Here Are The 10 Best Feel-Good Songs Ever According To Science - Or Not

The British electronics firm Alba carried out a survey that asked customers to name their favorite feel-good songs. Alba then asked Dr. Jacob Jolij, a neuroscientist at the University of Groningen, if he could determine if there was a pattern to the songs the customers named and devise a formula that would allow music producers to create hit feel-good songs at will.

The project resulted in a collection of 10 songs that was promoted with headlines like "[The 10 most uplifting songs ever - according to science](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/the-10-most-uplifting-songs-in-the-world---according-to-science/)." Did the headlines get it right? Has science come up with a formula that captures what makes a song feel good? Are these the songs the formula picked out? Not even close on all counts.

Jolij didn't pretend for minute that a formula for feel-good songs is likely or even possible. As he points out on [his blog](http://www.jolij.com/?p=362),  A ‘feel good song’ is rather tricky to define. Music appreciation is highly personal and strongly depends on social context, and personal associations. In that respect, the idea of a ‘feel good formula’ is a bit odd – factoring in all these personal aspects is next to impossible, in particular if you want to come up with a quantitave (sic) feel good formula.

Rather than dismiss the whole project as silly, however, Jolij analyzed the songs he was given by Alba to see if they shared a set of distinctive characteristics. He had planned to use a linear mixed model, or possibly a machine learning algorithm, to identify the set of characteristics that distinguish successful feel-good songs from all others. That turned out to be impossible because Alba had only given him examples of feel-good songs and you need a lot of examples of both feel-good and non-feel-good songs for the mathematical techniques to work.

Jolij next compared the distributions of tempo and key for feel-good songs and average pop songs and found clear-cut differences. Feel-good songs have average tempos in the 140-150 BPM (Beats Per Minute) range while typical pop songs average around 118 BPM. In addition, feel-good songs are overwhelmingly in major keys.

Armed with this information, Jolij examined the lyrical content of the songs and codified what everyone already knew -- feel-good songs are about positive, happy things. Alba had asked for a formula so Jolij put together everything he found and gave them one.

The formula I came up with takes the number of positive lyrical elements in a song, and divides that by how much a song deviates from 150 BPM and from the major key. It’s not perfect at all – it’s mostly an illustration

Okay, it's not perfect but it's better than nothing, right? So, what are the best feel-good songs according to this admittedly imperfect formula? We don't know because Alba didn't use the formula when they compiled the list. Instead they "took the most often mentioned song per decade" and left it at that.

If you're still interested, here they are. The 10 best feel-good songs ever according to a bunch of people who filled out a survey in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Your mileage may vary, mine certainly did.

10. Katrina & The Waves - [Walking on Sunshine](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPUmE-tne5U&list=RDiPUmE-tne5U&index=1)

9. Gloria Gaynor - [I Will Survive](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBR2G-iI3-I)

8. Jon Bon Jovi - [Living on a Prayer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDK9QqIzhwk)

7.  Cyndi Lauper  - [Girls Just Wanna Have Fun](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIb6AZdTr-A)

6. The Monkees - [I'm A Believer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB9YIsKIEbA)

5. Survivor - [Eye of the Tiger](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btPJPFnesV4)

4. Billie Joel - [Uptown Girl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCuMWrfXG4E)

3. The Beach Boys - [Good Vibrations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eab_beh07HU)

2. Abba - [Dancing Queen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFrGuyw1V8s)

1. Queen - [Don't Stop Me Now](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgzGwKwLmgMhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgzGwKwLmgM)