

most\_pop\_song

Songnames	Singer	Summary
Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)	Beyoncé	Sure, we could have picked ‘Crazy in Love’ instead, but there’s something even more transcendent about Queen Bey’s ode to flying solo. The super-sleek beats and naggingly catchy vocal hooks combine to create such an instant classic that even Liza Minnelli has covered it. And pretty well, too.
Umbrella	Rihanna featuring Jay-Z	Recently minted billionaire Rihanna has become part of pop’s DNA over the past two decades thanks to her singular persona and the strength of her powerful voice. Choosing one Rihanna song for the pop hall of fame is a fool’s errand, but gun to our head — likely held by Rihanna whilst asking us where her money is — the safe choice is the best. ‘Umbrella’ not only introduced the world at large to one of pop’s biggest stars, but it also ushered in a pop-culture dynasty, with fellow mogul Jay-Z on board to co-sign.
Shake it Off	Taylor Swift	The ‘1989’ album marked a clean break from Swift’s country roots, with the singer emerging as a pop diva for the ages on the strength of a front-to-back record of bangers. This lead-off single had former haters shaking their heads over their unexpected conversion into T-Swift fandom. Even if you rolled your eyes at her awkward dancing in the video, you were involuntarily grooving in your desk chair. Taylor would continue morphing her image in the wake of its success, but this is the singer at her most purely joyous.
Toxic	Britney Spears	On this iconic 2003 single, Britney transforms into a stealthy femme fatale, her voice soaring and dipping over a deranged synth-string arrangement that wouldn’t seem out of place in a Hitchcock film. Even now, nearly two decades later and with the #FreeBritney movement having highlighted the horrific treatment she’s had to endure, it’s a disorienting stunner of a pop masterpiece.
Rolling in the Deep	Adele	The London diva exploded to international fame with this stunning tune, released when she was just 21 years old — though her voice carries the expertise of a woman decades older. High-reaching vocals, a bone-chilling opening note andthe ever-relatable subject matter of tarnished love scored Adele two Grammy Awards as fans around the world cried to the breakup anthem.
Firework	Katy Perry	Part dance floor anthem, part inspirational power song, ‘Firework’ was Katy Perry’s third release from 2010’s ‘Teenage Dream’ album and a huge elevation point in her career. It won MTV’s 2011 VMA for Video of the Year and earned two Grammy nominations, and all the hoopla around Seth Rogen and James Franco’s The Interview gave it another boost of publicity in 2014.
Rehab	Amy Winehouse	‘Rehab’ was always a great pop song, but following Amy Winehouse’s tragic death in 2011, it’s acquired a hauntingly poignant quality, too. Mark Ronson’s doo-wop-inspired production swathes the singer’s soulful voice like a cashmere blanket, creating a timeless ode to defiance that hits hard with every last ‘no, no, no’. Rest in Power, Amy.
Blinding Lights	The Weeknd	The Weeknd has been a pop heavyweight since he dropped his coke-fuelled banger ‘Can’t Feel My Face’ in 2015. But the Canadian superstar took things to another level with ‘Blinding Lights’, a synth-driven monster that somehow managed to brighten up the summer of Covid, blasting out of cars everywhere as people escaped their bubbles. More than a year later, its power has only grown.
Dancing on My Own	Ro	Perhaps the most electrifying breakup anthem ever, ‘Dancing on My Own’ is an undisputed modern masterpiece. Even if you’ve played it a bazillion times, Robyn’s synth-driven monster will instantly lift your mood. It’s a welcome reminder that however shitty things get, you’ll always find salvation on the dance floor.
Hey Ya!	Outkast	Outkast ATLien André 3000 took a break from changing the rap game for this unexpectedly sunny ‘60s throwback that sees the superstar hit pause as an emcee to play bandleader. In a discography of unexpected twists and turns, it was a move nobody could have seen coming from the ‘Ms. Jackson’ legend, and further proof that André can do pretty much anything. Truly cooler than a polar bear’s toenails.
Hips Don't Lie	Shakira featuring Wyclef Jean	Topping her global breakthrough hit ‘Whenever, Wherever’ was always going to be a tall order, but Shakira managed it in 2005 with this colossal reggaeton bop. More than 15 years later, ‘Hips Don’t Lie’ still gets everyone on the dance floor, though not everyone manages to echo Wyclef’s ‘Shakira, Shakira’ shoutout quite on the beat.
SexyBack	Justin Timberlake	‘For whoever is claiming that they are bringing sexy back, sexy never left!’ certified Sexy MF Prince quipped when JT started blazing up the charts with this Timbaland-produced all-timer fusing raw sexuality and funk bonafides. Prince was, of course, right. But as far as a career reinvention goes, Timberlake’s is one for the books: ‘SexyBack’ doesn’t so much close the door on the singer’s ramen-haired boy-band chapter as burn it to the ground.
Call Me Maybe	Carly Rae Jepsen	This song made 2012 the year of the cheesy pickup line after Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez’s lip-sync sesh catapulted this tune onto the radio. Jepsen hasn’t had another equally huge hit since, but she has facilitated millions of hasty flirtations and phone number solicitations. Thanks, Carly Rae!
Uptown Funk	Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars	Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars really struck gold with this Michelle Pfeiffer-namechecking throwback jam. Not only did ‘Uptown Funk’ clean up at the 2015 Grammys, even winning Record of the Year, but it became the third most-watched video ever on YouTube. Wedding reception dance floors will never be the same again.
Poker Face	Lady Gaga	Gaga’s entire catalogue is a celebration of individuality, allyship and letting your freak flag fly. ‘Poker Face’ remains a staple of the pop pantheon thanks to its grimy-glam melodies and bombastic vocal breaks. Plus, Gaga managed to sneak the line ‘f’ck her face’ onto radio for yeears without anyone noticing. If that’s not the mark of a queen, nothing is.
Hollaback Girl	Gwen Stefani	Rumour has it that this 2004 chart-topper was aimed at Courtney Love, who had apparently dismissed Stefani as a ‘cheerleader’ in an interview. Either way, there’s no denying that the minimal beat supplied by the Neptunes still hits hard, or that Stefani sounds great spelling out ‘B-A-N-A-N-A-S’ over it.
Starships	Nicki Minaj	The hip-hop queen’s most sugary, hyperactive and kaleidoscopic song is a titanic explosion of energy. Transitioning from a catchy hook to rapid-fire rap, via saccharine melodies and undulating electronica, it really does make you feel elevated regardless of whether you’re actually ‘higher than a motherfuc*er’. Pure chaos, and an absolute blast.
Royals	Lorde	The small-town New Zealand export was only 15 when she penned this international mega-hit deflating hip-hop’s obsession with bling and braggadocio. It’s not the kind of thing that happens a lot in pop music, which makes the incredibly sparse, intricately layered, ultra-classy ‘Royals’ even more of a treasure. ‘Let me be your ruler,’ sang Lorde. ‘Yes please,’ replied millions.
Party in the U	Miley Cyrus	This song hails from a different era of Cyrus, before she transformed into a Robin Thicke-humping sexpot with a Gene Simmons tongue. This midway point between modern Miley and Hannah Montana is a ray of sing-along sunshine. Anyone who claims not to know the words (or belt them out and roll the windows down whenever the song’s on the radio) cannot be trusted.
Bad Guy	Billie Eilish	Like fellow pop royal Lorde, Eilish was just a teen when she dropped this subversive ode to bad behaviour. Brother Finneas’ thumping beats and spooky hooks hold the whole thing together, but it’s Eilish’s smoky voice — bounding between deeply unsettling and sprightly — that sells the whole ghoulish affair. The result cemented her as the antithesis of a squeaky-clean pop star and scared the ever-loving shit out of her target audience’s parentss.
Good as Hell	Lizzo	An instant feel-great classic, Lizzo’s ‘Good as Hell’ is the very definition of infectious thanks to its instantly recognisable piano beat, Lizzo’s forceful-yet-playful cadence and a pervasive, universal ability to make anybody within earshot strut for its entire runtime.
Get Lucky	Daft Punk featuring Pharrell	With Pharrell on vocal duties and Nile Rodgers on guitar, the helmeted Frenchmen’s biggest non-Weeknd hit is a piece of wipe-clean disco so immaculately crafted you might imagine there was some algebra involved. Like all great pop songs, it throbs with life, but also glows in brilliant neon that’s wholly Daft Punk’s.
Dynamite	BTS	The K-Pop supergroup has taken over the world, and there seems to be no sign of them slowing down. You either get on the train or get run over by it. Luckily, the band’s long-awaited English-language debut delivered, hijacking airwaves and talk shows with its perfectly calibrated bubblegum. Twenty years after NSYNC said ‘bye bye bye’, a new kingdom pop has raised its flag.
Adore You	Harry Styles	The former One Direction star’s solo career has gone many unexpected places, no more so than on his recent, genre-hopping album ‘Fine Line’. And while the funky ‘Watermelon Sugar’ brings the double entendres, ‘Adore You’ is Styles at his most endearing and infectious: a slow-paced, driving, and vocally lovely instant classic. As a bonus, the surreal video finds the hearthrob enamoured with a giant fish... and it’s everything.
No Tears Left to Cry	Ariana Grande	Ariana’s evolution from sugar-sweet pop princess to her generation’s foremost chronicler of the Kama Sutra has been astonishing, if a little much for some pearl-clutching early fans. She hit a universally appealing sweet spot with this 2018 bop, which ascends to the stratosphere with each repetition of ‘pickin’ it up’. As her voice swoops and soars, it seems to confirm the arrival of a global superstar whose talent stands taller than even her highest ponytail.
Drivers License	Olivia Rodrigo	Pop’s current heir apparent exploded onto the scene with this universally gripping, emotionally ripe tale of teenage yearning: a piano ballad with a forlorn melody, a driving backbeat and some of the most bracing vocals in recent pop. Rodrigo wears her love of Taylor Swift on her sleeve, so much so that fans call her the second coming while haters cry ripoff. For what it’s worth, Swift (unlike Courtney Love) is a fan... and rumours continue to swirl about an upcoming collaboration that could rock the pop world to its core.
Sorry	Justin Bieber	Taking a hiatus from making music to focus on growing up a little, the Biebs came back with ‘Purpose’ in 2015. ‘Sorry’, the second single from the album, was mixed by Skrillex — and in a stroke of genius and surprising modesty, he excluded himself from the music video and focused on an oft-imitated squad of dancers instead.
Titanium	David Guetta featuring Sia	Empowering, escalating and full of raw power, ‘Titanium’ is what happens when one of the world’s best producers meets one of its most prolific pop writers. Namely: fireworks. Sia may have found further success swinging from chandeliers, but as a vocalist she has never been more explosive than here.
Happy	Pharrell Williams	Only somebody as tuned-in to the pop landscape as Williams could take a throwaway track from a Minions movie and turn it into an enduring ode to being in a great mood. Think of it like this: Three years after ‘Happy’, Justin Timberlake tried to replicate its good vibes for the Trolls soundtrack. But, we’re not talking about Justin Timberlake here. Such is the power of a Neptune using his powers for good.
Hotline Bling	Drake	Take away the mountain of memes, ignore Drake’s beautiful dad dancing and this pop song would still be a winner for the ages. That delicate, trickling calypso beat effortlessly shrugs off the lover who never calls, transforming a classic tale of ghosting into an eminently danceable revenge song that everyone – ex included – would struggle to resist. No wonder it was literally inescapable for the whole of summer ‘15.
Levitating	Dua Lipa	Dua Lipa’s ‘Future Nostalgia’ album is full of bangers, but none is quite as instantly timeless as this throwback jam that pulses with verve, confidence and pure joy. Once she reaches the punchy ‘yeah yeah yeah’ callback, you’ll be soaring with her. Go ahead and skip the DaBaby remix... Dua’s got this one on her own.
Milkshake	Kelis	Kelis’s brag that her ‘milkshake brings all the boys to the yard’ has given this magnetic dancefloor anthem legs. Driven by an all-time great Neptunes beat, it’s a pop-R&B bop every bit as box-fresh as when it dropped (as part of Kelis’s excellent ‘Tasty’ album) in 2003.
Despacito	Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee	Nearly inescapable between 2017 and 2018, ‘Despacito’ is one of those songs that became so prevalent that people mistook its ubiquity for annoyance. A few years on, however, the ultra-smooth collision of Latin pop and reggaeton has aged remarkably well from song-of-the-summer status to certifiable classic.
Bootylicious	Destiny’s Child	Frankly, we’re still not sure what ‘this jelly’ is, and 20 years on we’re still not sure we’re ready for it. But what is certain is that the legendary girl group, facing the inevitability of Beyoncé’s solo ascendance, fired off one last barn-burner to usher in the ‘00s, and the dance floor was never the same.
Work It	Missy Elliott	Missy’s avante-garde approach to pop-infused hip-hop is at its best when she has certified master Timbaland at her side, and no pairing hits with the same mix of chaotic glee, weirdness and pop sensibility as ‘Work It’. Only an artist as nimble as Missy could take a jumbled mass of backwards-masked syllables and make it one the era’s most recognisable choruses... and one of karaoke night’s biggest flexes.
American Boy	Estelle featuring Kanye West	Both sides of the pond get some swagger on this pulsing throwback track occupying the space between disco, hip hop and pop. Estelle’s cockney-infused vocals provide the perfect antidote to Kanye’s braggadocio... no small task, given that the guy is 5-foot-7 of pure ego. Even ‘Ye takes a back seat to Estelle when she’s firing on all cylinders (with an assist by wil.i.am and John Legend on writing duties, natch).
Since U Been Gone	Kelly Clarkson	Simon Cowell may have made Kelly Clarkson a celebrity, but ‘Since U Been Gone’ made her a star. Outside American Idol viewers and the two people who watched From Justin to Kelly, this was the world’s true introduction to Clarkston’s mighty lung capacity, and a high point for the early-noughties pop-rock explosion. The gleeful break-up anthem comes off like a glorious cross between Avril Lavigne and ‘I Will Survive’. Fittingly in the flat circle of the pop world, it’s now regularly butchered on talent shows worldwide.
Let Me Blow Ya Mind	Eve featuring Gwen Stefani	A slinky, swaggering slow jam that meets at the intersection of hip-hop and pop, Eve’s biggest hit is essentially a four-minute not-so-humblebrag about career success. It’s the kind of thing that male rappers do all the time but somehow draws blowback when a woman does it (see also: ‘WAP’). Let the haters feign their dismay. The rest of us will be out on the dance floor and soaking in the silky sass.
Gangnam Style	Psy	Psy’s internet-breaking sendup of South Korean excess is absolutely impossible to ignore, try though you may. The first song to reach 1 billion YouTube hits, it’s been parodied, homaged, remade and remixed. Yet it refuses to die. That’s because, against all odds, it rips. Yes, it’s a song you’re ashamed to catch yourself dancing to. But guess what? It happens to all of us.
Crazy	Gnarls Barkley	Long before his vile worldview and accusations of abuse made it all too easy to say ‘Fu*k You’ to Cee-Lo Green, the former Goodie Mob emcee joined forces with producer Danger Mouse to release this slick psychedelic soul curveball. Fifteen years later, it still feels gloriously alien.