

2012: A Year in Music

- Liam Reilly

Another year has come and gone, leaving us to reflect on what has transpired over the last twelve months. This December ends the final year marked by the Mayan calendar, and even if you are not superstitious, there is a sense of time fleeting and a desire to seize the day. This feeling has engrained itself in the music industry in the last year, with a barrage of new and fresh sounds. These new and fresh sounds have been the driving force for much of the best music seen this year. Here are my end of the year awards for music in 2012:

Best Album: Some Nights by Fun.

Spending forty-two weeks on the Billboard Top 200 with Some Nights, Fun. has been a dominant force this year. The New York based indie/pop trio first came together in 2008, and the band's first album, Aim and Ignite, made little noise in the music industry. Three years later, the first single off of Some Nights, a duet with Janelle Monae called "We Are Young," provided Fun. with the exposure needed for Some Nights to become a much anticipated pop release. Some Nights is a wonderfully crafted pop-driven album with memorable piano and guitar riffs and catchy melodies reminiscent of Queen. Aside from the immensely popular single of the same name, Some Nights boasts several other noteworthy tracks, including "Why Am I The One" and "Carry On." Some Nights and Fun. are deserving of the six Grammy nominations received for their work this year.

Best New Artist: Frank Ocean

After making cameo appearances in 2011 singing hooks on Jay-Z and Kanye West's Watch the Throne, and appearing in the occasional track for his rap group Odd Future, Frank Ocean came into his own in 2012 with the release of his first solo album, Channel ORANGE. Since coming out in September, Channel ORANGE has spent twenty-two weeks on the Billboard Top 200, peaking at number 2. Ocean's semi-autobiographical lyrics complement the slow-tempo synthesized arrangements of each track, and the album leaves little to be desired. Channel ORANGE also is effective in showing off the dynamic nature of Ocean, particularly the track, "Pyramids," which is a ten minute long piece beginning as a synth-funk track, and the closest thing the album has to a dance track, and ends as a silky-smooth R&B track. Like Fun., Frank Ocean has been nominated for six Grammys for the upcoming Grammy Award ceremony.

Best Song: "Call Me Maybe" by Carly Rae Jepsen

Although not the most lyrically or musically profound song that came out this year, "Call Me Maybe" had a lasting effect that transcended the music industry. Carly Rae Jepsen's ridiculously catchy pop song has spent forty-two weeks on the Billboard Hot 100, including nine consecutive weeks atop the chart, and was the most purchased song on iTunes this year. Outside of the music industry, this song could be seen almost anywhere this year, from the Harvard baseball team, to the University of Chicago, which wrote the following in a letter encouraging a student to apply:

"I know that we just met you, and this is crazy, but here are our numbers (statistics about the school), so call us, maybe?". Along with the previously mentioned accolades of the Canadian pop star Jepsen, "Call Me Maybe" is Grammy nominated for Song of the Year.

So after experiencing what 2012 had to offer musically, it is time to look ahead at what 2013 might bring. I believe that something to look for in 2013 is a significant rise in the popularity of electronic and dubstep music. Even now, this genre of music is slowly becoming more mainstream, with many pop songs over the last few years containing electronic elements. The success of electronic artists such as David Guetta and Calvin Harris in pop music is a testament to the genre's growing popularity. As well, the use of electronic and dubstep music in television commercials and movies bodes well for its integration into popular music in the near future.

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