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# LOCKDOWN TWO YEARS ON: THE SOUNDTRACK

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It's been exactly two years since Boris announced the first UK lockdown. Telling us to stay home and promising it would only be a couple of weeks, what followed was essentially a collective fever dream of at-home workouts and trash TV. As we all downloaded TikTok and settled into the cabin fever, it's strange how certain songs seemed to hook into all of us.

Whether it was a proper album made in lockdown and released ready for the second wave, or a single that seemed to sweep the nation via IG live streams and 5-second dance clips, there was a very distinctive soundtrack of those early days. Listening back its now either nostalgia or pure pain, but regardless here are our picks for the Gigwise lockdown soundtrack.

### 'WAP' - Cardi B ft. Megan Thee Stallion

With the usual abundance of red carpets absent from 2020, celebrities were deprived of the opportunity to compete for a place on Twitter's trending topics. The awards ceremonies that did proceed, lacking audiences, failed to create the pop-culture shockwaves we had grown accustomed to. No meat dress or foam finger could distract from the communal sense of impending doom—making awards shows seem more trivial than ever.

Thankfully, rap superstars Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion salvaged the pop-culture landscape to give us something worth talking about. Questionable cameos (why was Kylie Jenner there???) and controversial lyricism (we will never see macaroni in the same way) solidifies WAP's place as the most iconic single of 2020. From Ben Shapiro's

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concerning biology lesson to endless TikTok dance routines, 'WAP' ended the conversational drought in the desert that was 2020. (Laura Molloy)

## 'After Hours' - The Weeknd

Released on 20 March despite many other artists of similar stature delaying their release due to the COVID pandemic, it's as if Abel knew the world would need his music. Indeed, just three days later the UK and many other countries around the globe entered the first lockdown—a time that almost feels like a bad dream now a couple of years later.

During this period, Abel's music was indeed a source of comfort for many, whether it was the 'Blinding Lights' dance sensation that took TikTok by storm, or simply strapping on a pair of headphones and escaping into The Weeknd's world of heartache and hedonism. In a strange way, listening to Abel's internal battle with himself outlined on After Hours, helped relieve the pressure of the lockdown anxiety.

After Hours would go on to be my most played album of 2020 and now, two years on, it's still a pick-me-up, a diversion, and a source of reassurance whenever I need it. (Karl Blakesley)

## 'Say So' - Doja Cat

Taking TikTok by storm the second Charli D'Amelio got her mitts on the track, 'Say So' by Doja Cat was one of the first big viral moments. Soundtracking those dystopian first days of banana bed, whipped coffee, Tiger King and worrying about toilet paper, 'Say So' was there to keep the vibes high. Was it the old-school disco feel that got us all hooked? Or was it the mob mentality of seeing literally everyone and their nan doing that TikTok dance that whipped us up into a Doja Cat frenzy? Regardless, the obsession has never stopped. (Lucy Harbron)

## 'Walking In The Snow' - Run The Jewels

With our time outside limited and unable to travel far, I remember being glued to the news constantly to watch the horrors of the world unfold. Unfortunately, it wasn't just COVID-19. The murder of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis Police Officer sparked a new wave of Black Lives Matter protests in May 2020 in America, and soon such protests and social consciousness spread to these shores.

RJT4 was released only a week after the tragic death, and its most hard-hitting song 'walking in the snow' sees Killer Mike and EL-P call out police brutality, racism, and media apathy to events like the Floyd killing. It felt especially relevant and powerful from hip-hop's alternative social justice raisers. (Matthew McLister)

## 'Physical' - Dua Lipa

For me, the standout lockdown hit was Dua Lipa's 'Physical'. It dropped just a little before lockdown hit, but it—alongside all other bangers from [Future Nostalgia](#)—became the soundtrack to the early pandemic days for many of us. 'Physical' in particular harkened back to better days that we hadn't experienced but could idolise (the '70s) from locked in our bedrooms. It's pop perfection, learning from the best (Olivia Newton-John) and injecting a dose of modern pop sentimentality. Plus it dropped in that sweet spot before the pandemic influenced music further, almost a swansong for the 'old' world we knew.

Whether it was on my Government-mandated daily walk or at home imagining that I was in a sweaty, dingy club surrounded by friends and strangers (which seemed a lifetime away), 'Physical' was always playing. I still haven't been back to a club, but I'm sure 'Physical' will await me on the dancefloor. (David Roskin)

## 'House Music All Night Long' - JARV IS

Upon its release in February 2020, it wasn't apparent how prescient 'House Music All Night Long' from [Beyond The Pale](#) by JARV IS would be. A paean to staying in while the rest of the world is partying, once the country was forced indoors it became a unifying anthem in the same way that much of Different Class did in 1995. "God damn this claustrophobia" indeed, as all music became house music.

To hear it performed live by Jarvis and his band on their autumn 2021 tour was a cathartic moment, a release of the pent-up pressure caused by 18 months of anxiety. To hear the song now, fortunately, makes it sound like it comes from a different world, but also a reminder of the collective trauma we went through in those spring days, an experience we should never forget.

Plus, y'know, it's a tune. (Richard Bowes)

## 'anthems' – Charli XCX

Charli XCX was one of the first artists to birth a lockdown record in [how i'm feeling now](#)—and out of that came 'anthems', her most carnal, sweaty plea to dance. Lyrically, 'anthems' is smash cut after smash cut of Charli's increasingly stifling life in lockdown: binge-watching telly, online shopping: staring out into oblivion. Amongst the monotony of domesticity, Charli petulantly belts: "I want anthems!" against a frenetic, abrasive bassline. 'anthems' personally soundtracked a lot of my lockdown walks, reminiscing about clubs and gigs; despite its turbulent emotional core, 'anthems' ultimately reminds me of a lot of idyllic treks around home, wondering if lockdown would ever end. (Alex Rigotti)

## 'If You're Too Shy (Let Me Know)' - The 1975

Maybe the lockdown caused me to revert back to my teen indie days, or maybe there's simply no denying that this song is absolutely huge. The day '[If You're Too Shy \(Let Me Know\)](#)' came out, I lost track of how many times I pressed repeat. Delivering a hit of serotonin so big it seemed to make up for a whole half-year inside, that random April day felt so distinctly like the start of a weird heatwave summer that many of us actually look back on fondly now.

The bottles of wine opened to accompany Tiger King or some other trash, the bad at-home cocktails enjoyed as you tried to soak up whatever sun you could get from your window, dressing up for walks like you were the hottest one in town; The 1975 still play in my head when I think about it. Giving me 'If You're Too Shy' for good days and the equally beloved 'Jesus Christ 2005 God Bless America' for bad ones, the album might not have quite delivered but those singles sure did back in April 2020. (Lucy Harbron)

## 'I Disagree' - Poppy

This album was the first I had heard of the artist, I remember being \*yet again\* completely obsessed, whilst confused at my lack of knowledge about her music. A gritty album that welcomed annihilating riffs, cryptic storytelling, and a splash of pop—I Disagree, felt like a whole new world for me. Comparing it to the idiosyncratic work of Babymetal, (an incredible band might I add), Poppy's [I Disagree](#) was an alluring project that I managed to stumble upon during the first lockdown. A time in which we were all pretty much glued to our phones, laptops and TV screens, I Disagree was the perfect, distorted distraction to the apocalyptic doom pit of Covid-19 that we never thought we'd escape. (Laviea Thomas)

## 'XS' - Rina Sawayama

Later to release our [Album of the Year 2020](#), Rina Sawayama dropped the jewel in the [SAWAYAMA](#) crown in early March 2020. 'XS' had a few weeks of play-time in clubs before it instead became the sound that pumped out of our second-floor window into the boiling shared garden. People all along the street probably got a taste of the metal-cum-sugar-pop sounds of this track while we sunbathed; a track heralding in a new icon of pop. The neighbours are yet to thank me, but I hold out hope. (Jessie Atkinson)

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