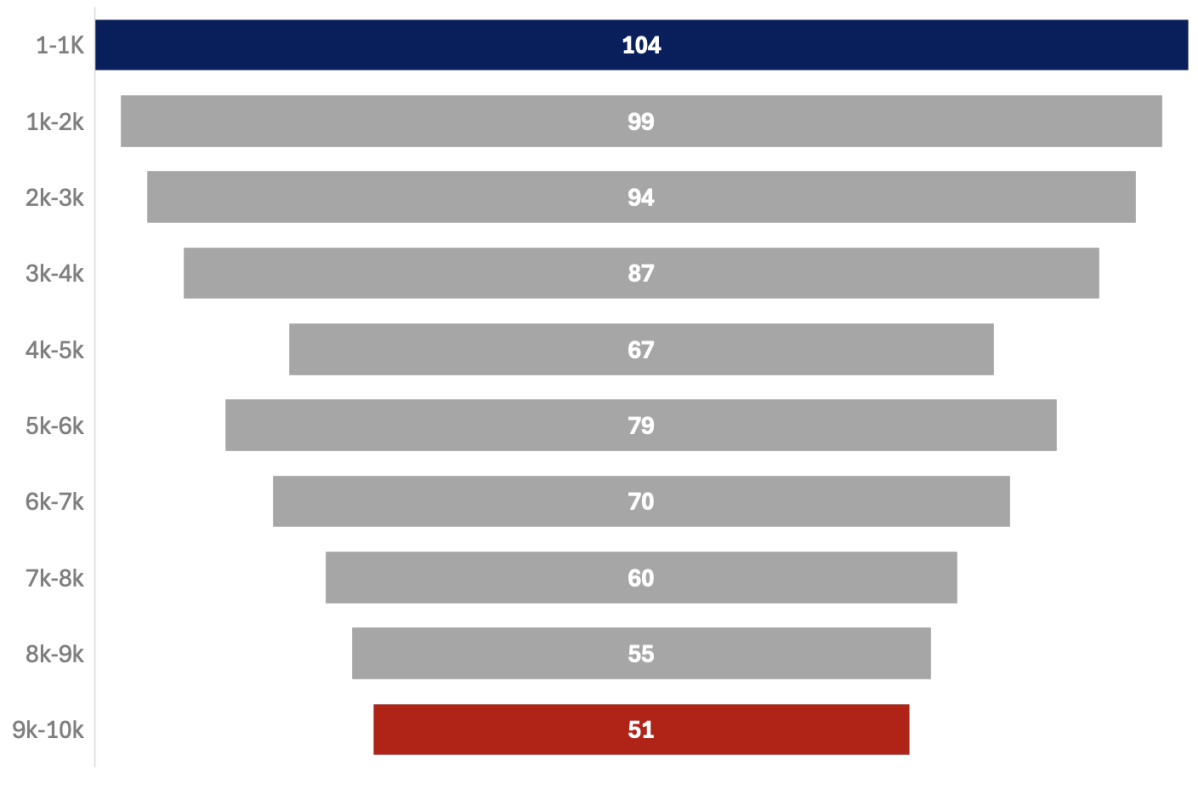


Source: Luminate

By 2024, the story flipped on its head. This is shown in Figure 4. In only one decile did Australian artists surpass the 1-in-10 threshold — thankfully, the top one, albeit with just 104. Down in the long tail (ranks 9,001 to 10,000) the count of Aussie artists has fallen to just 51.

<sup>15</sup> APRA-AMCOS (2025) *24-25 Year In Review*, <https://www.apraamcos.com.au/year-in-review>

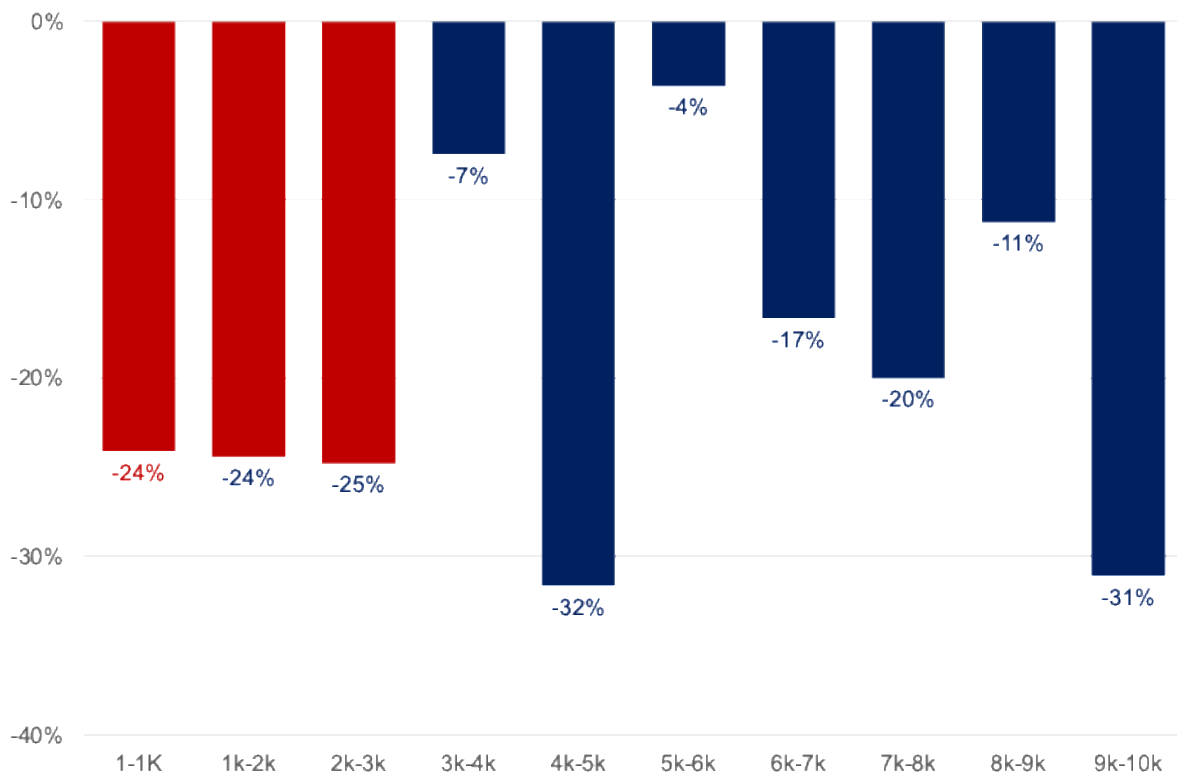
**Figure 4: The streaming of Australian artists by Australian audiences, 2024**



Source: Luminate

Plotting the percentage drop-off in the presence of Australian artists for each decile between 2021 and 2024 reveals that each of the top three deciles are down by a quarter (Figure 5). This matters, as music has always been a ‘hit heavy’ market. To wit, those top three deciles capture over 80% of all the streams. The virtual disappearance from the lower deciles is also worrying, though, as creative industries often view the long tail as the ‘seed bed’ for future growth.

**Figure 5: Decline of Australian music on streaming charts, by thousands, 2021 - 2024**



Source: Luminate

Stepping back from the rows and columns, it's worth putting some names to the faces of artists who are topping the charts.

First, looking at the head of the distribution (i.e. the top of the charts), you'll find The Wiggles as the most-streamed Australian artists inside Australia, yet even they ranked only #41 overall. They pip Kid Laroi, at second place domestically and #43 overall. AC/DC failed to make the top 50, ranking at #65 overall. Farther down, Vance Joy can be found at #77, Hilltop Hoods at #96, and RÜFÜS DU SOL at #100.

For policymakers, this merits a pause for thought: the Wiggles are an anomaly and AC/DC are a heritage act. The only one of these artists to debut in the past ten years was Kid Laroi — a proud Gamilaraay man — who does arguably capture contemporary music from Australia (and has stated he wants to do for Australia what Drake did for Canada). But, like so many others, he has moved his business to the United States in order to do so — signing to US labels and being managed by US management companies.

Australia is now the global poster child for what 'market failure' looks like in recorded music. A vicious cycle risks taking root, with increasingly fewer domestic success stories resulting in less domestic investment, meaning even lower chances of future success. Intervention is required to stop the rot.

# Australia's one-way valve dilemma

Streaming services have allowed local music to rise to the top of local markets around the world. European streaming markets are now dominated by local artists singing in their mother tongue. Bigger European countries like Italy, Germany, and France have each seen increased domestic prominence of local artists. Brazil now has zero international artists (i.e. no English language nor Spanish) on its YouTube charts. Even countries as small as Denmark, which has just 5.5 million people speaking the same language, are seeing Danish-language artists dominate their charts. Sixteen of the top twenty albums (and fifteen of the top twenty songs) in Denmark last year were by Danish artists, performing in Danish.<sup>16</sup> The economics of trade-offs may well have a role to play here, as those artists would rather be a big fish in a small pool than a miniscule fish in a giant global streaming pool.

The concept of 'glocalisation' can help explain what is going on. In relation to music streaming, glocalisation describes the phenomenon in which domestic artists top their national charts. This mostly happens with artists who sing in their mother tongue, which benefits artists that sing in languages other than English. In another publication, Will Page and Chris Dalla Riva found that "contrary to the perverse effects of globalisation where large markets often dominate small, we uncover evidence of local markets growing in their domestic identity."<sup>17</sup>

However, many large anglophone countries – including Canada, UK and especially Australia – face the opposite problem. Artists from all these English dominated countries compete against a deluge of American hits (and each other) for an audience on the same handful of streaming services.

The United Kingdom has witnessed an embarrassing drought since streaming took off, failing to produce a truly worldwide success since Dua Lipa in 2017. Indeed, in the five years since the start of this decade, the UK has seen only 30 new artists debut among their local top 1,000. Canadians are encroached upon by the dominance of its southerly neighbour, with a steady decline of domestic presence compounded by a 'talent drain' where many of their own major breakthrough artists are signed and managed out of the United States.

If those two members of the 'Commonwealth club' are worried about their current direction of travel, then Australia is in the end zone — or more appropriately, the 'dead end zone'. This is the crux of the 'one-way valve' dilemma: domestic artists have to compete for the

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<sup>16</sup> IFPI Denmark (2025) *Musikselkaber 2024*, <http://www.ifpi.dk/sites/default/files/2025-05/Musikselkaber2024.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Page and Riva (2023) 'Glocalisation' of Music Streaming within and across Europe', *Europe in Questions Discussion Paper Series*, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/european-institute/Assets/Documents/LEQS-Discussion-Papers/EIQPaper182.pdf>

same ears on streaming services whose algorithms mainly recommend foreign music to Australian music lovers. Unless Australian artists can first build a domestic following, how will they ever compete on international stages?

# The algorithm takes listeners offshore, local curators could bring them back

The suspects usually blamed for the decline in the popularity of Australian music include record labels, streaming platforms, radio stations, and the pandemic — the last of which hit Australian artists particularly hard. There are also less obvious culprits, like tall poppy syndrome. Lucie Watson, Kiwi founder of goodtwin, a London-based label working with artists from Australia and New Zealand, believes this stems from validation culture, where there is a hesitation for fans at home to celebrate local artists until they have earned it abroad. It is because of this attitude that locally based tastemakers, who can advocate for new artists, are so important. But the algorithms used by streaming services mean that content curated by people embedded in particular communities is harder to come by than ever.

The collapse of human editorial content on streaming services is well documented.<sup>18</sup> Without human intervention, choice is left to either inertia or the algorithm. If algorithms recognise language, but not nationality, it may explain why most non-English speaking markets are enjoying a surge in the popularity of domestic artists, while English-speaking countries outside of American are not.

In June 2024, Minister for the Arts Tony Burke MP told the ‘Spotify Loud & Clear’ event that, “the algorithm still tends to take us offshore and it's something that I really want us to work on.”<sup>19</sup> Burke's remarks have substance, as the algorithm probably isn't helping the Australian cause.

In the earlier days of streaming, algorithmic recommendations were based on collaborative filtering, which essentially means recommendations were based on lists of artists with shared fans. Recommendations based on these earlier algorithms tended to reflect the local tastes of local communities, because groups of friends do not just coincidentally end up liking the same things; they are exposed to the same things to begin with.

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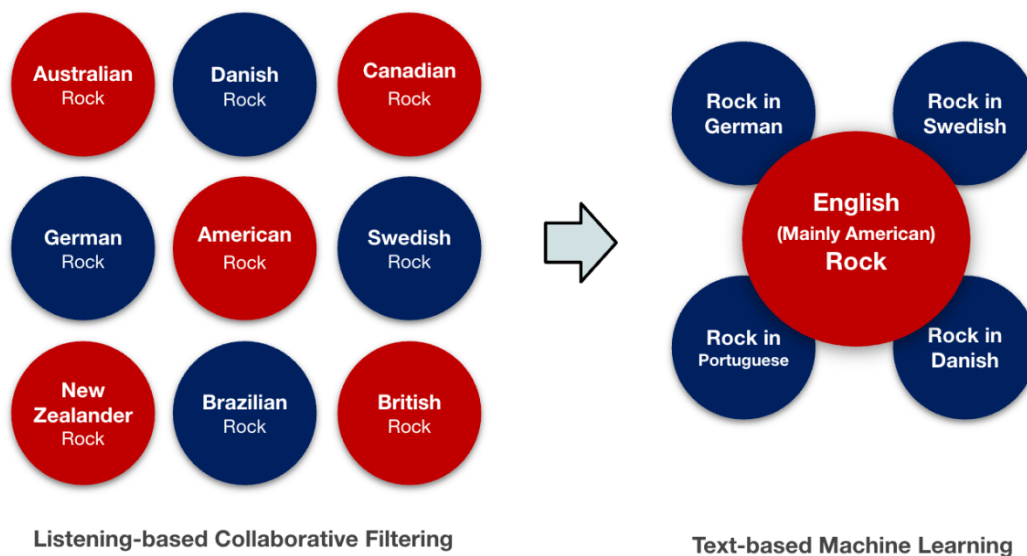
<sup>18</sup> Carman (2024) ‘Spotify’s Editorial Playlists Are Losing Influence Amid AI Expansion’, *Bloomberg*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2024-01-04/spotify-s-editorial-playlists-are-losing-influence-amid-ai-expansion>

<sup>19</sup> Burke (2024) *Minister Tony Burke - Transcript Speech, Spotify Loud & clear event – Monday, 24 June 2024*, <https://www.tonyburke.com.au/speechestranscripts/2024/transcript-speech-spotify-loud-clear-event-monday-24-june-2024>

But, over the last decade, most recommendation systems have shifted largely or wholly to machine learning abstractions without explicit grounding in communities. This tends to dilute or even ignore real-world community and cultural effects in favour of general popularity bias, acoustic similarity, or simple lottery effects of who gets promoted to the listener. TikTok’s model, which promotes unknown things at random, exemplifies this.

At the same time, genre-based playlists – which were once compiled by actual human beings – have mostly given way to automated systems in which playlists are based on masses of publicly available web pages. This method tends to ignore regional tastes in favour of languages of description. If you're in Denmark, singing in Danish, the distinction may not matter much, but all “rock” sung in English sounds the same to the machines. Figure 6 helps visualise this distinction.

**Figure 6: Collaborative filtering vs. algorithms, which take Australian listeners offshore**



In July 2025, the leading streaming platform Spotify published ‘Turn Up Aus’ as part of a commendable ‘multipronged initiative designed to highlight the dominance of Australian artists on the global stage’.<sup>20</sup> But local scenes, particularly ones without a natural language moat, cannot rely on existing algorithms to support local artists, even though research published by Spotify indicates that localizing recommendation improves audience engagement.<sup>21</sup>

If ‘Team Australia’ is genuine about supporting Australian artists, a good place to start would be for its streamers and broadcasters to work out how to work together to invest in locally based content curators. Curators that can compile playlists relevant to a particular city or

<sup>20</sup> Spotify (2025) *Turn Up Aus*, <https://www.turnupaus.byspotify.com/#introduction>

<sup>21</sup> Spotify (2024) ‘Exploring Local Music’s Place in Global Streaming’ <https://research.atspotify.com/2024/05/exploring-local-musics-place-in-global-streaming>

region (some of whom may also be local radio stations, local concert venues or local artists themselves) can organise and differentiate music in ways that algorithms either cannot or do not.

Take the Los Angeles-based community-led tastemaker station KCRW<sup>22</sup> as an example of how this could be done. Back in 2012, when Spotify had just launched in the USA, KCRW was the first public radio station to proactively partner with Spotify.<sup>23</sup> They now seamlessly link their playlists into both Spotify (and more recently) Apple Music through their impressive app.<sup>24</sup> Now, they've gone further, launching a YouTube live streaming of their flagship show Morning Becomes Eclectic, which allows for real time comments and expression.<sup>25</sup>

KCRW proves that radio and streaming can co-exist to benefit communities. In an online post, Jill Smayo, KCRW Chief Development Officer, reflected on their achievements:

At KCRW, our DJs aren't just curating playlists — they're building community. By bringing their adventurous taste to streaming platforms and live video, we've shown that public media can be just as fun, surprising, and intimate as any other part of culture. For us, radio and streaming don't compete — they complement each other, creating more ways to connect with people in Los Angeles and beyond.

The ABC, in particular, could learn much from their example. The national public broadcaster already plays lots of Australian music on stations like Triple J and Double J but, at the moment, they can usually only be heard on the airwaves or within the comparatively obscure ABC Listen App. Why not make more of this great local content available to the world on other platforms, including Apple Music, Spotify and YouTube, where lots more people can discover it?

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<sup>22</sup> KCRW (2025) <https://www.kcrw.com>

<sup>23</sup> Carley (2012) 'KCRW Becomes First U.S. Radio Station With a Spotify App', *Hollywood Reporter*, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/kcrw-spotify-app-streaming-radio-341239/>

<sup>24</sup> KCRW (2025) *Get the KCRW app*, <https://www.kcrw.com/pages/kcrw-app>

<sup>25</sup> YouTube (2025) *KCRW*, <https://www.youtube.com/user/kcrw>

# Public Support for touring, the Canadian way

Aside from fostering the curation of Australian content, more can be done to support Australian artists to reach a level of popularity overseas that will reinforce their popularity domestically. Like Australia, Canada’s music streaming services are dominated by music from the United States. But Canadian artists do better in the Canadian charts than Australian artists in the Australian charts. This could be because the Canadian Government does more to support Canadian artists, which gives them a greater chance of success in the broader English-speaking world.

**Figure 7: Domestic artists in the charts, Canada versus Australia**

Range in Sample	Top 100		Top 1,000		Top 10,000	
	Australia	Canada	Australia	Canada	Australia	Canada
Country in Sample						
Streamshare Captured	25.0%	23.9%	62.4%	61.1%	100.0%	100.0%
# of Domestic Artists	6	8	104	78	773	804
# of United States Artists	68	72	563	605	4,105	4,436

Zooming into the top 100 artists in each market, we can see that Australia had six artists in their top 100 (a 4% streamshare) whereas Canadians had eight (closer to a 25% stream share). Four of those eight were in the top fifty, with two in the top ten (Drake #2; The Weeknd #6).

Canada outperforms Australia in terms of prominence, with two of the biggest artists in the world and a host of others (e.g. Justin Bieber, Tate McRae, Shawn Mendez) close to the podium. The important question is ‘why’, and the answer may have something to do with the subsidies that Canada offers its artists, including when they tour internationally.

For decades, The Canadian Government has subsidised the expansion of tours by Canadian artists. Through the Canadian Radio Starmaker Fund (as well as through the funding organisation FACTOR), artists who have already put in the work to book and pay for a tour – domestically or internationally – get extra funding from the government to extend their run

of concerts.<sup>26</sup> Much of this support is provided by the mandatory licensing fees paid by private radio broadcasters to the Canadian Government, a percentage of which is funnelled into the Starmaker Fund. The Fund is designed to ensure that more talent is being developed that the radio stations who pay for it can play. This produces more bang for the taxpayer's buck.

To be eligible, artists have to have reached certain sales targets, and they have to take on the upfront costs of touring themselves. This means that public money only goes to artists that are serious about making a career out of music, and who have achieved enough to be on tour.

This kind of fund would be particularly beneficial for Australian bands, because of the prohibitive costs of international travel (e.g. insurance, freight, equipment and crew). Add on top visas, inflation, and exchange rates and bands are looking at a 'six figure' sunk cost before they start loading the tour bus.

If a band can demonstrate that they are willing to put in the significant upfront financial commitment to tour — insurance, freight, equipment — the Australian Government (via Music Australia) could subsidise every additional date the artist picks up whilst on the road abroad. If, for example, an artist has managed to travel from Brisbane to Scotland, driven a tour bus to Glasgow and created a buzz, a small investment from the Commonwealth would allow them to build further momentum by performing just an hour away in Edinburgh. This is what the Canadian Government does for its artists, and it works.

Through the establishment of Music Australia in 2023, The Australian Government is investing more than ever before in its music industry (\$70m over four years).<sup>27</sup> It would be unrealistic to expect a new entity to immediately reverse the decline, but they have hit the ground running with The Bassline Economic Report,<sup>28</sup> Soundcheck festival report<sup>29</sup> and, most recently, a campaign to 'Ausify the Algorithm'.<sup>30</sup> But, to compete algorithmically, Australian artists need to grow global profiles — home and away — and Canada offers a great model of how this could be done.

Subsidising the cost of touring makes Australian artists more visible in a music market that, because of streaming services, is internationally competitive. And this is likely to make them more popular on streaming platforms.

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<sup>26</sup> Canadian Starmaker Fund (2025) *Canadian Starmaker Fund*, <https://www.starmaker.ca/>; FACTOR (2025) *Live Performance*, <https://www.factor.ca/programs/live-performance/>

<sup>27</sup> Music Australia (2025) *Our purpose*, <https://creative.gov.au/music-australia/about-us>

<sup>28</sup> Creative Australia (2025) *The Bass Line: Charting the economic contribution of Australia's music industry*, <https://creative.gov.au/research/bass-line-charting-economic-contribution-australias-music-industry>

<sup>29</sup> Creative Australia (2024) *Soundcheck: Australian Music Festivals*, <https://creative.gov.au/research/soundcheck-australian-music-festivals>

<sup>30</sup> Music Australia (2025), *Ausify Your Algo*, <https://ausify.com.au/>

# Conclusion

The most popular artist across Australia's streaming services is The Wiggles, a children's act that has generated a net worth of tens of millions of dollars over an international career that has spanned four decades. While their success may be commendable, it is hard to imagine it being replicated in the current streaming-dominated environment, in which new artists must compete at a disadvantage against established and international acts.

If Australians are to enjoy a vibrant domestic music culture greater investment in new, local artists is needed. This paper has shown two ways that could be done. The algorithms of streaming services might recognise language, but they ignore geography, which means local music is not typically recommended to Australian audiences. Having real people from both sides of the aisle — radio and streaming — working together to curate playlists of greater relevance to particular regional audiences could help lift the profile of emerging artists. Furthermore, the Australian Government could adopt policy similar to the Canadian Government's Starmaker Fund, which enables artists who have already put in the work to book and pay for a tour – domestically or internationally – to extend their run of dates. This would allow them to perform in front of more audiences, which could help increase their followers both off and online.

# Appendix A - data used for analysis

*Presence of Australian music on Australian streaming services, 2021*

Decile Bottom	Decile Top	Total Streams	# of Artists	# of Streams	% of Decile	% of Top 1000	% of Universe
1	1000	40,074,897,008	137	5,224,591,338	13.00%	66.30%	7.20%
1001	2000	8,471,011,500	131	1,124,721,020	13.30%	14.30%	1.50%
2001	3000	4,665,476,796	125	571,625,617	12.30%	7.30%	0.80%
3001	4000	3,073,924,591	94	292,187,479	9.50%	3.70%	0.40%
4001	5000	2,202,958,104	98	218,294,360	9.90%	2.80%	0.30%
5001	6000	1,686,223,304	82	138,568,678	8.20%	1.80%	0.20%
6001	7000	1,335,884,249	84	112,459,064	8.40%	1.40%	0.20%
7001	8000	1,101,544,985	75	82,015,238	7.40%	1.00%	0.10%
8001	9000	928,245,892	62	57,476,107	6.20%	0.70%	0.10%
9001	10000	797,611,637	74	59,185,565	7.40%	0.80%	0.10%
		64,337,778,066	962	7,881,124,466	12.20%	100.00%	10.90%
Universe of Streams		72,590,042,173					
Top 10.000 % of Universe		88.60%					

*Presence of Australian music on Australian streaming services, 2022*

<b>Decile Bottom</b>	<b>Decile Top</b>	<b>Total Streams</b>	<b># of Artists</b>	<b># of Streams</b>	<b>% of Decile</b>	<b>% of Top 1000</b>	<b>% of Universe</b>
1	1000	46,425,879,467	133	5,294,433,705	11.40%	64.00%	6.00%
1001	2000	10,067,872,224	118	1,190,150,005	11.80%	14.40%	1.40%
2001	3000	5,635,469,317	106	591,642,034	10.50%	7.10%	0.70%
3001	4000	3,810,791,730	104	400,344,686	10.50%	4.80%	0.50%
4001	5000	2,761,255,809	92	256,038,865	9.30%	3.10%	0.30%
5001	6000	2,097,425,181	79	165,645,019	7.90%	2.00%	0.20%
6001	7000	1,677,048,595	72	120,437,461	7.20%	1.50%	0.10%
7001	8000	1,377,367,812	69	95,054,932	6.90%	1.10%	0.10%
8001	9000	1,167,344,371	84	98,327,204	8.40%	1.20%	0.10%
9001	10000	1,008,709,630	66	66,672,705	6.60%	0.80%	0.10%
		76,029,164,136	923	8,278,746,616	10.90%	100.00%	9.50%
Universe of Streams		87,603,556,808					
Top 10.000 % of Universe		86.80%					

*Presence of Australian music on Australian streaming services, 2023*

<b>Decile Bottom</b>	<b>Decile Top</b>	<b>Total Streams</b>	<b># of Artists</b>	<b># of Streams</b>	<b>% of Decile</b>	<b>% of Top 1000</b>	<b>% of Universe</b>
1	1000	55,356,291,003	119	5,116,459,465	9.20%	63.00%	4.90%
1001	2000	11,655,023,943	102	1,178,226,747	10.10%	14.50%	1.10%
2001	3000	6,397,632,004	95	615,269,922	9.60%	7.60%	0.60%
3001	4000	4,245,471,046	82	347,236,453	8.20%	4.30%	0.30%
4001	5000	3,090,284,469	85	264,801,118	8.60%	3.30%	0.30%
5001	6000	2,423,316,395	90	218,001,030	9.00%	2.70%	0.20%
6001	7000	1,959,770,649	62	120,667,537	6.20%	1.50%	0.10%
7001	8000	1,640,933,810	61	100,365,200	6.10%	1.20%	0.10%
8001	9000	1,404,600,832	53	74,287,767	5.30%	0.90%	0.10%
9001	10000	1,209,917,891	68	82,584,418	6.80%	1.00%	0.10%
		89,383,242,042	817	8,117,899,657	9.10%	100.00%	7.90%
Universe of Streams		103,408,740,865					
Top 10.000 % of Universe		86.40%					

*Presence of Australian music on Australian streaming services, 2024*

<b>Decile Bottom</b>	<b>Decile Top</b>	<b>Total Streams</b>	<b># of Artists</b>	<b># of Streams</b>	<b>% of Decile</b>	<b>% of Top 1000</b>	<b>% of Universe</b>
1	1000	61,050,987,12 2	104	5,040,591,926	8.30%	62.50%	4.60%
1001	2000	12,081,541,76 9	99	1,245,931,132	10.30%	15.40%	1.10%
2001	3000	6,597,022,071	94	622,879,198	9.40%	7.70%	0.60%
3001	4000	4,335,917,543	87	370,197,426	8.50%	4.60%	0.30%
4001	5000	3,180,138,292	67	209,890,196	6.60%	2.60%	0.20%
5001	6000	2,455,964,582	79	194,473,742	7.90%	2.40%	0.20%
6001	7000	1,991,054,011	70	140,164,499	7.00%	1.70%	0.10%
7001	8000	1,661,901,113	60	99,387,517	6.00%	1.20%	0.10%
8001	9000	1,411,642,562	55	78,482,365	5.60%	1.00%	0.10%
9001	10000	1,220,471,950	51	62,646,948	5.10%	0.80%	0.10%
		95,986,641,01 5	766	8,064,644,949	8.40%	100.00%	7.30%
		0.724133194	0.38772846	0.856752194			
Universe of Streams		110,103,433,4 68					
Top 10.000 % of Universe		87.20%					