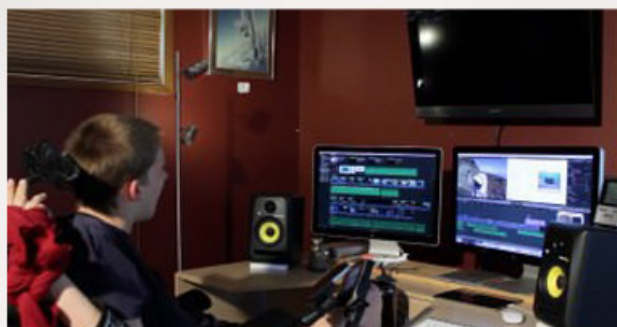
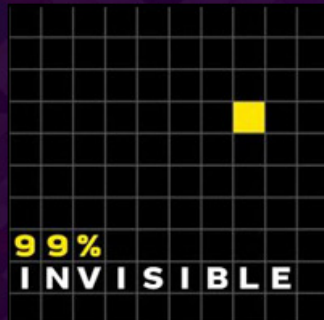




JULY 2015  
8th Anniversary

# 10 YEARS OF PODCASTS

FEATURES A GUIDE ON GETTING STARTED STARTED WITH PODCASTS



## APPLE MUSIC

First Impressions on the streaming service

## ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

Tips on making apps accessible to everyone

## MOVIE REVIEW: INSIDE OUT



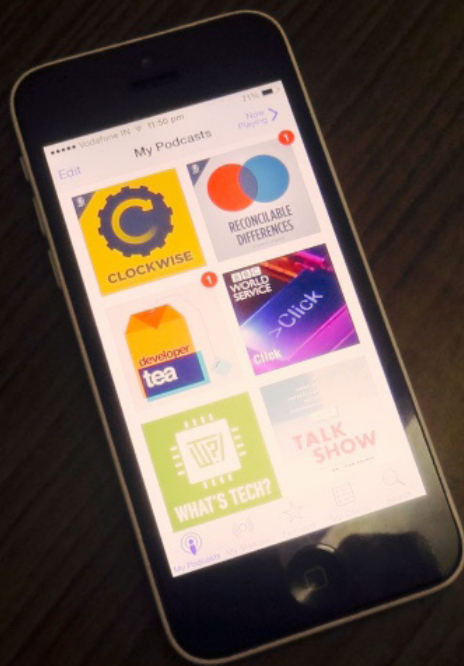


*“Man needs his difficulties because they are necessary to enjoy success.”*

- Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam



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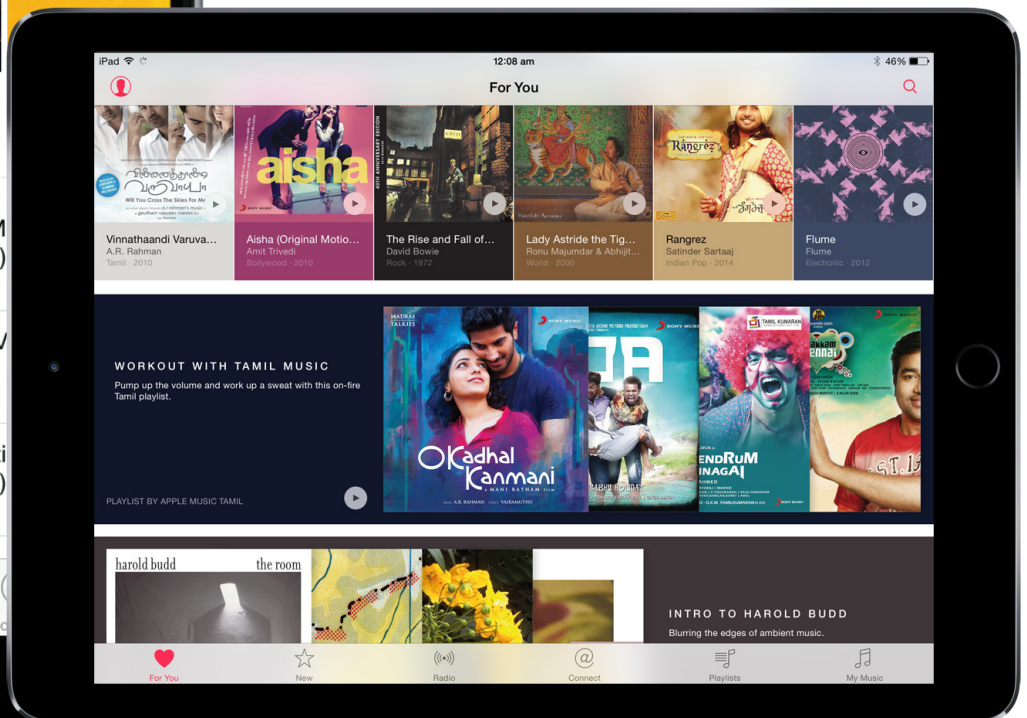
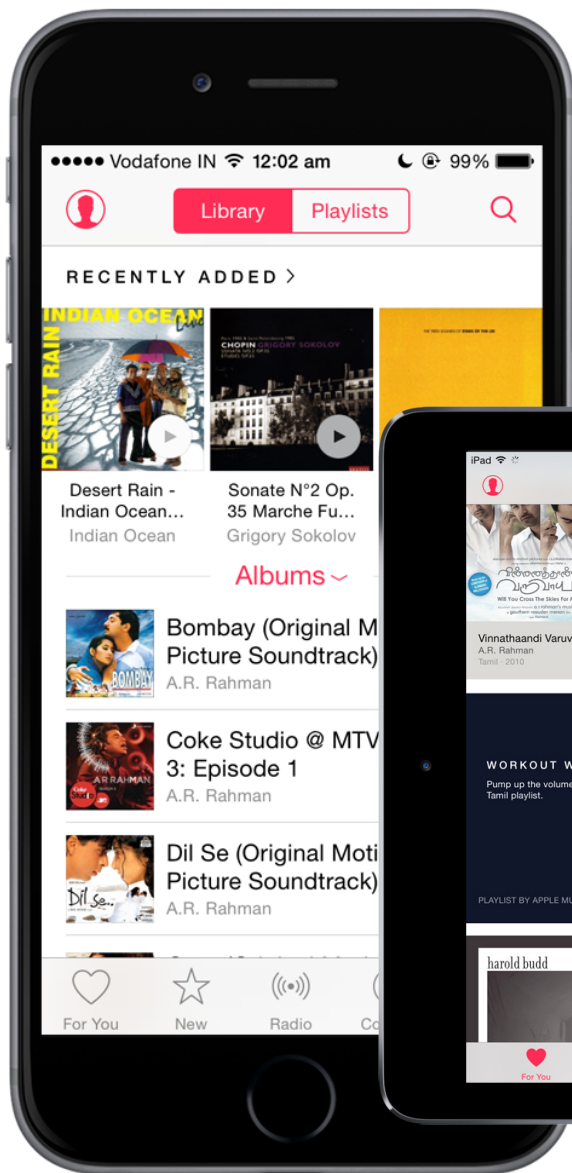
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*Yet another search engine? or is it  
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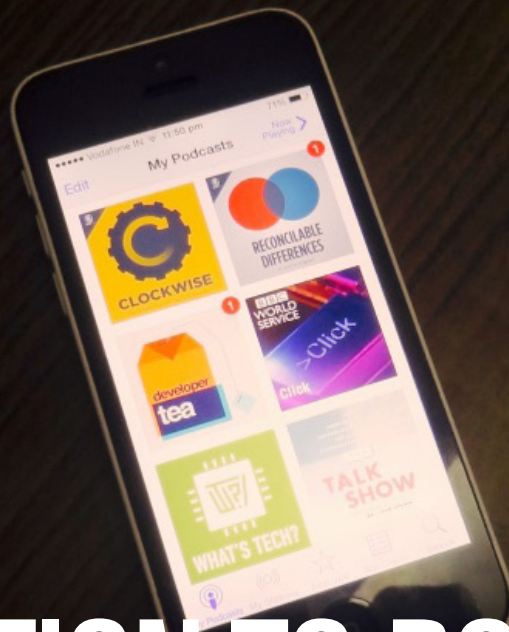
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# INTRODUCTION TO PODCASTS

Vidit Bhargava

For the last three years, I've been using a rather uncommon method of getting weekly news and gathering information that I'd otherwise be reading. I've been listening to Podcasts, and They are so good that I'm having a hard time scheduling them and I'm not alone, there are a few but growing number of users to such shows.

So, what are podcasts? And why is there a growing minority listening to them so frequently? Podcasts are periodicals. They're like TV shows but in smaller snippets and are in Audio format most of the times. They can be talk shows, news casts, comedy gigs, or better stories narrated to you every week (I love those).



Clockwise is a great podcast about catching up with news every week. Every week a bunch of tech journalists get together and discuss about four important tech stories of the week.

Most of the podcasts I listen to, range from being 5 minutes long to about as long 2.5 hours but the engagement level is immense. You can tune into anything you like and get a lot of insight.

Likewise a podcast called Serial is an audio periodical, a real life story of a murder that happened 16 years ago. The host explores the possibility that the wrong person was put

behind the bars. It's just as exciting a murder mystery as a TV series on the same might be!

## Where and How can I listen them?

Podcasts are free to listen streams available on the Internet. There are a lot services which let you discover new podcasts and listen to them with ease. They are called PodCatchers. iOS Has a default app that lets you do that. Then there's Marco Arment's Overcast which has awesome recommendations, again great for discovery.

On Android, PocketCasts (Made by Russel Ivanovich, a podcaster himself) is the leader in Podcast apps but if you are Looking for something free DoubleTwist is worth a shot.

The interface is generally simple. Once you subscribe to a podcast, your feed populates with the latest ones from different podcasts. You can then stream them or save them for later listening.

The interface is generally simple. Once you subscribe to a podcast, your feed populates with the latest ones from different podcasts.

## Where do I begin?

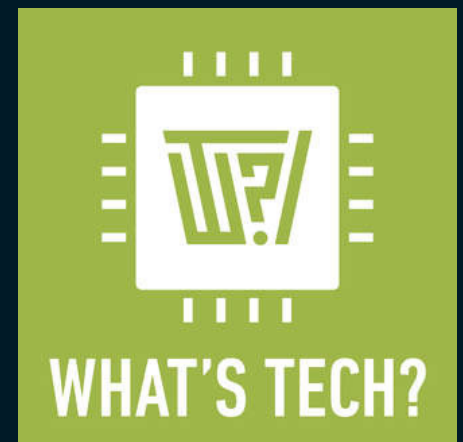
The podcasts I listen to generally cater to my interests and while I discovered some through Twitter. Most of them were discovered through the iTunes Store, a pretty decent platform to discover lots of Podcast content.

Over time I've built a small repository of some of the active podcasts that interest me. You can view it on the side columns.

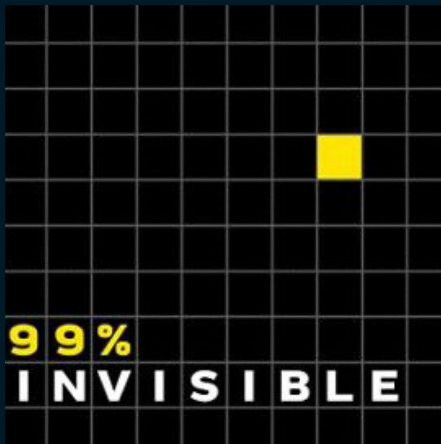


New Yorker's Fiction Podcast is a great show for readers. Each week a guest author reads a short story from the New Yorker's Archives.

Short and Enganging, The New Yorker Fiction Podcast is a vault of stories.



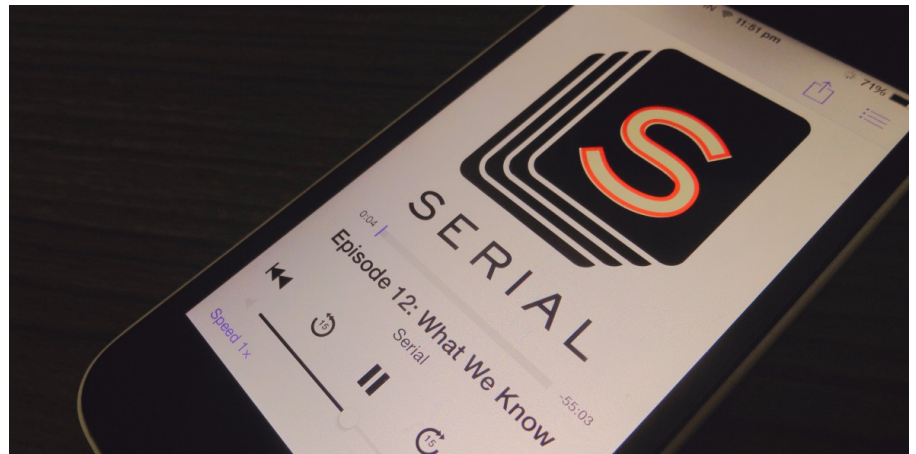
A podcast by The Verge, What's Tech tries to explain the technology in the most basic form possible. It's an interesting podcast for some really good trivia too.



How does design affect our lives? Bad Design can lead to frustrating experiences and accidents. While Good Design is generally rewarding and helpful. Hosted by Roman Mars, 99% Invisible is a Design Podcast that every one can listen to.



A weekly dive into the pop-culture, The Incomparable, hosted by Jason Snell, is a podcast about Books, TV shows, Movies and Comics. The host and his guests, discuss and recommend great stuff.



### About the Serial Podcast:

If you haven't heard serial. Go listen to it now! It's probably the most intriguing story I've heard, better than some of the TVShows and Movies even. A real life story of a murder that happened 16 years ago. The host Sarah Koenig explores the possibility that the wrong person was put behind the bars. A series of 12 episodes, The season 1 of Serial finished back in December last year and is scheduled to come back soon.

A lot of people like to compare podcasts with Radio talk shows. Which is in some ways a pretty fair comparison. Podcasts are Radio Talk Shows in a sense. They are free, periodical and highly engaging.

But what sets them apart from the modern day radio, is the fact there's always something worthwhile to listen to and it can be listened at anytime of the day. Podcasts cater to the interests of just about everyone and not just a group of people, often called the mass-market. And the fact that even the ads on some of these Podcasts are curated is a big win. They don't usually feel like big-distractions in a conversion (often very carefully placed). Ads are often a distraction. Curating what is being advertised, is very interesting.

A phenomenon that caught steam back in early 2000s is populating with interesting content every day, these days. It's perhaps the most interesting time to be hooked to audio weeklies.



# A MONTH WITH DUCKDUCKGO

Vidit Bhargava

At this point it seems crazy to think someone will start a new search engine. Google after all is doing a great job at search. But here we are, looking at a search engine, that claims to be different and in many ways better than Google, the unchallenged

leader of search engines. DuckDuckGo's big differentiating factor is the fact that it isn't interested in your data. It's challenging Google on the privacy front and sure, DuckDuckGo's privacy concerns are genuine but does it make it a better over-all product? I have mixed feelings.

## Useful DuckDuckGo !Bangs

General Search Commands		eCommerce		News	
Website	Command	Website	Command	Website	Command
Wikipedia	!wiki	Amazon India	!amin	The Verge	!verge
Google Maps	!maps	Flipkart	!fk	TechCrunch	!techcrunch
Quora	!q	Snapdeal	!snapdeal	Ars Technica	!ars

*DuckDuckGo has an expansive repository of more such bangs!*

### The !Bangs

Probably, the best feature of DuckDuckGo, and one that's had me using it for this long is the !bang feature. To search within a website, all I need to do is insert "!site name" before a website. This is extremely useful, while looking for Wikipedia content, shopping for items on Amazon, ba-

sically everywhere when you know the website you want to search content at. bang repository

The best !bang command, ironically is for one of Google's Service: !map start place to end leads you to Google Maps with the directions to the said place. It's one of the



fastest way to get directions. I found myself using !wiki command more often than anything else. Primarily because of my reading trend, which consists of more wikipedia articles than anything.

Try searching for !map Current Location to Destination to get directions for a particular place on Google Maps.

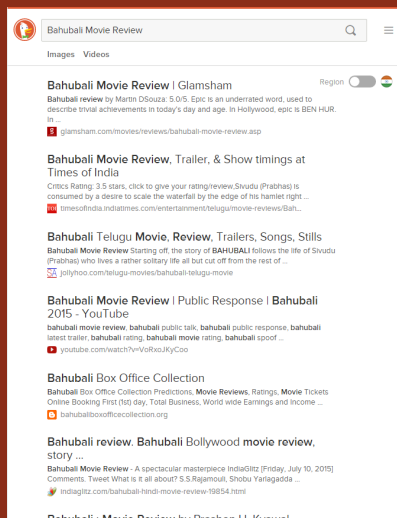
Initially, I had to remember to use it, but over time !bang has become a regular part of my searches. The only gripe I have with this feature though, is the choice of using an exclamation mark for such commands.

Basically, this makes the process slow, because the exclamation mark is neither in the primary keyboard layout of mobile keyboards (you have to tap the numbers icon to get to it) and nor is it instantly typeable on the keyboard (Shift + 1 gives you an exclamation mark). This relative un-reachability of

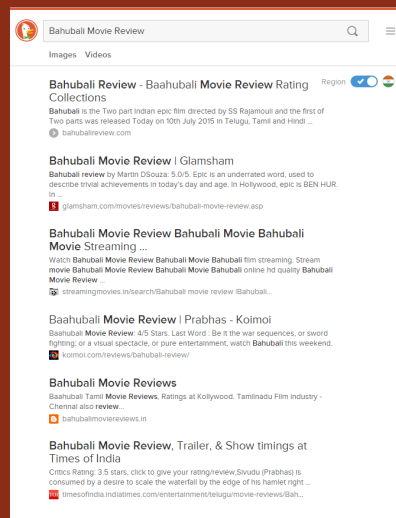
the ! mark make using !bang commands slightly less seamless. There could be better options of using such commands. For example something like a [Site Name] is far faster to type than an exclamation mark.

The !bang commands are a big win for

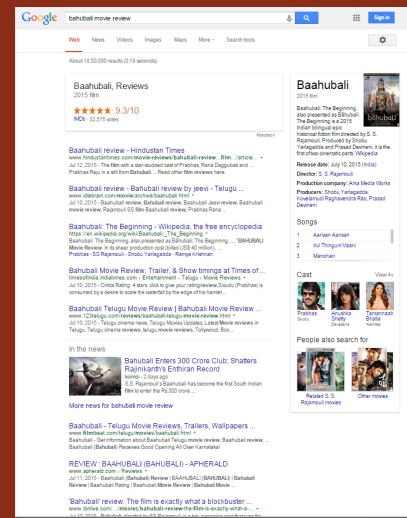
The !bang commands are a big win for DuckDuckGo, but typing in these commands could have been faster, if they didn't begin with an exclamation mark.



DuckDuckGo with  
Region Settings off



DuckDuckGo with  
Region Settings on



Google Search

DuckDuckGo, but typing in these commands could have been faster, if they didn't begin with an exclamation mark.

**Different Kinds of Search**  
Just how good DuckDuckGo is as a search engine, depends on what you search for. Looking for Random Websites? Duck-

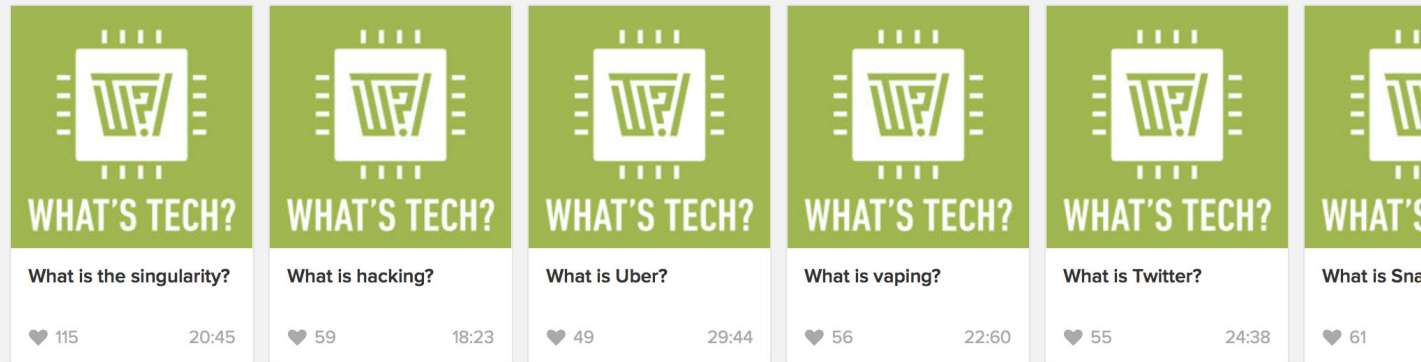


What's Tech the verge



Audio | Images Videos

Showing 31 Tracks



*DuckDuckGo's Search Snippets are Amazing, Like this one, which lets you play podcast and music from SoundCloud.*

DuckGo goes ahead and recommends you the official website. In a habit of searching for random terms, making news at the moment? You'd be well off by using the !google bang command.

The lack of Relevant and Easy to access News Results is a big let down.

My search trends include more of the latter. I use search engines to gather news more than anything

else, and it is something that I realised after I began using DuckDuckGo. Earlier, I'd just throw in random words of things I'd like to know the news about; Look at the date / time of the news and gather the headlines instantly. This is where DuckDuckGo fails though. At DuckDuckGo, you have to mention that you are looking for news, and most of the times the news isn't relevant.

DuckDuckGo has some extremely handy search snippets, which give quick access to information that you'd otherwise be left to fishing inside Search Results.

Searching for a review

Here's a snippet of my search for Indian Movie's review. Notice, the news section in Google's Search is highly relevant over here.

DuckDuckGo is great for a lot of other things though. Searching for a website

is super easy on DuckDuckGo.

DuckDuckGo has an official website tag added to official websites, incredibly useful if you are looking for

a bank's website, where a misspelling can easily lead you to a phishing page.

Image of a search snippet

Another handy feature are the convenient Audio, Ask and Apps tab. So, basically, if you are searching for a podcast. You can easily Search for one and listen right inside the search engine. The ask tab is great for stackoverflow questions.

And then again, it's got some of the nifty snippets that Google provides too, Flight Schedules, Calculators, Wikipedia Snippets, Definitions et al. DuckDuckGo's Snippets are extremely useful.

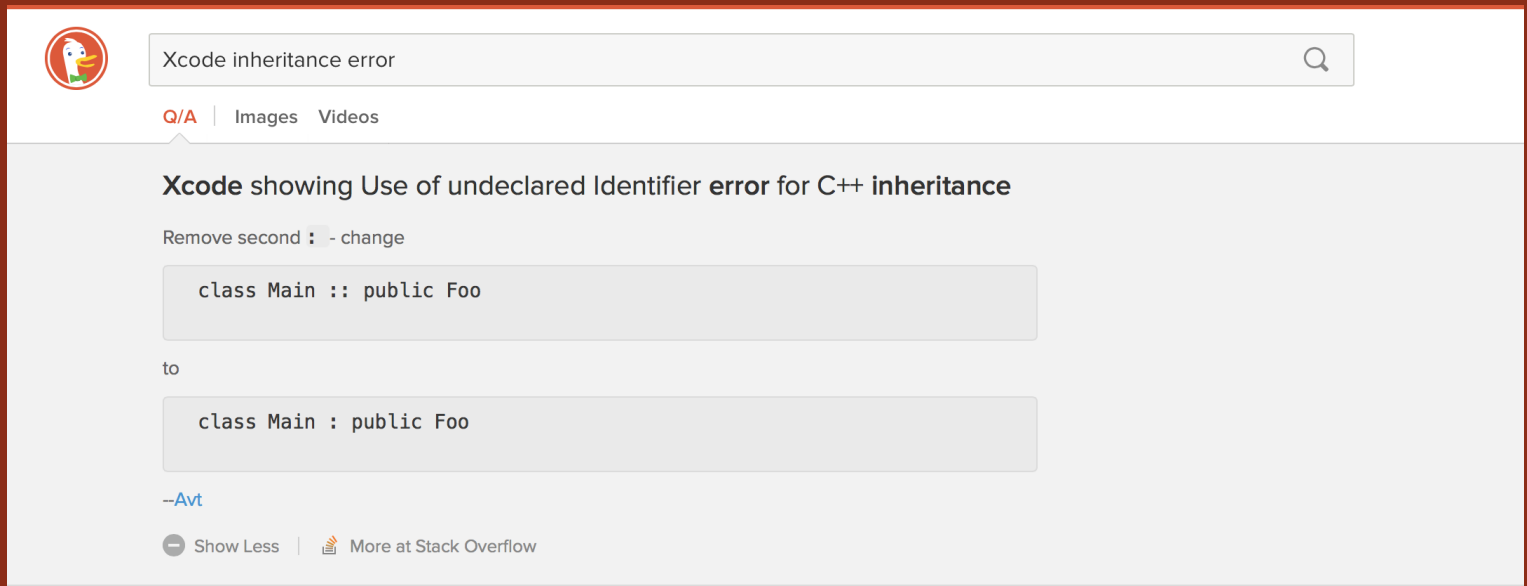
DuckDuckGo has some extremely handy search snippets, which give quick access to information that you'd otherwise be left to fishing inside Search Results.

For me, DuckDuckGo's search has been very iffy. It's not better than Google, for a

lot of my searches I still rely on Google's services but it's definitely learning and learning fast. The founder, Gabriel Weinberg is actively listening to feedback from all sorts of places, including Twitter. I was surprised at his prompt replies on a particular DuckDuckGo feedback.

DuckDuckGo isn't the best search engine available, but it's one of the fastest learning and that is highly important.

So, After months of DuckDuckGo us-



*This snippets from DuckDuck Go allows you to search for Answers from Stack Overflow. These small enhancements keep me hooked to the search engine.*

age. Am I still using it? Yea! Do I love the experience? Not necessarily. The experience depends on your search habits, for me it's been less than satisfactory. The only reason I'm still using DuckDuckGo is because of its constant improvements and the fact that

I can always fall-back to Google's services without having to switch default search engines.

DuckDuckGo isn't the best search engine available, but it's one of the fastest learning and that is highly important.

Should you give DuckDuckGo a Try? Sure! It might just work for you. It all depends on what your search habits are.



# DESIGNING FOR ACCESSIBILITY

by Vedit Bhargava



Accessibility features are extremely helpful for the disabled. These features enable them to use the devices that they love, without letting their disability get in the way but they are equally important to those who are perfectly abled.

A lot of times these features provide an extra level of convenience too. I've always loved to play

around with Accessibility controls on my iPhone. I'm an ardent user of the speech functionality, even though I don't have any reading disabilities. The speech func-

tionality is great for proof-reading!

What's more, Accessibility isn't something that needs long hours of programming or excessive design tweaking. With a few

lines of code and minor interface tweaks, your app can reach a much wider audience. But having said that, Accessibility isn't

Accessibility features are extremely helpful for the disabled but a lot of times these features provide an extra level of convenience too.

something that you put on a checklist of items and check it off in the end. True accessibility is ingrained deep into an App's interface.

## Design and Accessibility Venn Diagram



Accessibility is key to a good user experience. If you are designing an app without making basic considerations for easy usage, it isn't right. If a colour blind person

cannot tell the difference between an on or off state of a button, was the button really designed keeping all the users in mind? I don't think so.

I'd like to share a few tips to quickly make apps more accessible, here:

### A Quick Accessibility Check

The first thing you'd want to do with your app would be put every interface element that serves a *purpose* accessible.

It's a basic checklist of five tasks that you could perform for every element. Eventually it makes your app work with the voice over functionality of the device.

Some would argue that this is more about code than designing the interface and they are right in a way. Most of the things I mentioned above need to be done in code but they are definitely a part of a good user experience.

### Accessibility Checklist

Does it need to be an accessible element?

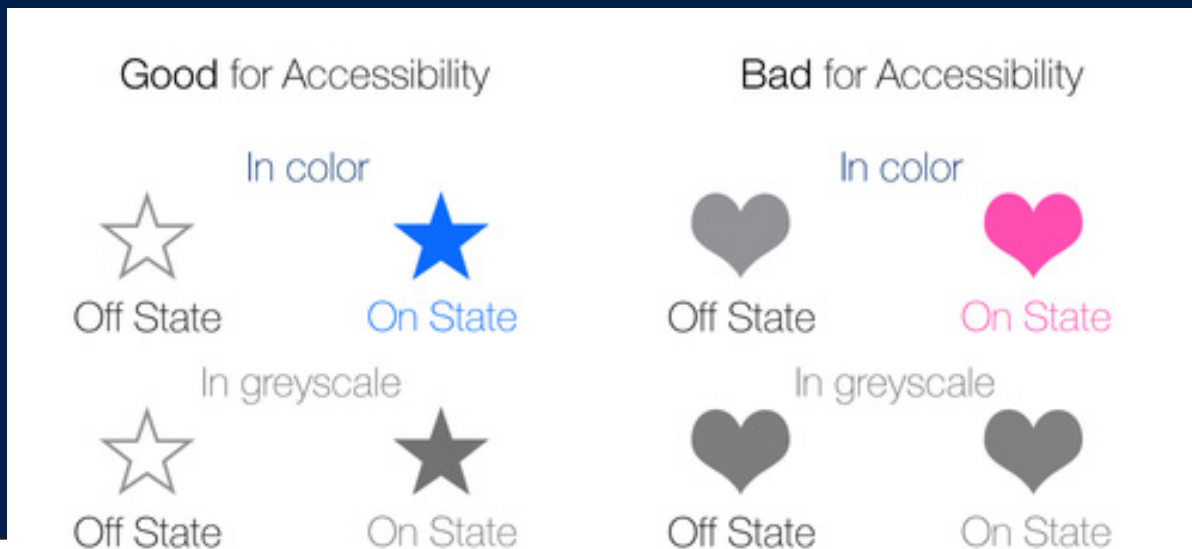
Label your Element:  
Keep the labels succinct.

Define its trait:  
Is it a button or a slider or a change of state notification?

For Value Based Elements:  
Define the value to be returned.

Provide Hints!

*An interface that works in greyscale too,  
helps you create a more universal interface*



### **Grey Scale Check**

While designing an interface for a touch screen device, we make elements and states distinguishable from each other. For example: An 'on state' appears different from the 'off state' of the same button. However, a lot of times this doesn't translate to people of all kinds of abilities. For example if your button is only changing colour on change of state. Somebody who is colour blind won't be able to distinguish between the two states. A greyscale check solves the issue. I've tried to explain the grey scale test through the illustration above.

This doesn't only translate to buttons, it also translates too every change in the interface. The important question here is, Can a user see a change on screen, without a change in colour? He should.

### **Accessibility with Text**

iOS provides users with an ability to in-

crease the text size on their phones. This is a functionality especially useful to those with distant vision. A functionality I believe, every app should have.

There's also a speak functionality. Optional but highly useful. It not only helps the visually impaired. It's extremely useful for having things read out.

In fact I use this feature for nearly every article that I read online. It helps me read at a pace I'd otherwise not be able to and while it is being read I can focus on other work too. An extremely handy feature which is also a part of making your app more accessible.

### **Subtitles and Closed Captioning**

Heavily used for a variety of reasons, subtitles and closed captioning are a classic example of accessibility. There are times when people find it hard to catch the accent of a person in the video, there



are others where a language unknown to audience is being spoken and most importantly, sometimes the user has a hearing problem. Subtitles and Closed Captioning help a long way here.

### Following Platform Conventions

Following platform conventions is a good design practice. It helps lower the learning curve for an app, significantly. A Lower learning curve also helps in making a more universal app. An app that's usable by all, shouldn't be difficult to navigate or take time to provide basic functional-

ity. Following platform conventions is one of the most significant ways in which an app's learning curve can be brought down. Users get used to a lot of interactions while using the default app. For example the swipe gesture which takes you back to the previous screen or the icon that pulls up a share sheet. Each platform has its own conventions, navigation on an iOS device is different from navigation on an Android device. Different operating systems have different design languages and hence their icons are different. A share icon looks different on iOS and Android

## Platform Conventions

### Share Buttons



Easily Recognizable  
by iOS Users



Easily Recognizable  
by Android Users

and so does their respective share sheets.

So, when a user opens a third party app he is already expecting the interactions and icons from the operating system is using. But if an app decides to use its own platform's conventions it takes time for the user to adjust in the new app. The app is no longer as easy to use as it would have been if it followed the interactions and icons from the platform it is running on. Not following platform conventions creates a learning curve which might be hard to overcome for different people with dif-

ferent abilities. It is a bad design choice that hampers not only the user experience but the accessibility of the app.

—

A good user experience without designing for accessibility is a myth. At this point if you are not designing your app to be accessible to people with different abilities, you are missing out. It's not only about the social responsibility of making your app work for the differently able, it's about reaching a wider audience and enhancing the quality of your app.



# DESIGNING FOR APPLE WATCH

*by Vidit Bhargava*

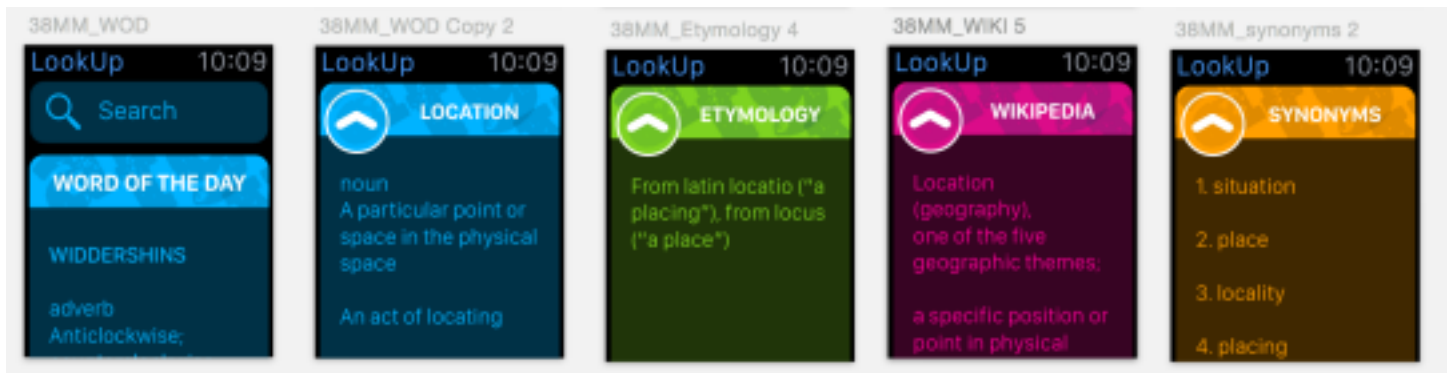
About an year ago, my brother and me released a dictionary app for the iPhone: LookUp. LookUp is a modern day dictionary, it provides more than just meanings with an easy to use and elegant interface. There are instances where an image is a better definition than just text. There are instances where a wikipedia article might be useful. A traditional dictionary fails here but LookUp provides all this data.

This month, we were featured in the 20Under20 Promotion by the App Store (It is a section featuring the apps made by young developers). Along with that, we also released a version 2 for our app. The second version features a major redesign and a watch app.

The prospect of a watch app is extremely exciting. It's very convenient to lookup a word's meaning on your wrist, without having to fetch your phone from the pocket. But It's extremely challenging too. When we started to develop the watch app, there was no watch to test it on! I was creating an interface for something I hadn't even seen in person. Needless to say, It was a great learning experience and I'd love to share some of the things I learnt while designing the interface for LookUp's Watch App.

## **Designing for the Watch Without the Watch.**

One of the key steps to designing the interface for LookUp on the Apple Watch



*Initially the Watch App had the option to search for everything. But it was apparent soon, that something of the sort would be highly impractical given how short the interaction is.*

was Paper Prototyping, and while I had spent a lot of time prototyping interfaces on Sketch (Thanks to the templates that Apple Provided with it's design kit), I eventually fell back to the paper prototypes. Paper Prototypes alone are a great way of learning. One of the first things you realise when you sketch the apple watch on paper is that how small it is, even the 42mm version. The screen's tiny. This fact, changes the dynamics of the UI, completely.

Another thing that proved to be extremely useful were paper cutouts of the watch itself. There's lots of insight to be gathered from the exercise of just pretending to wear the watch for a day. I would sit wearing the watch's cutout for sometime and try to fiddle in the screen area. This gave me some great insights into button placement.

Though the paper prototypes and sketch templates, there were a lot of things that I realised in the entire process of designing the interface for the watch. I've listed a few of them below:

### **There's Limited Time.**

Watch Interaction is measured in seconds. Designing an interface for the phone is different from designing for the desktop because the interaction time on a phone is much shorter than that on the desktop. While interaction time on Desktop is measured in hours, it's measured in minutes for the phone and in seconds for the watch.

One can't use the watch in the same way as one uses the phone. This calls for limiting the functionality of the app, so that, key tasks are performed in





seconds and the app's primary tasks are clearly defined as easily navigable.

When I initially prototyped LookUp's watch app, it was a miniature version of the iPhone app. It had all the functionality, it displayed everything from Meanings to Images and even the UI looked like a shrunken iPhone app.

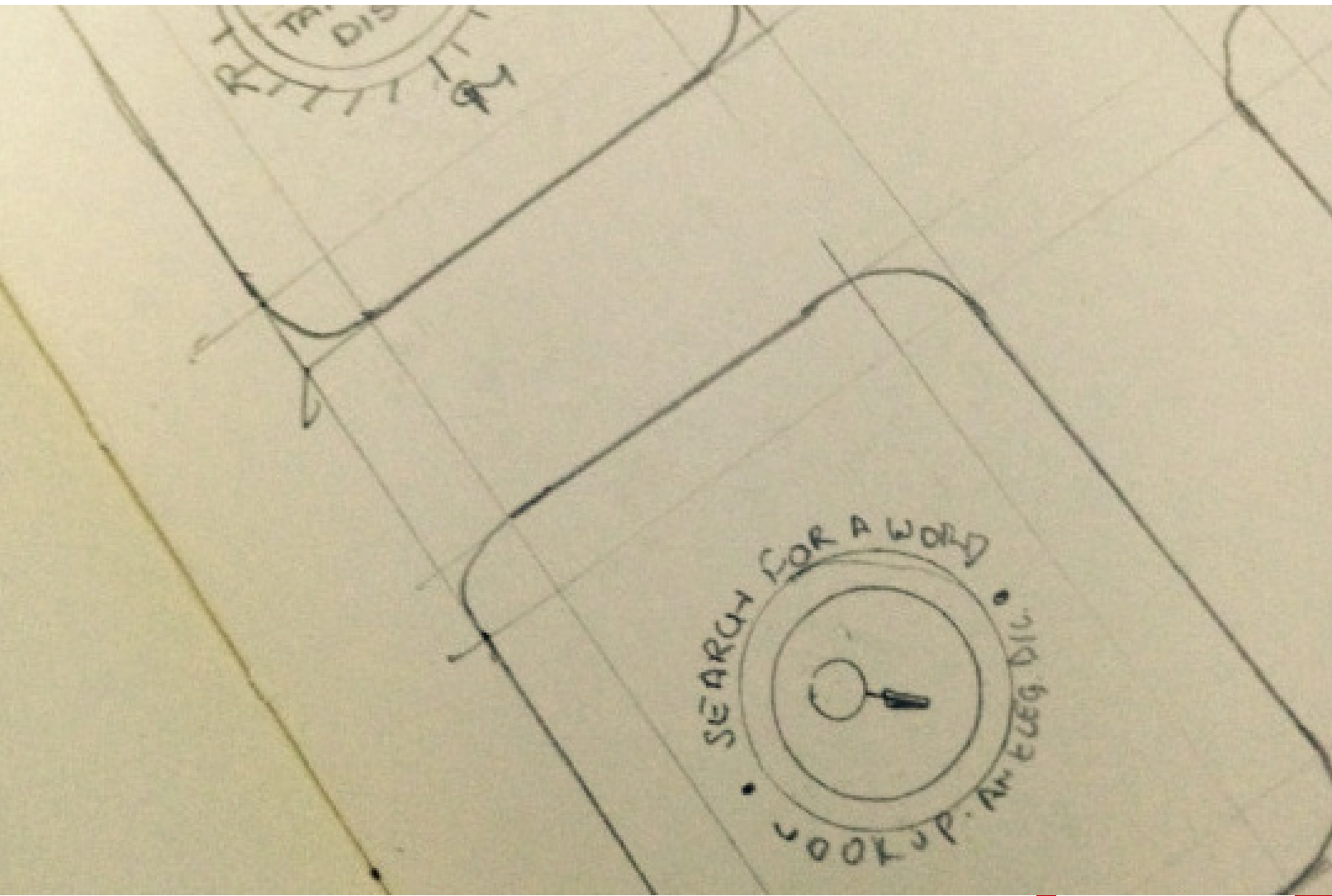
Eventually we ended up displaying only meanings for the watch app. True, LookUp's all about providing more than just meanings, but retrieving all that information would take a lot of time, as apps aren't fully native at the moment. What good would our app be, if it took you minutes to lookup a words meaning?

Wouldn't you rather use your phone instead? Sometimes, doing fewer things is better for the app. Of course, this is just a non-native apps issue, so we'll add more functionality, once it is possible to retrieve it quickly.

Sometimes less is better. With the watch it was extremely crucial to trim down the functionality of our app to its primary use. No distractions. The interactions are super quick, and if it takes too long or if the interface is to clumsy to even perform the smallest of tasks, it isn't worth it.

### **The Screen is very small.**

The Watch Screen is small. It is tiny in fact. While the watch is capable of ex-



tremely complicated tasks, adding a lot above the fold is sometimes easy, when designing on 'sketch templates'. Drawing the watch on paper gives the right perspective. Providing fewer controls at a time is very helpful to the user. But there's room for a lot of content to be displayed. The less frequently used content can go below the fold.

Paper prototypes have given great per-

spective while designing for the Watch. While designing the app, Initially, the first screen was very similar to that of the phone app. The search bar would sit atop the Word of the Day card. However, I soon realised that this wasn't the right kind of interface. The word of the day card side-stepped the primary function of our app: To LookUp words. Our current interface for the first screen is just a single button, that allows you to quickly search



*The Home Screen of the Watch App went through various changes, we eventually settled for a single button interface which was much more suited to the small screen.*

for a word's meaning. The primary function of the app is clearly highlighted on the screen.

Our current interface for the first screen is just a single button, that allows you to quickly search for a word's meaning. The primary function of the app is clearly highlighted on the screen.

### Apple Watch's Force Touch Menus

Force Touch Menus are a great tool to add

extra functionality to the app. Things that don't find a place in the primary interface of the app, secondary functions, can go in the force touch menu. Easily accessible but not cluttering the interface in any way.

They aren't instantly visible though. It isn't as instantly apparent to a user to force touch on the display for more actions, as it is to scroll with the crown or to use the touch screen. Which is probably why, Apple's Human Interface Guidelines



don't recommend adding primary functions to a force touch menu.

The Word of the Day Screen which we left out from the first screen eventually ended up in the force touch menu. It's a secondary function for the watch.

It's not

something you'd want to see every time you open the watch app. The Starred List is both a secondary function and something that should be accessible from any screen. It's a diary of your favourite words which warrants a place for it in the force touch menu.

## Natural Padding

One of the things I realised, after reading a few blogs upon the release of the watch, was that the watch provides natural padding to an interface and so the text on a black background can be edge to edge. Moreover, heavily margined text might also hamper the readability on the small screen. It's a minor tweak, It's something that'll probably go unnoticed a lot of

times, but it's a smart move that uses the watch's natural padding in a great way.

—

The design and development of the LookUp Watch App took nearly six months. I had begun on the design as soon as the watch kit came out but everyday since then has been a learning experience. Apple's Human Interface Guidelines and Marco Arment's post on redesigning his app for the Apple Watch (which had come much later during the development, but has been heavily useful) have been great guides here. Mike Stern's "Designing for the Apple Watch" Session at WWDC has also helped me further improve the interface. It's a great session and extremely recommended. The things I've learnt from the session will definitely make it to the watch app's future updates.

I'm yet to try my app on an actual watch though and I'm sure I'll learn a lot more about interfaces on Apple Watch by using it. However, Creating an interface for a device which I haven't even used or seen yet was a wonderful learning experience. The paper prototyping stage holds a lot of importance here. There's a lot you can learn by just sketching a watch on the paper and drawing the interface on that.

LookUp: An Elegant Dictionary is available for the iPhone and Apple Watch on the App Store. It's just \$1.99. Your feedback on the Apple Watch app would be heavily useful to me.



# APPLE MUSIC FIRST IMPRESSIONS

by Vidit Bhargava



## The Idea of Music Streaming

Music Streaming services have existed for sometime now. These services gained immense popularity after the introduction of Mobile App Platforms, the idea of listening to any song at any time for a nominal cost is extremely convenient to a lot of people.

To me though, the idea has always been a distraction. The entire music library? Na! That's too much of music to take care of.

At best, Music Streaming services are a good discovery tool. It's good to be able to hear complete songs a couple of times before I go on to Purchase them and take them wherever I want to!

Music Streaming Services often post another problem. Rents. Why would I want

to rent my favorite Albums every month!?

The idea of Renting music feels a bit like Uber. It's good to travel around the city in a Uber sometimes, on days when being driven is more important. But it's an impractical arrangement to sell your own car and use a Uber everyday. The experience of staying in control of your car is just not there. This is the same with Renting out music. The experience is plastic. It feels as

Why would I want to rent my favorite Albums every month!?

though a service made for those who don't even have an inkling of a relation with their music.

Does Apple do anything better here? Or does it just provide the same morbid experience that others subject me to? Well, for one, I'm still buying my music, since Apple Music Libraries won't sync with my iPods. But let's have a deeper look.



## Apple Music as a Streaming Service Internet Streaming

Apple's Music Streaming service is top of the line. The sound quality is great, it's way better than my previous (part-time) streaming service Saavn. Streaming is basically about three things:

The first: Internet Streaming,

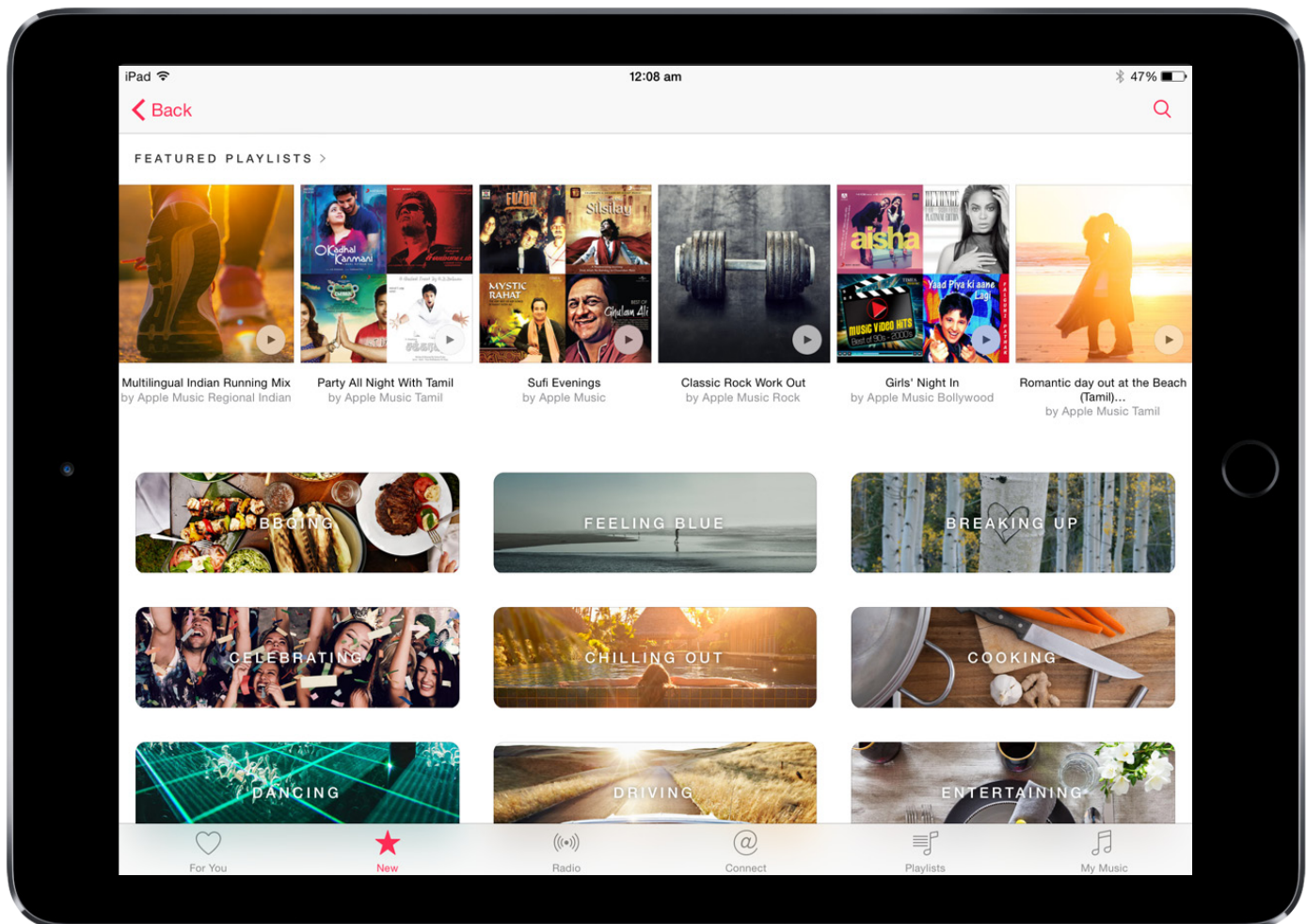
Second: Curated Playlists and Third: Recommendations.

Apple Music's Internet Streaming is basically similar to the what other platforms offer, the music quality being streamed is

at par and better than some of the other services, there's a fair

amount of content to be streamed for a

If Apple Music is lacking in content, it's Curation more than makes up for it.



subscription and it also offers Music Videos to be streamed, something that's inherently better than the YouTube model of handling such videos, if it gets that level of music content. Music

Streaming in India, however is a slight let down, in the current three month trial period, some of the major music labels like Eros Music (Understandable. Eros wants to promote its own music streaming ser-

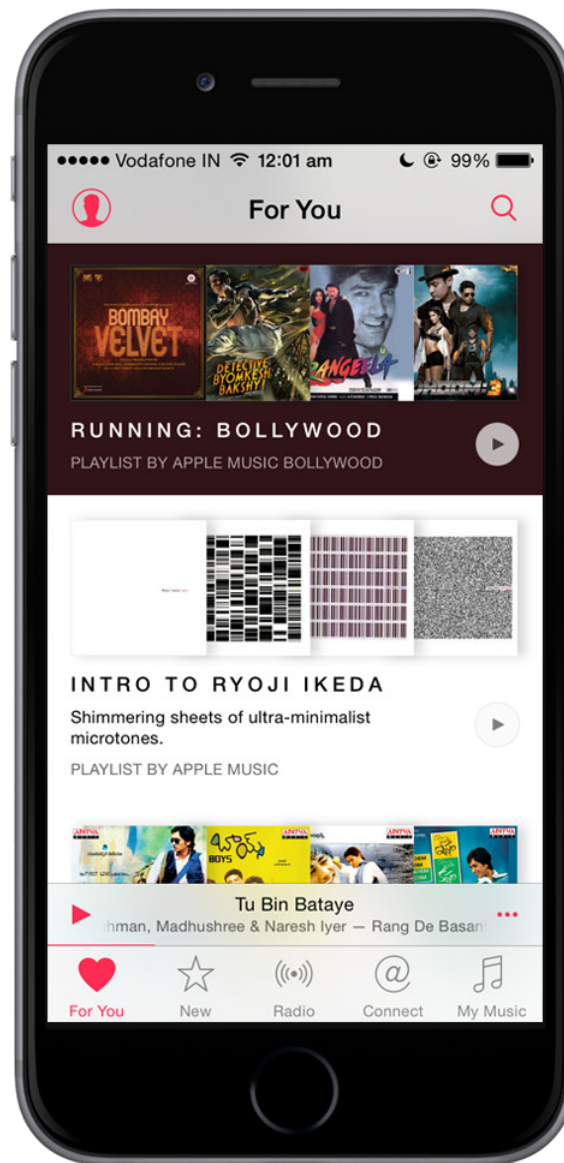
vice and is holding back on exclusivity at least for Apple Music) and T-Series (There are just slow to adapt I guess. Or Maybe they are still hanging on to their little used Hun-gama Music service!) are missing which is slightly annoying because currently, the difference between the Apple Music catalog and the iTunes Store catalog is jarring, with Apple Music not getting a lot of new content. This I hope, changes when Apple Music starts charging its users and goes cross platform in September. Add Content to it, and Apple Music streaming is frankly better than all of the other streaming service currently in India.

If Apple Music is lacking in content, it's Curation more than makes up for it. The thing is, even without the major labels, Apple Music has huge amounts of good undiscovered music. And Apple has done a fabulous job at compiling all of this into curated playlists for a host of occasions, genres and activities. So, if you tap on a studying playlist section there are around 20-30 playlists ranging from in-

strumental to Bollywood mixes for you to choose from. Then there are the "Intro to Artist" playlists, which basically offer you 10-15 amazing songs from the particular artist, again beautifully compiled. I tried

the "Intro to A.R. Rahman" playlist (Didn't need an Intro to him though, being a huge fan of his) and the songs were pretty nicely selected. The same was true for most of the other artists. As a localization for Indian music, there are Intro to Actor playlists too. The playlists are so far Apple Music's best feature. This is where Apple Music is Strongest. This is also a place where Apple Music is way ahead of the competition. Other Streaming services rely on Algorithms for this kind of work, Apple Music however is doing human curation too and the results are visibly better.

What tops the Playlists is the recommendation engine that Apple's using to suggest you playlists and albums. This is probably more about Machine learning than Human Curation and for that reason, it's not absolutely accurate all the time, as

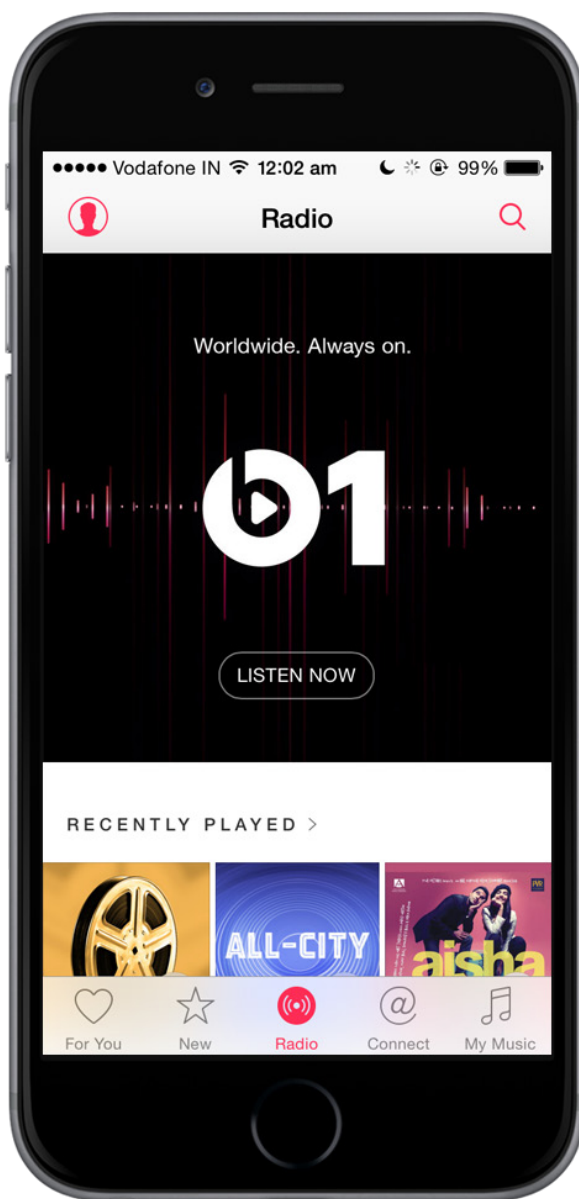


in, it's not always that I like the the music being recommended to me. Having said that, a lot of Apple Music's recommendations are accurate and have helped me discover new music.

The three parts of the streaming service combined, together form a pretty good discovery platform. In the one month that I've used Apple Music, I've almost formed a treasure-chest of awesome music that I wouldn't have otherwise come across.

## Radio

Apple's killer feature for the music service is Beats 1. It is a global Internet Radio Station that has real DJs curating music, a pleasant departure from the current local radio scenario where spots are basically bought to promote new Albums or new Movies (In India, at least). With three DJs and a host of guests on different Radio Shows Beats 1 features quite an assortment of English music to listen to. Personally, I don't really listen to English Music, and have only listened to Beats 1 for a few minutes at max, the talk shows are great and indulging and the songs I heard didn't really make me listen to more English music



but I can see the novelty in such a radio service which offers a right mix of new and upcoming music along with other good English music in an environment which isn't painted with Ads or A lot paid promotions.

There are of course, other radio stations by Genre, Activities and Artists. I tried the Bollywood Radio for some time and while the music being played was a much better collection than the local radio stations, but the lack of Beats 1 like DJs and Curation was slightly disappointing. The Radio stations in their current state aren't amazing, as they basically use some sort of a recommendation engine and currently the content is too little

to cater to the diverse needs of a user in a meaningful way. The stuff will probably get better with time and perhaps we might even see a Beats 1 Hindi Station some day if and when Apple plans to expand to territories which don't listen to English music much.

Perhaps, Apple Music's riskiest feature yet, Connect is a social network for Artists to upload exclusive content. Admit-



tedly, this is something that will only catch to have but it isn't necessarily essential for steam if the artists join in and share content. **In some form at least, Connect is an alternative for Independent Artists to share their music with a wider audience.** the service, or to say, a need feature.

## But Apple Music is much more than Shanker **Apple Music the App**

Ehsaan Loy sharing behind the scenes concert photos with their fans. It's also about discovering independent artists in an easier way. In some form at least, Connect is a competitor to SoundCloud, or more precisely an alternative for Independent Artists to share their music with a wider audience. The current experience for uploading content, however, is less than desirable for Independent Artists and frankly there aren't many indie artists showing up on my connect tab. The experience of following them, isn't exactly great either.

But what Connect is good at is, catching up with Artists, primarily of use to fans. There's tons of backstage footage available, One of the artists I'm following even disclosed a bit of information of one their much awaited movie albums (Confirming the movie in the process too!). Connect is a nice feature



Apple Music v1.0 is a good service but it has some serious app issues. The iPhone App, iPad App and OSX App are all marred with bugs and crashes. The experience isn't great. It just barely works.

To start with, I've had a few problems with the way Navigation on the new Music app is designed. Apple Music's Navigation seems to be more concerned about promoting new features than making everything easily discoverable. Placing the Search option at the top right corner of the display clearly seems to be an attempt to promote playlists, radio and curation over searching for specific content. Every

Album and Playlist recommendation is stashed under the "For You" segment, and all of "My Music" is shoved under one tab at the bottom right. Why is this annoying? There are three different navigation tabs



to discover Playlists and Albums but none of them clearly demarcate the line between content available on my device and that on the Internet. Shoving every piece of music under the My Music Tab and every little inch of recommendation under “For You”, makes both of the views Heavy, and slightly suffocating.

Personally I’d have gone for a bottom navigation that had Playlists, Albums, Radio, Search, and Connect, with the For You, New and My Music segments showing up as Segmented Controls.

Apple Music also has it’s share of minor bugs, such as the feedback issue with the



Repeat and Shuffle Buttons. Placed at the bottom of the Now Playing Interface, both Repeat and Shuffle have an extremely dim feedback on whether they are in on or off state. On one occasion I accidentally pressed the “Repeat 1” state and it took me almost a day to figure out why Apple Music wouldn’t Play my playlists and instead repeat a random song from them, or why my Up Next Queue had only one song repeating 20 times. It initially felt like a bug, on close observation however it was the Repeat 1 mode switched on. I’d have liked better feedback on that. I faced a similar

The Experience isn’t great. It just Barely Works.

issue with adding playlists and songs to my library initially. It took me days to figure out why the music that I had added to my library wouldn’t show up. Eventually I figured, it was a setting, hiding under the My Music tab that needed to be switched on. A minor case of setting wrong defaults put forward a frustrating experience in the beginning.

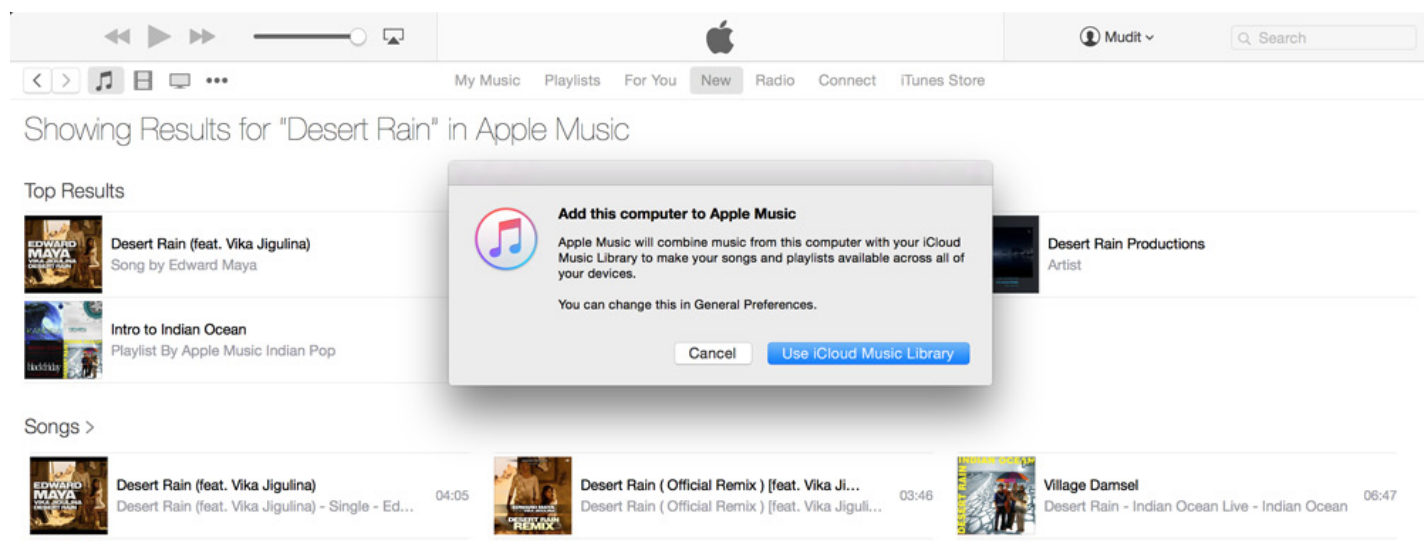
To be Honest, Apple Music feels like a beta software at present, the last time I saw these many crashes in an App was when I was using the iOS 5 Beta 1 to test an app!

## iCloud Music Library

None of these problems though, hold water to the biggest problem with Apple Music: iCloud Music Library. When Apple came up with iCloud back in 2011, they also introduced something known as iTunes Match. For years, iTunes Match has been slightly buggy and sometimes an inaccurate solution to putting music on the Cloud. Destroying Meta Data, mixing tracks, adding duplicates have been

a frequent annoyance with iCloud Music Library, the service behind iTunes Match. With the introduction of Apple Music, iCloud Music Library being a key component, one would have hoped Apple would fix these issues like they fixed Siri's Voice Recognition before the Apple Watch release. This didn't happen.

This is what iCloud Music Library does: It takes your Library and matches the songs



you have to those on the iTunes Store, it then replaces your music with a better quality iTunes replica of the same. However, sometimes the Match isn't accurate, sometimes there are more than one version of a song and the songs get inaccurately matched, in the process, destroying the Song's meta data (like Play Counts) and sometimes even deleting music from library.

At the moment, iCloud Music Library feels

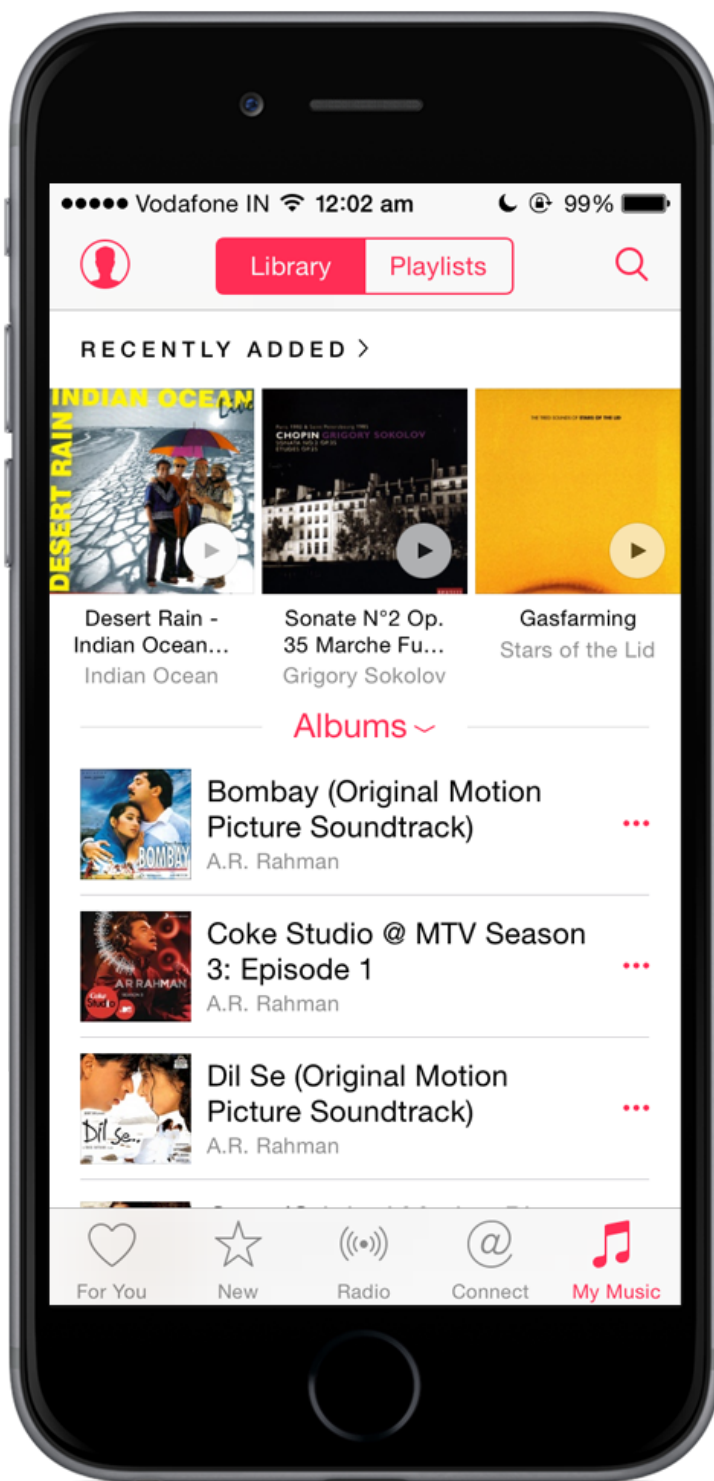
like a switch of destruction, which when switched on could potentially blow up my iTunes Library. Which is actually worse than having a frustrating experience. The experience is no less than terrifying. Personally, I kept a good distant with the button that turns this on, on my primary desktop, which hosts about 10 years worth of Valuable Music Data, something I'm not willing to give away for any service, whatsoever. But being a key part of Apple a Music, it's annoying to not be able

to use the features like Adding Playlists PC. This doesn't even include the new iPod Shuffle and iPod Nano.

## DRM Woes

DRM is a problem for all kinds of Internet Streaming Services, not just Apple Music. But with Apple Music, it's moving from a DRM Free system to one that's closely guarded with DRM. DRM is basically a technology that ensures that the music obtained is playable only on Authorized Computers and Devices.

Currently, Apple's Music Catalog is split in two. First, the New Apple Music Service which offers DRM Music for a Subscription and iTunes Store which, for years, has been giving away DRM Free Music. So if you download a song from Apple Music, you can only play it on the iCloud Enabled devices associated with your Apple ID, like your iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Mac and



It is perfectly understandable as to why a subscription service would do this. No one wants the music to be pirated and with these albums being offered for Free on Apple Music, it would make it tough to keep a check on Music Piracy without a DRM.

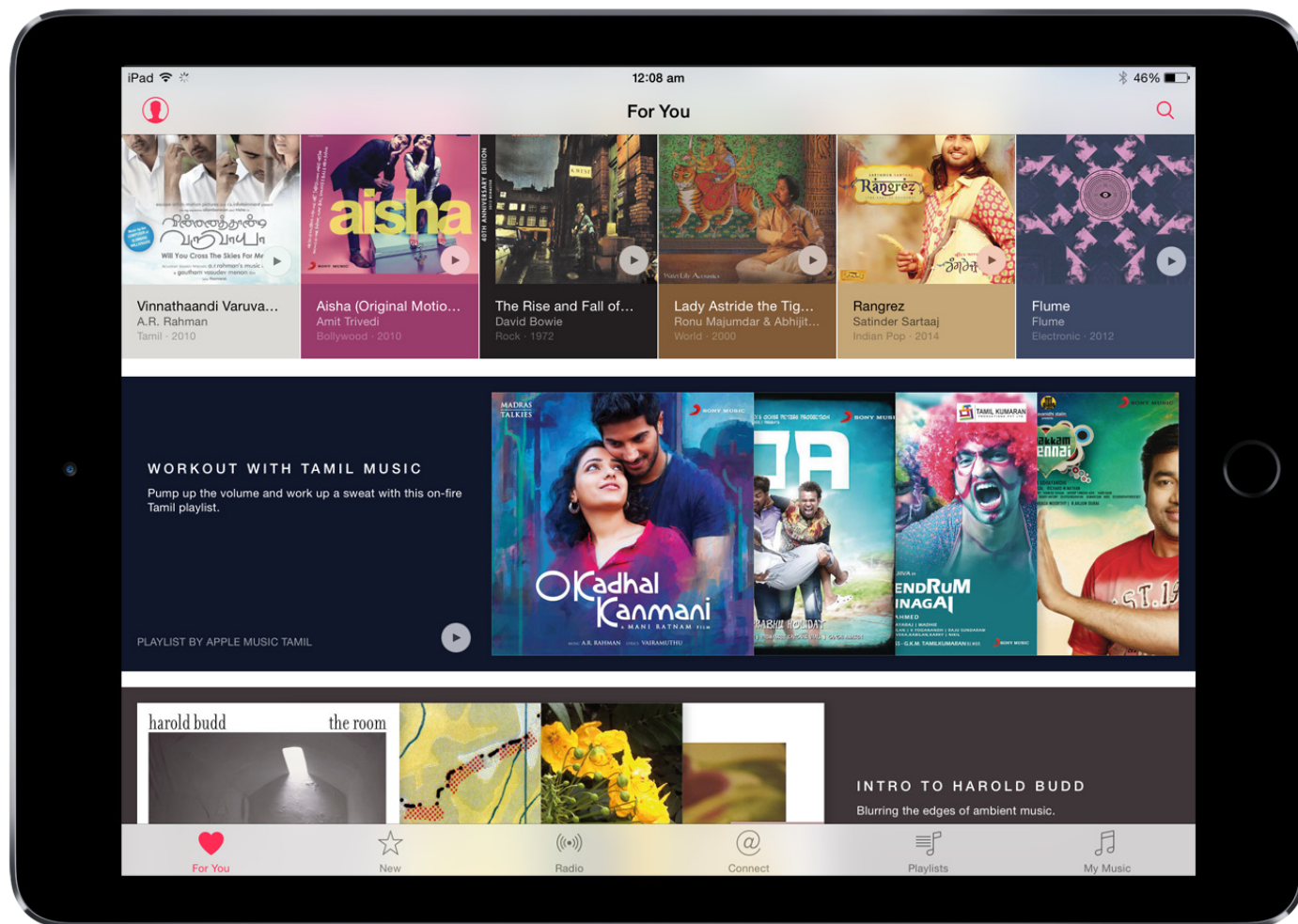
Having said that, we have had DRM free Music for years now and are used to having the convenience of carrying music anywhere and not being locked down to one Eco-System. Currently, it's next to impossible to switch platforms without spending hours on getting back all the playlists and music. Let alone playing music on any platform, this eco-sys-

tem lock-in doesn't even have room for a universal playlist format. There's a reason why DRM was hated all along.

## Discover and Buy

Apple Music is a great music discovery platform. In the last one month, I've discovered Albums that I love listening to and forms of music which I had not even heard of before moving to Apple Music. Despite v1.0 issues with the Music Apps,

bum than rent it every month. Will I use Apple Music in the future, after the three month free trial ends? I might. I definitely want to use more of Apple Music's Playlist Curations and Music Recommendations to discover more music but I'm not willing to embrace DRMlock in just yet. (Ap-



it's a rock-solid service, which in India, is miles ahead of any competition.

So, Am I willing to switch to a subscription model only? No

Way! I'd much rather buy my favorite al-

ple Music just wouldn't sync to my iPod). For now, I'm sticking to the Discover and

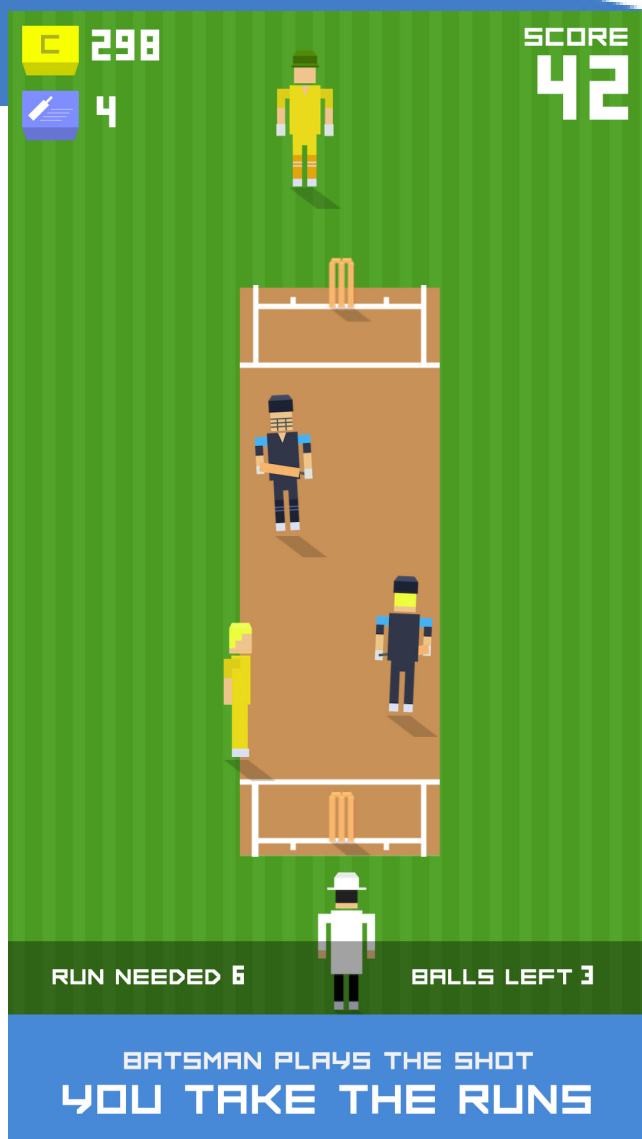
Buy formula, where I discover music via streaming and buy the albums I'd

like to listen more often.



Game of the Month

# ONE MORE RUN



Vidit Bhargava

One more Run by SuperSike Games is a new and innovative cricket game. A complex game like cricket is extremely hard to make, there are various rules to be kept in mind, the actions and shots must look realistic or the game becomes caricaturistic very fast. One More Runs gets rid of all that and focuses instead on just one part of the game: Running between the wickets.

All you've got to do is score the target by running between the wickets, in the given number of balls without getting run out. The scores get tougher to achieve as the game progresses, there are bonuses to be earned for a perfect run.

One More Run is fun, engaging and hard to put down. The eight bit graphics (which look a lot like Crossy Road) are nice addition.

**Available for Free on iOS and Android**



# INSIDE OUT

## ONE OF PIXAR'S BEST MOVIES

Vidit Bhargava

Hidden inside the wonderful world of InsideOut is a tribute to the Reality Distortion Field, often associated with Steve Jobs; A comment on how careless people are about 'facts', and a reference to the booming startup scenario in the Silicon Valley and having to cope up with moving to a completely new city. InsideOut's details are sharp and the plot boiled down to the simplest possible form.

When Reilley's parents decide to move from Minnesota to San Francisco, her world's about to change, both Inside and Outside. Inside the 11 year old's brain reside Five Basic Emotions, Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Fear and Anger, taking turns to

control Reilley's Actions and collectively controlling the generally peaceful headquarters of the brain. But things go awry when Sadness, the often neglected emotion, begins to tinker with the *core memories*.

The most interesting part of InsideOut is the brain. Pixar constructs a simple world full of wonderful things which Joy and Sadness end up exploring. There's a brain headquarters which control Reilley's actions, her actions define her memories which land up in the brain as shiny little balls and while most of them end up in 'Long Term' Memory, a library of sorts which contains a lot of memories stacked together in giant shelves and maintained





by the ‘brain cleaners’, some memories form the core memories of Reilly. Which in turn define her behavioral ‘islands’ like Honesty, Family Values, Goofiness. Then there are tiny little ‘adventure parks’ too, like Imagination Land where Reilly’s imaginary friends reside or the Dream Creation Place where dreams are projected. There’s also a 2D world, where you end up as Picasso like objects (The favorite part of my film was to see the transition from 3D to 2D to just shapes). InsideOut throws in words like Core Memories, Long Term Memory, which would otherwise be suited more to a computer class Than an animated children’s movie but these explained so simply that it’s hard to think that anyone would have a hard time understanding them. InsideOut is a ride you’ll love to take and the director spends time in letting you discover the details.

The Brain has been very systematically made. It’s not simple by any means but the complexities have been presented in such a way that you want to visit the carefully structured world. It’s beautifully designed and well constructed. This has been a long standing strength of Pixar. From the carefully crafted world of Toys in ToyStory to the fine world of Fiats, Volkswagens and Racing cars in the Cars (Highly Underrated), they create worlds that you’ll just love to visit again. InsideOut is no different.

InsideOut poses another interesting question though, fundamental to the movie’s plot: Do joy and sadness in everyone’s brains go through the same ride that Reilly’s emotions went through? Do they comeback or do some stay back in long term memory for very long? It’s when you





start to ponder on the uncanny partnership of Joy and Sadness, that you realize how their sync is highly important. Inside-Out associates these events with growing up, Reilley moving to her teenage years. It is a very interesting indeed.

In the nearly pitch perfect world of Inside-Out what sticks out though is the slightly jagged speed with which the screenplay moves in the second half, and even more so when the focus shifts from the characters to the beautifully created background, it's beautiful but it's best in background, but then again it's a kids story and they won't mind a peak into an extremely creative brain.

I saw this movie about a month ago and the characters have stuck with me, the idea of tiny little creatures controlling a person's is extremely interesting. Few movies have this kind of impact, and coming from a an animated movie, is only an indication of how far the medium has gone into making extremely special movies.

Pixar's InsideOut is the best movie I've seen this year. It's easily one of the best animated movies ever made. It's a movie that just can't be missed.

Rating: \*\*\*\*







## Pixel Quiz July 2015

Vidit Bhargava

Q1. Y works out what's in an image by analysing layers until they finally decide on what it shows. The first images from Y's project X, shown in June, reveal a horrific display of monsters and tentacles and a capability to insert random noise on a black screen. This isn't a product by Y, but a published GitHub repository. What is X? and What is Y?

Q2. Y on his DeviantArt profile page, he notes that he "created X in 2004 because I can't help but draw stupid looking characters to spew out my stupid ideas.". The first X were published at a website called "Sticksuicide[dot]com". What is X?

Q3. X is Nintendo's First Game Designer. X designed EVR Race, Nintendo's First Video Game. X also helped build the technology that developed the 'save' option in Legend of Zelda, a first in console games.

X and Shigeru Minamoto are currently handling the reins at Nintendo. Who is X?

Q4. X, directed by Sanjay Patel is an upcoming short about an Indian boy, who dreams up a "Hindu version of Avengers, with Gods as Superheroes". Name X and studio behind it.

Q5. Created by Bjorn Jeffery, X is a kids app making startup that started in Sweden. It is often called the "Lego of Kids' Mobile Apps". X's apps and games don't have a story line, to make the games 'fun' for kids, instead of teaching them things that parents would like them to learn. To keep the games universal for Boys and Girls, X uses monsters instead of humans for it's game characters. X calls itself the maker of digital toys. What is X?



Q6. X was founded in 2009, by two

St.Louis based engineers. X gets it's name from the 'idiom' for settling debts (which also happens to be the name of their web-site). They were initially called "Squirrel Systems". Capital, Feedback, Market, are just some of the names of their 'products'. What is X?



Q7. First Founded in 2009, X was lead by Y from 2013 to 2015. One of the most successful X session was that of Peter Dinklage (of Game Of Thrones fame), back in 2014. Dinklage had this to say about X : "This feels like being interviewed by a hundred thousand news anchors at once! But much friendlier anchors...who seem to know their material...I really appreciate everyone's enthusiasm and questions.". Both X and Y were in news this month. What is X and Who is Y (Image above)?

Q8. If the tail of the "X-Y position indicator for a display system" was the reason

for the nickname Mouse. What nickname did the cursor on screen get?

Q9. This is Carl Malamud, an American technologist, author, and public domain advocate. Malamud is credited with the invention of X. Malamud began a talk show back in 1993, the first X, where he would interview a computer expert every week. More recently, you might have about X in in a fiction series, where one of the characters is credited with the invention of X. What is Malamud famous for?



Q10. A development event was held in June some years ago by the developers of an open source operating system in Canada. The event saw a few developers working on cryptographic software. This event is widely considered the worlds first \_\_\_\_\_. Fill in the blank.

Answers to the Pixel Quiz April 2015

1. SquareSpace 2. Secret 3. Sonos  
6. X: Lyft Y: Pink Moustache

4. Hitman

5. Happy and Sad Mac  
7. Lynda

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