

'en de tijd staat stil..'
(Lola Cedès – *We Dansen*)

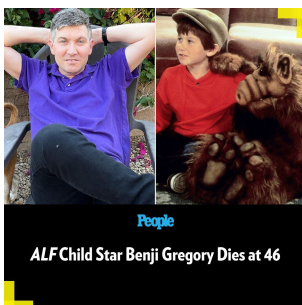
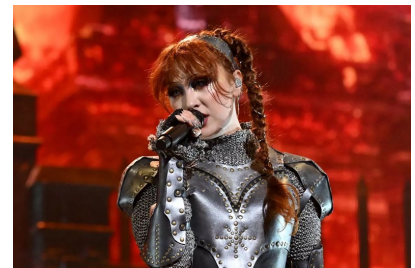
2024

menni's review of the year

March 6th, 2024. More about that day later, but none of all other dates came even remotely close in impact. And no, it was not because Nikki Haley suspended her presidential campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met women from Sandeshkhali, not due to the death of South African painting pig Pigcasso (7) nor in honor of National Dentists Day, while Nickelodeon aired two new episodes of *That Girl Lay Lay* and fucking Hamas demanded a permanent ceasefire.

The world's a crazy place, especially in areas involving human beings. On the other hand, all the most sane, best moments this year involved fellow people as well. As i write this modest review of a great 2024 from an egocentric point of view, December as the ultimate period of personal contemplative celebration is in full swing. Now, finally at perfected peace with isolation, suddenly i get invited to Christmas gatherings.

Well well, Chappell. Has there ever been a quicker rise to superstardom than Kayleigh Rose Amstutz, better known as **Chappell Roan**? Last year November, we saw her in a tiny venue and we really had no idea what would happen. If i am brutally honest, i don't like most of her songs *that* much, nonetheless i'm a femennist. In my top 10 concerts of the decade so far, Peter Gabriel remains the only male.



Since i laid my infamous Rippoll to rest, keeping up-to-date with deceased celebrities hasn't been first priority, let alone devoting an entire article to them. Like all other years, 2024 was loaded with famous deaths, from acclaimed stars to personal favorites. In the latter category, shocker **Benji Gregory** broke my heart. Yet another from my all-time favorite tv show ALF is gone now, little boy and terrible actor Brian, he was only 46. Heat stroke in his car, together with his service dog. Enjoy life while you can.

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Movies 2024

It has been a relatively quiet, but formidable year. Not since my childhood have i truly *enjoyed* movies this much, regardless of quality, regardless of quantity. Film phases in various degrees are planned carefully, i see what i wanna see and dump the rest. One film per day keeps the therapist away! The puzzle of when to see what, is entertaining in itself. Here's a recommendation:

- Wednesday afternoon: **Flow** (Gints Zilbalodis)
- Saturday evening: **Twisters** (Lee Isaac Chung)
- Sunday: **Young Woman and the Sea** (Joachim Rønning)



The one true must-see of 2024 however of course is Demi Moore's grand rejuvenation splatter fest **The Substance** (Coralie Fargeat). Oscar nomination would be awesome.

'was gezellig, fijn weekend!'



10. Melk (Stefanie Kolk)

To others, it may start to look like an unhealthy obsession, but letting mother's milk go to waste is the only thing that doesn't make sense to her. The supply piles up, while Robin and her partner, who literally plays a supporting role, look for an organisation or individual willing to take it. It's her inside way of dealing with the loss of a child, the outside part involves silent group therapy in the woods, serene walking without talking. Dutch breakfast meets universal grief, while grinning at coffee mugs.



9. Skunk (Koen Mortier)

Belgian teen boy enters a burned down house, obviously bringing back memories. That's how *Skunk* starts, just so you know we are in for a troubled ride, to put it mildly. His frighteningly 'not too bright' parents are overacting so much that it clearly serves a purpose: *not* overacting is the whole point. The stark contrast with a young lad (phenomenal Thibaud Doms) trying to be a good guy but pushed into scalping reckoning, couldn't be greater. Social workers are given much respect.

'da eindigt altijd in ruzie..'



8. In a Violent Nature

(Chris Nash)

Canadian walking simulator redefines slow horror, while not holding back on inventive gore. Find a necklace, choose a weapon, wander around, don't say a word. Opposite of the natural born killer, as always: a group of obnoxious young people, camping, drinking, talking, and worse of all: yoga.



But that's not all of it. This arthouse gaming experience is about so much more than the classics it tributes. All great horror clichés are merged into a calm film about universal annoyance and irrational fear. Just don't steal. Regardless of substance, all the splendid splatter is so well executed, aided by crunchy sound and breathtaking cinematography. It just shows how much a genre can still be expanded on.

7. I Used to Be Funny

(Ally Pankiw)

What if standup comedy doesn't work anymore? An aspiring entertainer has a nanny job as well, bonding with a typical teenage girl. That family however goes through tragedy and life gets too strange and complicated to be simply solved with humor.

I Used to Be Funny is not an easy ride, unfolding exactly what has happened gradually in flashbacks, including a battle between the sexes. A dying mother leading to blue hair, #metoo resulting in hate tweets, honestly trying to care for others only ending up in unfair shit; everything that makes life hard to laugh about is taken into account. Bunnies and bananas aside, this really is a cinematic Phoebe Bridgers, who happens to be featured on the soundtrack. Rachel Sennott is very much appreciated.



6. Il pleut dans la maison

(*It's Raining in the House*, Paloma Sermon-Daï)

Nothing happens. So if you prefer your daily dinner to move beyond plain spaghetti, your crimes to be more severe than a stolen bicycle, leave this place. That's exactly what Purdey wishes to do: get out from a leaking home, away from minimum wage cleaning jobs. Her brother Makenzy is less ambitious, while their mother is hopeless. During the summer, lots of things change, but everything stays the same: rich looks down on poor and vice versa. This Belgian film is just 75 minutes observing someone else's life. It makes me miss going to film festivals, meeting directors and actors after screening. Purdey and Makenzy Lombet, their real life names, blend fact and fiction.



5. The Vanishing Soldier

(Dani Rosenberg)

Sad truth is that, no matter which movie you make about, or simply taking place in the Middle East, with or without agenda, people will always be angry. Depoliticization will make people angry, extremism will make people angry, nuance will make people angry. *The Vanishing Soldier*, a young man deserting by simply running back home to Israel, does its absolute best to remain humane. These are just normal people, simply trying to have a good time, sheltering from rockets all the time, to which this guy has become immune. Shlomi's fed up, hungry and thirsty and hasty. And he is in trouble. Girlfriend just wants to cook, grandma just wants to dance. He is an asshole at times, a sweetheart at others. What starts as major war action, ends as minor urban drama. Watermelons might be provocative, but so is not allowing anyone to take a breather.



4. Joker: Folie à Deux

(Todd Philips)

Audience wants the Joker, audience gets the Joker. Unless of course a director refuses to comply. Instead they get the tragic story of Arthur Fleck and the dangerous absurdity of celebrity, the psychology of split personality, imaginary girlfriends, the best musical since

Dancer in the Dark and just one explosion. Joaquin Phoenix sings Daniel Johnston and Jacques Brel; that's no superhero blockbuster, it's a solitary confinement masterpiece. In this timeline, Lee Quinn might be the bigger villain, but at least it's a bad romance.

'all we had was the fantasy, and you gave up..'

He is naive, she plays him for a fool, people die. It's really quite simple isn't it, a midget could understand; no offense, none taken.

Rewatching an insanely misunderstood sequel while a CEO killer gets idolized on TikTok, was seriously funny as hell. Fascinating courtroom scenes are coming up soon in this theater!





3. Sometimes I Think About Dying (Rachel Lambert)

Social anxiety isn't big drama, not suicidal per se. When an introvert meets someone kind of normal, it doesn't necessarily lead to an interesting movie. If that very same movie however acknowledges, even emphasizes on the fact that it might be an uncomfortable watch, things change. Constantly, so very much on purpose, view is partially blocked, out of focus, or peculiarly framed, with distant voices and unusual closeups, not to mention the weird dream sequences. Everything feels disconnected, just not enough to totally notice. Daisy Ridley is plainly perfect as Fran, wallflower without perks, daydreamer who doesn't mean to be mean. She has some surprising initiative up her sleeve if given cottage cheese. Parties suck.



2. Civil War (Alex Garland)

This is not a war movie, it's a film about journalism. In the near future, California and Texas have formed an alliance, well that should indicate how unpolitical the action is. Photographers drive across the country to shoot the president and it all remains quite light, until they bump into red glasses: 'Reuters doesn't sound American'. Soon now it becomes clear that intuition is the main theme; trust an acclaimed director, then click. The White House sequence is a mindblowing mix of cinematography and still image.

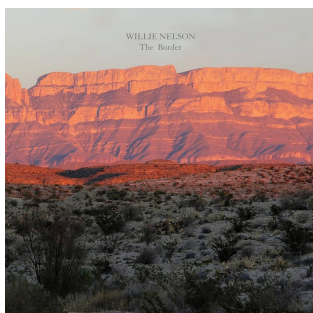
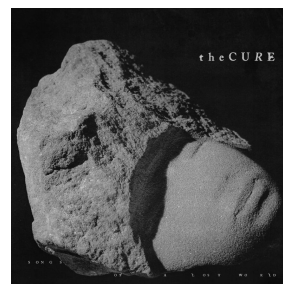


1. Riddle of Fire (Weston Razooli)

Stealing, screaming, swearing, smoking and shooting, now these are my kind of kids! Admitted, this is a Menniesque film if there ever was one, but I urge you to grab some gummies and enjoy an adventure game, including witchcraft, crab legs and unrelated celery. Jodie, Hazel and Alice, at least two of them are boys, are questing ingredients for a blueberry pie, so they can get a computer code from their sick mom. Especially the speckled egg turns out to be a task, Cannibal Holocaust theme is cherry on top.

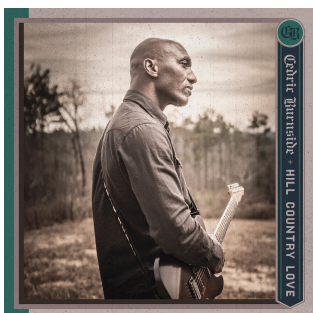
Albums 2024

Yet another awesome 'listen to a record every morning' year is in the books! Give or take a few, 366 brand new albums were given a proper spin. Eighties retro battled postpunk headliners, legends versus artificial intelligence, French and Dutch periods, but entire genres were left alone with nothing. At the end of every song:



10. Willie Nelson – The Border

'I am a songwriter, always will be', 91-year-old country legend sings on the closing track of his gazillionth album, which has already proven to not be his last. The opening title song is an arresting Rodney Crowell cover about this Texas border guard, setting the tone for an old-fashioned, relaxing dusty road trip. Willie won't change the world now, but it's darn good music.



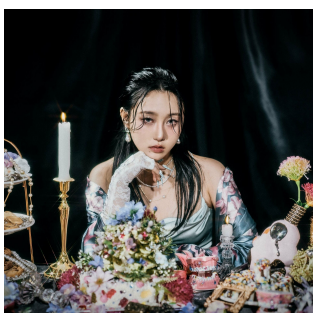
9. Cedric Burnside – Hill Country Love

Traditional blues is mostly about crafting the exact same music as both your daddy and granddaddy, and doing it to perfection. Frequent Grammy nominee Burnside walks around with a guitar in the hot sun all day long, only to always return to juke joint porch, playing irresistible tight riffs that will cause feet to tap. It's love, it's funk, respectful to important pieces of history.



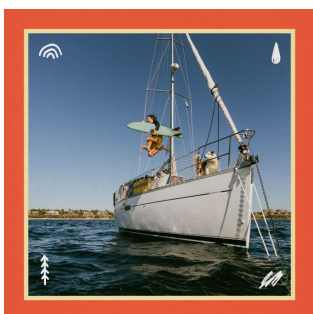
8. Elsy Wameyo – Saint Sinner

On her endlessly fascinating debut album, a Kenyan-Australian singer mixes r&b with afrobeats and fuses hip-hop with spoken word; there's a whole lot to chew on. Angels and demons fight, urban meets otherworldly and Elsy has clearly broken free from the past. Gritty and stylish *Saint Sinner* is the most impressive album of the year, making one wonder about words like *Umva*.



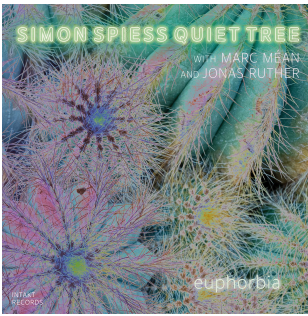
7. Silly Silky – Silly but, Silky [mixtape]

On January 4th, Korean bedroom poppourri lightheartedness was the very first music that caught real attention. The little-known, homemade experiment for all seasons has really stuck around all throughout 2024. It's soft, it's fun, and feels like long-term result of covid lockdowns; whispers & whistles on 20 tracks, in exactly an hour. Influenced by r&b, soul, gadgets and Lorde.



6. Goth Babe – Lola

Contrary to what his artist name might suggest, this is just a dude and his dog on a boat called Lola, writing fun music and chilling out, summer music at its finest. Some romantic longing can't be avoided, but happy solitary existence soon takes over. Giving off Mac DeMarco vibes; relaxing, smiling, it's electronic sailwave with surprising snowy mountain visit. You're welcome.



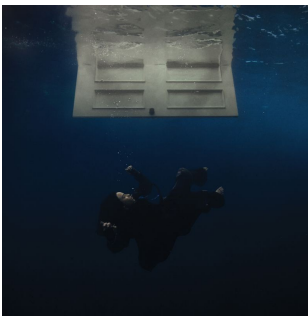
5. Simon Spiess Quiet Tree – Euphorbia

Swiss jazz turns any day into a Sunday afternoon: saxophone, piano, percussion are classic, but the music feels neo-spiritual. Multiple languages are lurking, including adorable child babble in highlight *Das isch diis. Euphorbia*, or Wolfsmelk, indeed is a large and diverse genus of flowering plants, soft but poisonous. That's probably why it's being picked one at a time, cautiously.



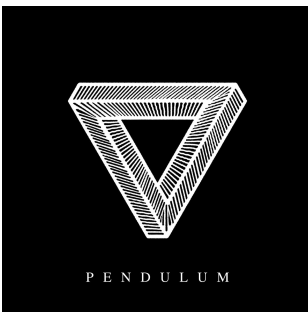
4. Nailah Hunter – Lovegaze

Daughter of a Belizean pastor plays harp, that alone is worthy of attention. Jazzy triphoppy *Lovegaze* is beyond enchanting, diving deep into a dreamlike world much like our own, close to drowning sometimes. Nailah's mesmerizing voice blends with electronics, echoing a sad longing for (environ)mental healing, She dreams of beheadings, by means of beautiful soundscape.



3. Billie Eilish – Hit Me Hard and Soft

So good. Soooo good. *Hit Me Hard and Soft* is the kind of album that reassures, raises bars, breaks hearts and makes you want to hug everyone ever hurt, especially the youngest generations. Except, Billie beat you to it, using subdued vocals and infectious rhythm. Contemplation is the best support act for synth dancing all the blues away, as proven by sensational *L'Amour de Ma Vie*.



2. Twin Tribes – Pendulum

Me envenena, te envenena. Reliable annual darkwave entry is by far the best of the decade, by a peculiar Texas duo doubling down on the blackness. Throbbing synthetic beats, joy dividing guitar riffs; this is how relentless gloom is supposed to be done, curing listeners, finding escape hatch at the bottom. Towering above all is a massive *Monolith*, their majestic magnum opus.



1. Francesca Castro – TWO

At first, it sounds like a Disney movie, but then r&b shows up, *Born in the 80s* tributes the best era ever, naturally followed by nineties rock in a *Mental Breakdown*. Apparent lack of cohesion starts to make sense. Berklee graduate Francesca Cayla Castro then continues by strolling into jazz territory and a bossanova cover, closing with just the loveliest little lullaby for her niece.

This half hour ride across decades, genres, feelings, family, is a wonderful, wonderful relaxation practice, efficient at any time of day or night and in any season; i've tried. *TWO* – there doesn't seem to be *ONE* – is short and sweet, really respecting everyone and everything, connecting Michael Jackson to João Gilberto. Showing a complete lack of pretense, Francesca seems perfect to chill with, or silly dance if that's what the day dictates. She was spotted in the new version of *Mean Girls*, credited as 'band freak'.

'karate kid, miyagi-do, gremlins poppin out like whoa..'



Concerts 2024

From **Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark** to **Olivia Rodrigo** on the moon, Black Pumas into PinkPantheress, *Landslide* and *Wicked Game* twice, that's just mentioning a few outsiders; emotionally this past year might have been even better than record-shattering 2022. On average one concert per week featuring many different genres in all shapes and sizes, graced the stages and confused my broken stabilizer. Remarkably few disappointments served as a humble reminder that although my horizon is wide, taste shifts constantly. There is so much more to life than angry young men. Avoiding loud guitars, nothing against them, protects ears from tinnitus and mind from rage.

With festivals almost out of the picture, fun but sometimes overcrowded happenings like Eurovision in Concert (with later winner **Nemo**, as well as Dutch entry Joost Klein and Croatian then still favorite Baby Lasagna) offer a jolly way to see multiple artists in a row, no matter how hysterical.

I tend to skip gatherings in Paradiso (like London Calling and Indiestad Fest) because of claustrophobic rooms, the Melkweg is better suited and i loved spending a couple of hours at Popronde, where Dutch gem **Iris Jean** obviously enjoyed playing to her largest audience so far. This year review is so incomplete it should be illegal. Seen so much.



For every Rod Stewart there's a Bas Beenackers, for every Stevie Nicks there will be a Future Husband, for every Janet Jackson try Joya Mooi. Shoutout to the woman (60+) at Chris Isaak, who said i inspired her to maybe try and attend a 'young concert' too.

The amount of ex aequo 11th place finishers is too many to mention, so here goes:



10. Sinfonietta Cracovia

(Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, October 23rd)

Like an intoxicating blend of car race and horror movie, twenty-five Polish string instruments plus two wind, fully hypnotized through Glass, Reich, Kilar and present at this masterclass Kulenty.

It has been a vocal year, severely more focused on emotional impact than technical achievement. Perhaps one year, i'll go fully instrumental, but for now the longing for poetry and human voice is still overwhelming. There's some fascinating psychology probably ready to be unleashed on this, but why bother, concerts are my therapy.



9. Gladys Knight

(Carré, June 20th)

Most Pips are long gone, but Gladys sounds just as good as a century ago. More important, she's clearly still having fun. *Midnight Train to Georgia* and *I Heard It Through the Grapevine* in concert; it has been surreal privilege, historical night out.



8. Pet Shop Boys

(Afas Live, June 26th)

It's a Sin: eighties heaven raised level with new all-time favorite *Loneliness*, from splendid brand new album *Nonetheless*. Nonetheless, of course all classics hit: *Suburbia*, *Rent*, *Domino Dancing*, *West End Girls*, etcetera. Synthpop perfection.



7. XG

(Afas Live, November 30th)

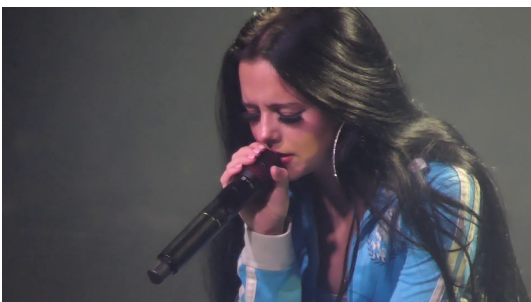
Japanese K-pop hip-hop sensation exploded on multiple scenes through extraordinary videos. Seven singing, rapping, dancing, howling girls are destined to conquer the universe with alien talent, immense hard work, adorable character.



6. Dogstar

(Melkweg Max, June 5th)

While AC/DC was playing stadium, connoisseurs were here: three old time friends reunite to play simple garage rock, nothing more, nothing less. You'd almost forget that their honestly humble bass player just happens to be Keanu Reeves.



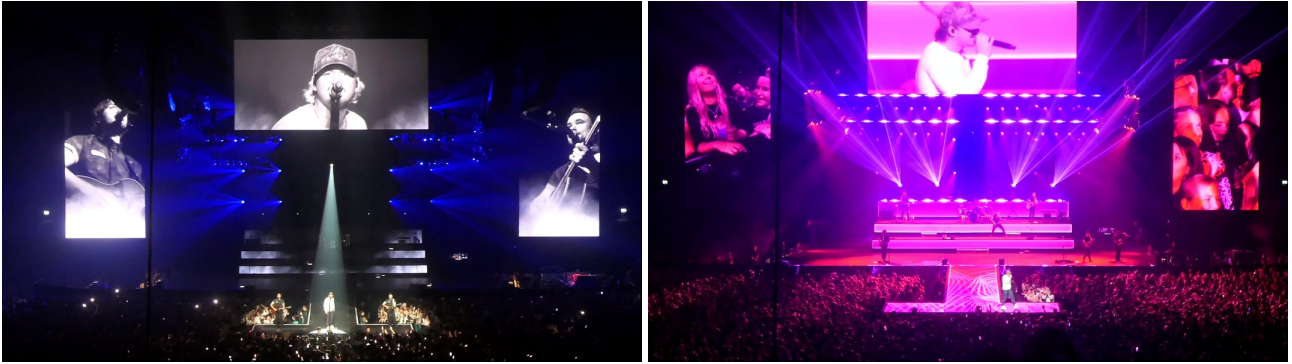
5. Jessie Murph

(Melkweg Oude Zaal, February 10th)

Early in the year, Jessie sounded like a solid 10th place perhaps. Since then appreciation has only increased and here she is, a breakthrough best. Raspy voice released a superb hybrid album half a year later. Oh she's from Huntsville, Alabama.

'i didn't sign up for this, you fucking son of a bitch..'

Concert gurlies have taken over the world and i fucking love it. Googling 'tiktok jessie murph amsterdam' immediately found one of the damsels who had been dancing on stage just an hour before. Later in the year, Eva was spotted front row (or as the kids call it these days, 'barricade') at both Bea and her Business and Lola Cedès. Outside, we briefly talked gigs; she told me about her fangirl trips to London, then apologized for screaming/crying so much. And there is your difference with beer guzzling men.



4. Morgan Wallen (Ziggo Dome, September 3rd)

For days and days, attending was considered, then rejected, then considered again, until FOMO decided it was time to book a great seat. Low expectations weren't even close to being a part of this overwhelming feelgood country pop concert by one of the absolute biggest stars in the USA, unknown to most Europeans. Like Post Malone last year, similarly nice guy Morgan Wallen completely won me over. The show was stolen by brand new eighties hybrid *Love Somebody*, plus a lengthy signing session on stage afterwards. Personally, heartbreak does not connect to alcohol, but i do understand.



3. Taylor Swift (Johan Cruijff ArenA, July 4th)

Attending the biggest show on earth, on Independence Day, felt unlike any other thing ever experienced. For such a gigantic production, its visuals are actually quite modest. Of course there are genius stage elements and the audience light show is enchanting, but that's not what Taylor Swift is about. Subdued songs, true connection, 'details' like the 22 Hat, those create the 3.5 hours of pure magic and safety; trust me, you won't know what it's like until you've been there. Before the show started, feeling uncertain, this girl in front of me suddenly turned around and offered me a friendship bracelet.



2. Ragazze Quartet

(Station West, January 21st)

My father turned 80 this year and i didn't have to organize anything. That fanboy simply called up his favorite string ensemble and they played an exclusive little concert for an elite few, with cinematography by yours truly, the only time a tripod was used this year. Composers of choice

were Dvořák and Bartók, plus a peculiar pencil encore by Sharlat, sadly none of them showed up for this unforgettable meeting. Thirty years from now, this will be revisited and looked back upon as absolute highlight of the cultural life of a dad i am proud of.

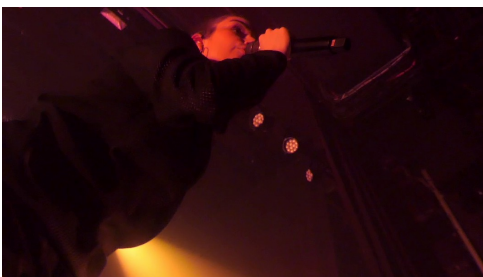
'je veux pleurer..'



1. Adèle Castillon

(Botanique, Bruxelles, March 6th)

What's French for catharsis? Anyone not *moi* will never fully comprehend what this gig did to my soul, i'm still figuring it out myself. There i was, thinking the Videoclub book was closed. Sure, Adèle's solo debut album scored a deserved third place in my top 10 last year, but that must've been slightly biased, synthpop dream romance had brutally come to an end, right? Turns out, i didn't have a fucking clue of the upcoming impact.



Charming chanson, meet pounding pop! Dressed in casual black, heartbreak and addiction got stripped to the bone, with just keys and drums. Standing in perfect place, with just the loveliest people around, my two most played tracks of both 2023 and 2024, *Promis* (broken promises) and *Rêve* (hope for love) swirled the mind. There's dance in dépendance.

Waiting in merch line for an hour gave me just enough time to practice what i wanted to tell her. And it came out perfectly. She held her hand to her heart when i explained about *Euphories* taking over from *Disintegration* as best album ever. Adèle/Videoclub has managed to do what no older retro artist could: capture the essence of eighties nostalgia and cure the loneliness; at exactly 4am, i woke up crying of happiness. I deeply feel our hug until this very day. This was an all-time top 5 gig, perhaps even top 2.

Breaking news encore: May 2025, Adèle Castillon will return to Le Botanique. *Mon cœur en fomo*.



'jack off to lyrics by Leonard Cohen.'
(Sabrina Carpenter – *Dumb & Poetic*)

One album per day, one concert per week, multiple movie marathons; needless to say, this review has been completely incomplete. Oscar movies (*Wicked, Anora, Conclave, Emilia Pérez, The Brutalist*) have been saved up for winter months, metal albums were shamefully ignored, but they're in good company with all the FOMO concerts i skipped after all (Slipknot, Paul Young) or were very impossible to get tickets to (Reneé Rapp).

2025



Already, next year is completely stacked with great, great, great, and even better gigs to look forward to. **Billie Eilish** towers above them all, previous encounter still rising in awe. In my humble opinion, she is the absolute queen of pop music right now, yes that's above **Dua Lipa** and **Sabrina Carpenter**, two of my other headliners in 2025. Also added, I really need to understand him better, is fascinating **Tyler, The Creator**.

Then there's the retro, eighties in my case. **Lionel Richie** will finally perform around the corner and is a no-brainer, just like previously missed **Level 42** in Paradiso, more childhood sentiment will probably follow. Further back in time, **Dionne Warwick** and **Graham Nash** will hopefully still be alive. So yeah, that's eight major concerts in the bag before the new year has even started. **Sugababes** and **FLO**, it adds up quickly.

Wishlist 2025, all never seen live before, in order of likelihood:

Stevie Wonder, Duran Duran, Lana Del Rey, Nailah Hunter, Elsy Wameyo, Sade, Smokey Robinson, Bananarama, Selena Gomez, Francesca Castro

Jazz and other world music will be a nice change of scenery, lovely Bimhuis a frequent destination, resulting in focus on instruments instead of recent obsession with vocals. Ticket to the Tropics pass is being considered above Indiestad, am I finally adult now?

First now, i'll finish my gaming advent: 24 video games that i have never played before, a genius idea. New potential addictions have been spotted, but game of the year **Project Zomboid** is likely to return too. I don't understand 'being bored'.

Haven't even mentioned Eighties Movies Bananas Project, which will be put into an overdrive soon. Merry Christmas, happy new year, stay sane.

