

# AC/DC

Entering their fourth decade in the music business, the legendary rock band had taken pride of place as one of the more notorious holdouts against the new digital age, their music catalogue one of the highest profile absentees from online stores. In late 2012 a deal was finally inked which would see this restriction removed, leading to a much heralded arrival on store such as iTunes of all their classic albums - and perhaps just importantly many of their classic old singles. Inevitably it was like taking the lid off a pressure cooker. Sales charts, both singles and albums, were briefly swamped with AC/DC material and two of their most famous recordings managed to creep inside the Top 40 to give the band their first hit singles in twelve and a half years.

## **BACK IN BLACK**

First charted: 1/12/2012

Peak Position: 27

Peak reached: 1/12/2012

Of the six AC/DC tracks to make the singles chart Top 100 during their great digital arrival in the first week of December, the highest seller of all was one which had hitherto been notoriously absent from the British charts until that moment. The title track from their 1980 album, *Back In Black* had over the years become one of their signature anthems but whilst it was released as a single in America, making the Top 40 there in early 1981, the track was never promoted as a standalone release for the British market. Thus this entry to the singles chart at Number 27 marked the first time the track had ever charted in this country, mirroring in a way the long overdue appearance of Led Zeppelin's *Stairway To Heaven* which also made the Top 40 when finally made available digitally almost exactly five years earlier. A brief Number 27 peak was enough for the track to become AC/DC's highest charting single since *Big Gun* peaked at Number 23 in July 1993 and as a "new" hit single, *Back In Black* took their tally of chart entries to 28, further extending the group's famous record as the most successful chart act never to have had a single reach the Top 10.

## **HIGHWAY TO HELL**

First charted: 1/12/2012

Peak Position: 40

Peak reached: 1/12/2012

Thirteen places below was a track which by contrast had actually been a single before, *Highway To Hell* having first hit the charts as their second ever hit single in September 1979 when it crept to a lowly Number 56. Also charting in the week of their digital dawn were *You Shook Me All Night Long* at Number 42, *Thunderstruck* at Number 44, *Whole Lotta Rosie* at Number 68 and *Shoot To Thrill* at Number 98.

# ADELE

Transformed from local sensation to true global superstar thanks to her second album *21*, Tottenham-born Adele Atkins began 2012 with the world well and truly still at her feet. At the start of the year her smash hit album celebrated its first anniversary as an ever-present in the Top 10 and would continue to sell in sufficient quantities for the next 12 months to rank as Britain's second biggest selling album of the year. In America *21* would go one better, becoming the first long player since Michael Jackson's *Thriller* to be the best seller for two calendar years in a row. All of this was achieved with little in the way of new musical activity, her long break from public performances thanks to serious throat surgery during 2011 only ending with a now notorious appearance at the Brit Awards ceremony in February 2012 when her winners speech after picking up the Album Of The Year award was abruptly terminated so that special guest stars Blur could perform before the ceremony overran its TV slot. She did however make the singles chart twice at the tail end of the year, both hits coming from some rather unexpected sources.

## **I CAN'T MAKE YOU LOVE ME**

First charted: 6/10/2012

Peak Position: 37

Peak reached: 13/10/2012

Bonnie Raitt was the first person to record *I Can't Make You Love Me*, the track appearing in 1991 on her *Luck Of The Draw* album. The most famous hit version to date is that by George Michael who paired the track as a double a-side with his own song *Older* on a single which made Number 3 in early 1997. Adele's own version was first released on a special EP of songs released in the wake of her appearance at the 2011 iTunes festival, one of her last live appearances before throat surgery that year. Its surprise singles chart appearance came thanks to a performance by X Factor contestant (and eventual winner) James Arthur who used the song as his final plea for inclusion in the final lineup. The week following the broadcast the charts were inevitably peppered with several different recorded versions of the song but it was Adele's hitherto unnoticed rendition which sold the most and entered the Top 40. It was a curious echo of the way her cover of Bob Dylan's *Make You Feel My Love* (originally recorded for her debut album *19*) had become a chart hit in 2010 thanks to its adoption by a string of X Factor contenders.

## **SKYFALL**

First charted: 13/10/2012

Peak Position: 2

Peak reached: 20/10/2012

With news that a new James Bond film was set for release in time for Christmas 2012 after a several year delay caused by the financial problems of movie studio MGM, speculation was rife over the identity of the performer of the theme song. Whilst Adele's name had been mentioned in passing she was considered one of many possible candidates and her participation in the project remained a closely guarded secret right up until the song made its surprise radio premiere. Despite a new Bond theme and a brand new Adele track to boot requiring little in the way of gimmicks, one was crafted nonetheless. With its existence having only been revealed on Monday October 1st, the track was released to both radio and to retail at exactly 0:07 the following Friday, marking as it did the 50th anniversary of the release of "Dr No", the first film in the James Bond series. Naturally demand for the track

was pretty much off the scale and in the two days that followed *Skyfall* sold an impressive 84,000 copies - enough to see it enter the singles chart at Number 4 and at a stroke beat the Number 9 peak of its immediate predecessor in the series *Another Way To Die* by Jack White and Alicia Keys. In direct contrast with the previous theme, Adele's single was a nod back to the golden age of the series as she did her best Shirley Bassey impression over a broad, sweeping John Barry-esque production which admittedly made the track something of a throwback but at the same time gave it an air of comforting familiarity.

One of the more famous quirks of UK chart history is that no James Bond movie theme has ever reached Number One, Duran Duran having come the closest in 1985 when their theme to *A View To A Kill* made Number 2. Surely there was every chance that this new theme, helped not a little by the presence of one of the biggest music stars on the planet on vocals, would finally break that long-standing duck. In the end the rather gimmicky nature of its release pattern counted against it. In its first full week on sale *Skyfall* sold just over 92,000 copies. An impressive total but one which was easily topped by the Swedish House Mafia who topped the charts instead that with a sale of 135,000. The Bond Jinx remained, notwithstanding the fact that *Skyfall* had effectively sold 176,000 copies in nine days and would surely have been an easy Number One had it been released at the start of a sales week rather than the end. The film itself opened to widespread acclaim whilst its title track went on to be showered with awards, picking up honours for Best British Single at the 2013 Brit Awards and the Oscar for Best Original Song - occasions which sent the single climbing back into the Top 20 in February 2013. But still nowhere near Number One.

## **AGUILERA, CHRISTINA**

Although Christina Aguilera's last studio album *Bionic* had been released way back in 2010 she had maintained a strong public profile in the intervening period, starring in the film "Burlesque" and working as a judge on the American TV talent show "The Voice", a booking which led to a collaboration with Maroon 5 on *Moves Like Jagger* in 2011 - giving her the biggest hit single of her career when it became a million seller in this country despite the single never topping the charts. Hopes were high that this success would translate to her seventh album *Lotus* which debuted to mixed reviews in November.

### **YOUR BODY**

First charted: 17/11/2012

Peak Position: 16

Peak reached: 17/11/2012

That mixed reaction extended to the lead single from the album which was if nothing else remarkably unremarkable, a dance-pop track which was a world away from the impact-making tracks which had heralded previous new works from the American star. Its reception was reflected in the chart performance, the single making a perfunctory Top 20 appearance in the week of release before exiting the singles chart completely a fortnight later. She could do - and indeed often had done - far, far better than this.

# ALI, NADIA

Born in Libya, but raised in New York, Nadia Ali had her first taste of worldwide musical success back in 2001 as frontswoman and songwriter of dance act iiO, best known for their hit single *Rapture* which made Number 2 in Britain at the tail end of that year but who also scored a Top 20 hit with *At The End* two years later. In 2005 she went solo and after carving a niche for herself as the guest singer of choice on tracks by many European producers she finally released her own solo album *Embers* in 2009. 2010 saw her collect together her decade of work in dance music with a trilogy of albums entitled *Queen Of Clubs* featuring newly remixed versions of some of her past work. It was one of these albums which produced what is for now her one and only solo UK chart entry.

## **RAPTURE**

First charted: 14/1/2012

Peak Position: 40

Peak reached: 3/3/2012

Logically enough her solo debut just happened to be a new version of her most famous hit recording, the song which iiO had narrowly missed taking to the top of the charts ten years earlier. In new mixes by Gareth Emery, Tristan Garner and most prominently of all Avicii, the new version of *Rapture* first appeared as a digital download in the Benelux countries in late 2010, finally making it to a commercial release in the UK in March 2011. However it wasn't until almost exactly a year later that the track finally gained some commercial traction, creeping into the Top 40 in late February after a seven week climb.

# ANGEL

Born Sirach Charles in October 1987, singer and songwriter Angel began his musical career alongside his siblings in the logically named Charles Family group whilst still a teenager. After the band broke up he concentrated on building his own reputation, putting out his first mixtapes in 2010, the same year that he contributed lyrics to the Roll Deep track *Green Light* which became a Number One hit single and cemented him as an urban songwriter of some note. His debut solo single *Go In, Go Hard* peaked at an agonising Number 41 in March 2012.

## WONDERFUL

First charted: 28/7/2012

Peak Position: 9

Peak reached: 1/9/2012

Better things were to follow with this hit single, not that *Wonderful* showed many signs of being a major hit at first sight, the single entering at a respectable enough Number 20 in late July only to stall as a non-mover in week 2 and climbing just a single place in week 3. After that however it was off and running and after six weeks on the chart the single finally broke into the Top 10 at the end of the summer. One of those rare pop singles which somehow manages to cross genre divides with effortless ease, *Wonderful* glided through soul, alt-rock and hip-hop in a manner which is as clever as it is appealing and it is possible to chalk the failure of the single to progress any further than it did as one of the greater chart mysteries of the year. Still, a near essential soundtrack to the summer for a great many people - and of the nine different songs entitled *Wonderful* to chart over the years, only the second ever to reach the Top 10.

# **APLIN, GABRIELLE**

One of a now very long line of YouTube discoveries, 20 year old Gabrielle Aplin developed a cult following online thanks to some well performed covers of tracks by bands such as Paramore and You Me At Six. By 2010 she had moved on to debuting her own self-penned material, some of which was compiled into a well received self-released EP she made available that year. A series of high profile performances for BBC Introducing saw her profile rise even further, leading inevitably to major label interest and her signing for Parlophone records early in 2012. Her first mainstream single release followed at the end of the year, but she had the exposure from a certain TV commercial which made it a far bigger hit than anyone could have anticipated.

## **THE POWER OF LOVE**

First charted: 17/11/2012

Peak Position: 1

Peak reached: 15/12/2012

Department store John Lewis continued their campaign of marrying eye-catching TV commercials with unexpected new takes on old pop classics, Paloma Faith having scored a Top 20 hit in the early autumn 2012 after taking on INXS and winning. For their Christmas advert it was the turn of then-unknown Gabrielle Aplin to take centre stage with a reworking of the song which had given Liverpool group Frankie Goes To Hollywood a then record-equalling third Number One in a row back in 1984. Previous John Lewis soundtrack hits had done reasonably well on the charts in their own right, but none had been quite as successful as this one, the soundtrack to the tale of a lovelorn snowman. Debuting just inside the Top 40 in its first week, the single raced into the Top 5 and three weeks later found itself at the very top of the charts, exactly 28 years to the week that the original version had also had its seven days of glory. The reason for the single's sudden vault to the top (it had actually moved 5-7-6 in the three weeks previously) was less to do with the still airing TV advert and more thanks to the X Factor semi final which had seen eventual winner James Arthur perform his own version of the song. Gabrielle Aplin was thus perfectly placed to reap the benefits of the watching millions entranced by the song. Quite unexpectedly what was surely intended to be a low level water-testing debut for the new signing had become instead a chart-topping smash hit during one of the peak sales periods of the year. The challenge now for 2013 was going to be to demonstrate to the world that Gabrielle Aplin was more than just the girl with the soulful cover version from a TV ad.

# ARCTIC MONKEYS

Seven years on from their sensational debut which saw them shake up the old order with a brace of instant Number One hits based on little more than their well-curated online and live performance popularity, by 2012 the Arctic Monkeys were effectively old hands at the music business. Although the major smash hits appeared to be a thing of the past, their record sales and ability to pack arenas for live tours were still more than respectable and the group began 2012 in the process of winding down the promotion of their fourth album *Suck It And See*.

## **R U MINE**

First charted: 10/3/2012

Peak Position: 23

Peak reached: 10/3/2012

Although plans for a fifth Arctic Monkeys album were still in the early stages, the group did find time to convene in the studio at the start of 2012 and knock out a one-off single as a taster for where their future musical direction may lie. Unavailable anywhere else, this naturally made *R U Mine* a slightly more essential purchase for eager fans of the Sheffield group than might otherwise have been the case and the single made a comfortable Number 23 the moment it was released, beating the Number 28 peak of *Don't Sit Down, Cause I've Moved Your Chair* which was the one and only chart hit from the *Suck It And See* album.

## **COME TOGETHER**

First charted: 4/8/2012

Peak Position: 21

Peak reached: 11/8/2012

The group's biggest hit of the year however came thanks to the 2012 Olympic Games and their role as one of many musical acts to play during the acclaimed "Isles of Wonder" opening ceremony which took place on Friday July 21st. Three hours into the ceremony and following the traditional parade of nations, the Arctic Monkeys took to the stage and performed both their debut single *I Bet That You Look Good On The Dancefloor* and a brand new cover version of the Beatles song *Come Together* which they had prepared specially for the occasion. Released online at the end of the ceremony, along with many of the other tracks from the soundtrack, *Come Together* crept into the bottom of the singles chart on the basis of one day of sales before rising to a peak of Number 21 the following week. It was the highest charting Arctic Monkeys hit single since *Crying Lightning* made Number 12 in July 2009. One of the quirkiest songs in the Lennon/McCartney catalogue, the Arctic Monkeys take on the song was only the second version ever to be a hit single, following in the footsteps of charity collective The Smoking Mojo Filters (named themselves after a line in the song) who reached Number 19 for Christmas 1995. In theory Michael Jackson could easily have had a worldwide smash hit with his version, recorded originally for the soundtrack of his 1988 film "Moonwalker" but it remained unreleased until it found its way onto the b-side of his *Remember The Time* single in early 1992.



# ARTHUR, JAMES

As 2012 drew to a close, few would have argued with the proposition that the annual X Factor talent show series had been something of a disappointment this time around. The continuing absence of show founder Simon Cowell from the judging panel was being felt keener than ever and popular perception seemed to be that the parade of contenders was perhaps rather less inspiring than in previous years, especially as early favourite Lucy Spraggan had been forced to withdraw from the competition halfway through due to illness. Hence it would have surprised nobody if the reception for the eventual winner's single, released as was traditional at the very end of the year, was rather more muted than in the past. After all, 2011 winners Little Mix had only sold just over 210,000 copies of their hit "Cannonball" in its first week on sale, a long way from the near three quarters of a million singles sold by 2005 winner Shayne Ward in just four days, confirming the downward curve which had been in evidence for some time. No, the X Factor bubble had most definitely deflated, which surely meant that newly crowned winner James Arthur was going to struggle with his own coronation single.

## **IMPOSSIBLE**

First charted: 22/12/2012

Peak Position: 1

Peak reached: 22/12/2012

**#5 of 2012**

So much for that theory. In a sales rush which took just about everyone by surprise, James Arthur stormed to Number One on the penultimate chart of the year with a huge sale of no less than 490,000 copies. Enough for it naturally enough to be the fastest selling single of the year but also more significantly amongst the fastest selling X Factor winners singles of all time. This was easily more than Little Mix in 2011, more than Matt Cardle in 2010, a greater sale than that of Joe McElderry in the famous 2009 chart race and only narrowly short of the 576,000 copies sold by Alexandra Burke in her first week in 2008. In all the sales was enough to ensure that *Impossible* was the fourth fastest selling X Factor single to date and the ninth fastest selling single of the 21st century so far. As for the track itself, well it was once again a cover version from a rather unusual source, this time a new take on the song which was originally recorded by Bajan singer Shontelle and who reached Number 9 with the track in September 2010. Although James Arthur was denied the chance to spend a second consecutive week at the top and therefore become Christmas Number One, his single continued to sell in large enough quantities to return to the top of the charts in the new year and its continual sales were enough to result in *Impossible* being certified as a million seller in fairly short order. By spring 2013 the song had sold over 1.3 million singles to become the biggest selling X Factor winners single in the history of the series. Some disappointment then.

# ATHLETE

Formed in South London at the turn of the millennium, four-piece indie rock act Athlete saw their greatest period of commercial success in 2003 and 2005, first with debut album *Vehicles and Animals* receiving a Mercury Music Prize nomination and then follow-up collection *Tourist* taking them to the very top of the charts. The group had released their fourth album *Black Swan* in 2009, but their first Top 40 hit in five years came thanks to a TV-inspired revival of their most famous chart single.

## WIRES

First charted: 8/12/2012

Peak Position: 40

Peak reached: 8/12/2012

Written by lead singer Joel Pott after the experience of seeing his prematurely born daughter hooked up to hospital machines in the first days of her life, the intense song *Wires* had become Athlete's biggest ever hit single in 2005, reaching Number 4 as the lead track from the *Tourist* album. Its brief chart revival came thanks to - what else - an X Factor performance, in this case by contestant Rylan Clark who performed the song in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to avoid elimination during the eighth week of the competition. Nonetheless the resultant surge of downloads resulted in the track creeping to the bottom end of the Top 40, the first such chart appearance for Athlete since 2007 single *Hurricane* crept to Number 31.

# AVICII

23 year old Swedish producer Tim Bergling styles himself as Avicii for record making purposes, his usual method of working being to create innovative progressive house instrumentals - many of them based on other more familiar tracks. These pieces of music are eventually turned into hit singles thanks to the addition of newly written vocal tracks. He had closed 2011 with his most notable hit to date, *Levels* which contrived to be a UK hit in two versions at once, both in the original Avicii work and thanks to its use as the basis for Flo Rida's *Good Feeling* which was a Number One single in early 2012, dragging the Avicii track back up the charts in its wake.

## **SILHOUETTES (featuring Salem Al FAKIR)**

First charted: 12/5/2012

Peak Position: 22

Peak reached: 23/6/2012

The follow-up to *Levels* was a rather more muted hit single, a track which had first leaked online a year earlier but whose eventual commercial release had been given a slightly more polished feel. The track was a collaboration with Swedish singer Salem Al Fakir who had recorded a string of moderate hit singles in his own country since 2006 but who was otherwise unknown internationally. For whatever reason *Silhouettes* failed to capture the public imagination in the manner of its predecessor and a brief wander up the lower end of the Top 40 in early summer was all the impact it had. Avicii would return in 2013 with two chart-topping singles far bigger and even more popular than anything else he had released to date.

## **AVIDAN, ASAF & THE MOJOS**

Asaf Avidan had formed his folk-rock group The Mojós in his native Jerusalem back in 2006 and the group had recorded three albums together between 2008 and 2010 but had effectively split by 2012 with their lead singer being primed for a solo career. They had, however, reckoned without one of their older recordings becoming a surprise international hit single.

### **ONE DAY/RECKONING SONG**

First charted: 20/10/2012

Peak Position: 30

Peak reached: 10/11/2012

Originally recorded for their first album *The Reckoning* in 2008, *Reckoning Song* had become the first ever single release for Asaf Avidan and the Mojós although it was the immediate follow-up *Weak* which had turned them into stars in their native Israel. Four years later it was uncovered by German DJ Wankelmut who created a brand new mix of the track, one which met with Avidan's enthusiastic approval. Released in the summer of 2012, the newly retitled *One Day/Reckoning Song* became a worldwide sensation, topping the charts in many European territories and going Top 3 just about everywhere else. The one odd exception seemed to be in the UK where due to licensing delays the song did not escape commercially until later in the autumn by which time most of the buzz had died down. One of Europe's biggest hits of the year was little more than a minor chart entry in Britain where it charted low and took four weeks to climb to a rather disappointing peak of Number 30.

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