**‘Queer’ Playlists on Spotify: Understanding the positions, roles and meanings of LGBT- and queer-themed playlists on a music streaming service.**

In 2016, popular music streaming service Spotify launched a series of playlists to commemorate the persons who died during the shooting at Pulse –a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida– and to celebrate (American) Pride month. Besides featuring a range of diverse playlists that all represent a certain aspect of LGBT and queer culture, Spotify also asked artists and LGBT-allies to curate their own playlist. Under the moniker “#PlayPressForPride” artists such as MNEK, Olly Alexander (‘Years & Years’) and Kathy Griffin assembled playlists which feature tracks considered meaningful or relevant to themselves and/or to the LGBT community, interspersed with personal commentaries. Spotify motivated its pride-related initiative by stressing that the company celebrates diversity and inclusivity and wanted to create content that allows its consumers to identify with (Notermans in Mlot, 2016). The pride playlists are not per se novel. A considerate amount of LGBT- and queer-themed public playlists have been created and curated by its consumers. Similarly, private media companies (e.g., Têtu) with Spotify accounts have produced LGBT-themed playlists. The company thus seems to capitalize on a popular media practice that is built around sexual identities that, firstly, are grafted onto personal, intimate and private desires and feelings and, secondly, are discriminated against or just tolerated in many parts of the world.

Hence, to assess the sociocultural implications of this popular media practice and how various actors are engaging with it, this paper formulates two goals. Without the intent of being exhaustive, this paper aims to firstly map the various types of curators and ‘genres’ of LGBT- and queer-themed playlists and, secondly, understand the positions, roles and meanings of these queer and LGBT-themed playlists. As such, this paper will not only gain insight into what kind of music is considered ‘LGBT’ or ‘queer’ and what it means to create such playlists, but also into the potential implications of unequal and hierarchical relations between the curators and the lists in the technocultural realm of Spotify. To study this, I assembled a selection of playlists –based on a wide variety of keywords– and used contextual and textual analytic methods to determine the type of curator and genre of each playlist and to interpret its position, roles and meanings.

**Bio**:

Frederik Dhaenens (PhD) is a member of CIMS - Centre for Cinema and Media Studies at the Department of Communication Studies, Ghent University, Belgium. In 2012, he successfully defended his doctoral thesis, entitled “Gays on the Small Screen: A Queer Theoretical Study into the Articulations of Queer Resistance in Contemporary Television Fiction”. He is working as a post-doctoral assistant at Ghent University, where he teaches courses on film/television genre and key theories within communication and media studies. His research is situated within the field of critical media studies and cultural studies, while focusing on queer theory, LGBT representation, sex and sexuality, and masculinities in relation to popular culture, with a particular interest for television studies, popular music studies and fan studies.