

May 4, 2021

Daniel Ek
Co-founder & CEO, Spotify
Regeringsgatan 19
SE-111 53 Stockholm
Sweden

Dear Mr. Ek,

We write to you as a group of concerned musicians and human rights organizations from across the globe who are deeply alarmed by Spotify's recently approved [speech-recognition patent](#).

Spotify claims that the technology can [detect](#), among other things, "emotional state, gender, age, or accent" to recommend music. This recommendation technology is dangerous, a violation of privacy and other human rights, and should not be implemented by Spotify or any other company.

Our major concerns with the technology are:

- **Emotion manipulation:** Monitoring emotional state, and making recommendations based on it, puts the entity that deploys the tech in a dangerous position of power in relation to a user.
- **Discrimination:** It is impossible to infer gender without discriminating against trans and non-binary people, and others who do not fit gender stereotypes. It is also impossible to infer someone's music taste based on accent, without assuming there's a "normal" way of speaking or falling into racist stereotypes.
- **Privacy violations:** The device would be recording everything — it would be monitoring, processing voice data, and likely ingesting private information. It would also collect "environmental metadata," which could inform Spotify that other people (who might not know Spotify is listening) are in the room and potentially be used to make discriminatory inferences about them.
- **Data security:** Harvesting deeply personal data could make any entity that deploys the tech a target for snooping government authorities and malicious hackers.
- **Exacerbate inequality in the music industry:** Using artificial intelligence and surveillance to recommend music will only serve to exacerbate existing disparities in the music industry. Music should be made for human connection, not to please a profit-maximizing algorithm.

As you know, on April 2, 2021, Access Now sent a [letter](#) to Spotify calling on the company to abandon the technology in the patent, because it presents grave privacy and security concerns. On April 15, 2021, Spotify [replied](#) to Access Now's letter, stating that the company "has never implemented the technology described in the patent in any of our products and we have no plans to do so."

While we are pleased to hear that Spotify has no current plans to deploy the technology, it begs the question: why are you exploring its use? We call on your company to make a **public commitment to never use, license, sell, or monetize the recommendation technology**. Even if Spotify doesn't use it, your company could profit from the surveillance tool if another entity deploys it. Any use of this technology is unacceptable.

We ask you to publicly respond to our request by May 18, 2021.

Sincerely,

Artists:

Abhishek Mishra
The Ableist
AGF Produktion OY
AJJ
Akka & BeepBeep
And Also Too
Andy Molholt (Speedy Ortiz, Laser Background, Coughy)
Anjimile
Anna Holmquist (Ester, Bad Songwriter Podcast)
Anti-Flag
Aram Sinnreich
A.O. Gerber
Ben Potrykus (Bent Shapes, Christians & Lions)
The Blow
Catherine Mehta
Charpit
Coven Brothers
Curt Oren
Damon Krukowski
Daniel H Levine
DIIV
Don't do it, Neil

Don't Panic Records & Distro
Downtown Boys
Eamon Fogarty
Elizabeth C
ella williams
Evan Greer
Eve 6
Flobots
Fureigh
Generacion Suicida
Get Better Records
Gordon Moakes (ex-Bloc Party/Young Legionnaire)
Gracie Malley
Guerilla Toss
Harry and the Potters
Hatem Imam
Heba Kadry
Human Futility
The Homobiles
The Hotelier
illuminati hotties
Isabelle jackson
itoldyouiwouldeatyou
Izzy True
Jacky Tran
Jake Laundry
Joanie Calem
Johanna Warren
Kal Marks
Ken Vandermark
Kevin Knight (Nevin Kight)
Khyam Allami
Kimya Dawson
Kindness
Kliph Scurlock (The Flaming Lips)
La Neve
Landlady
Laura Jane Grace
Leil Zahra

Lemon Tree Records
Liliane Chlela
Liz Ryerson
Locate S,1
Lyra Pramuk
Making Movies
Man Rei
Maneka
Marshall Moran
Mason Feurer
Mason Lynass - Twenty Ounce Records
Mirah Yom Tov Zeitlyn
of Montreal
My Kali magazine
Nate Donmoyer
Nedret Sahin - Mad*Pow
Nick Levine / Jodi
Norjack
not.fay
OLVRA
Paramind Records
Pedro J S Vieira de Oliveira
Phirany
Pile
Pujol
Rayan Das
Sadie Dupuis (Speedy Ortiz, Sad13)
Sam Slick
The Shondes
Slug (Atmosphere)
So Over It
Sound Liberation Front
Stella Zine
Stevie Knipe (Adult Mom)
STS9
Sukitoa o Namau
Suzie True
Taina Asili
Talib Kweli

Tamra Carhart
Tara Transition
Ted Leo
Thom Dunn / The Roland High Life
Tiffany, Okthanks
Tom Morello
Yoni Wolf

Organizations:

18 Million Rising
AI Now Institute, NYU
Access Now
Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Amnesty International
Article 19
Center for Digital Democracy
Center for Human Rights and Privacy
Citizen D / Državljan D
Color of Change
Conexo
Creative Commons Uruguay
Cyber Collective
Damj, The Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality
Datos Protegidos
Demand Progress Education Fund
Derechos Digitales
Encode Justice
Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)
Electronic Frontier Norway
epicenter.works
EveryLibrary
Fight for the Future
Fundación Acceso
Fundación Huaira
Fundación InternetBolivia.org
Global Voices
Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
Heartland Initiative

Hiperderecho
Homo Digitalis
Independent Jewish Voices
INSMnetwork - Iraq
Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC).
Instituto para la Sociedad de la Información y Cuarta Revolución Industrial (Peru)
IPANDETEC Centroamérica
ISUR, Centro de Internet y Sociedad de la Universidad del Rosario
IT-Pol Denmark
Japanese American Citizens League
Kairos
Masaar - Technology and Law Community
Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
Mawjoudin for Equality
MediaJustice
Mijente
Mnemonic
Mozilla Foundation
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
OpenMedia
Open MIC (Open Media & Information Companies Initiative)
PDX Privacy
PEN America
Presente.org
Privacy Times
Public Citizen
R3D: Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales
Ranking Digital Rights
#SeguridadDigital
Simply Secure
Sursiendo, Comunicación y Cultura Digital
SMEX
Taraaz
TEDIC
Union of Musicians and Allied Workers
Venezuela Inteligente
X-Lab

Individuals:

Caroline Sindere, Founder, Convocation Design + Research

Gus Andrews, Digital Protection Editor at Front Line Defenders

Jessica Huang, Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School

Joseph Turow, University of Pennsylvania Professor and Author of The Voice Catchers

Justin Flory, UNICEF Office of Innovation

Michael Stumpf, Scholar, Systems biology

Dr. Sasha Costanza-Chock, Researcher, Algorithmic Justice League

Tonei Glavinic, Director of Operations, Dangerous Speech Project

Valerie Lechene, Professor, University College London

Victoria Barnett, Former Director of Ethics, Holocaust Museum