SPOTIFY ECONOMY
PROFIT MAXIMIZING AS A SYSTEEM

"The real competitor is silence."
– Spotify (internal)

ASSUMPTIONS
- people want convenience
- attention is scarce
- music = background utility
- more scale = better

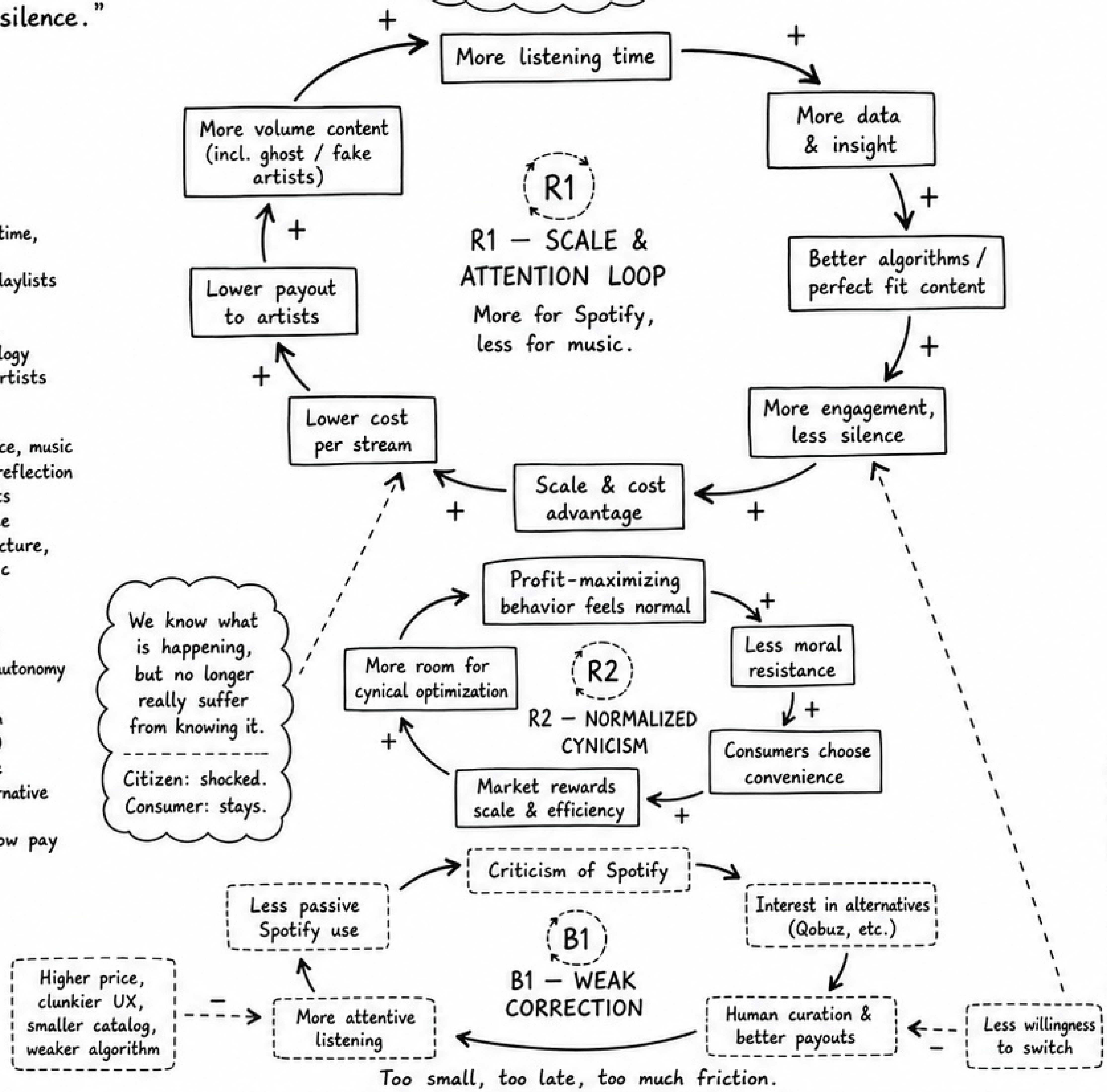
EPISTEMIC STATUS
W = alert
F = fact
H = hypothesis
U = unknown
N = normative judgment
(most relate to H)

ACTORS & INCENTIVES

SPOTIFY
Interest: growth & profit
Incentive: more listening time, lower cost
Power: platform, data, playlists
Sees: engagement, scale
Does not see: damage to music ecology
Externalizes: risk onto artists

LISTENER
Interest: convenience, price, music
Incentive: convenience > reflection
Power: low switching costs
Sees: playlists, ease, price
Does not see: power structure, payout logic
Externalizes: indifference

ARTIST / INDUSTRY
Interest: income, reach, autonomy
Incentive: dependence on platform reach
Power: low (individually)
Sees: chance of audience
Does not see: viable alternative at scale
Externalizes: accepting low pay



CONVENIENCE ABOVE ALL

UNINTENDED COLLECTIVE OUTCOME
- Music becomes background wallpaper
- Fake content crowds out real music
- Artists earn too little
- Creation & diversity weaken
- Attention economy wins, culture loses
- What shocks us morally, we reward economically

WHY DOES THE BRAKE STAY WEAK?
- Low switching costs, high laziness
- Music is not treated as a critical subject
- Alternatives cost more and feel less smooth
- The harm is diffuse and culturally distant
- People condemn the behavior in one role and reward it in another

LEGEND
+ = more leads to more
– = more leads to less
|| = delay
- - - = weak / indirect
R = reinforcing loop
B = balancing loop

THESIS: Spotify's system persists because listeners are not critical, and listeners are not critical because Spotify has trained them not to be. The two reproduce each other.
The grave is partly dug by the same people who complain about it.