

20 Throwback Hits for a Nostalgic Spring Break Playlist

Take a trip down memory lane with these pop classics from the early 2010s.

By: Todd Vaughan



When 2010 arrived, music seemed to have one main destination in mind: the dancefloor. From David Guetta to Pitbull, the new decade ushered in a slew of artists determined to keep us partying nonstop with high-energy electropop tunes. But not every artist was vying to dominate the clubs. Those early 2010s also gave us Adele whose somber breakup ballads had even grown men fighting back tears.

Those first few years of the 2010s undoubtedly gave us plenty of memorable music that still slaps to this day. With spring break around the corner, road trips and pool parties will soon be underway. Such occasions call for the perfect playlist, and no playlist is complete without some throwback favorites sprinkled in the mix. Check out this list of classic sing-along tunes that will have you and your friends laughing, dancing, and reminiscing during spring break.

“Royals” – Lorde

When Lorde burst onto the scene in 2013, she didn't look or sound like anyone in pop music. The New Zealand singer delivered a unique avant-pop sound that was surprisingly radio-friendly. Her debut single “Royals” had everyone bopping their heads, from pop music fans to R&B lovers. Although she scored some success with subsequent tracks like “Team” and “Greenlight,” “Royals” is the ultimate Lorde song, and its hard-hitting beat still sounds just as good now as it did 9 years ago.

“Party Rock Anthem” – LMFAO feat. Lauren Bennett & GoonRock

With their big glasses, outlandish outfits, and endless songs about drinking and partying, LMFAO were hands-down the kings of fun. Everybody—and I do mean everybody—was rocking to “Party Rock Anthem.” This song epitomized the electropop dance sound of the time and is indeed a party anthem. If you're looking for that one throwback jam guaranteed to get everybody lit, add “Party Rock Anthem” to your playlist.

“We Found Love” – Rihanna feat. Calvin Harris

It's hard to top such bangers like “What's My Name?” and “S&M,” but RiRi outdid herself with this dancefloor masterpiece that begs for some glowsticks. With its dark video that features a Chris Brown look-alike, we couldn't help but wonder if “We Found Love” described Rihanna's tumultuous relationship with Mr. Brown. Whoever inspired it, we're just glad Miss Fenty blessed us with this heartfelt dance classic.

“Bang Bang” – Jessie J, Ariana Grande, & Nicki Minaj

“See anybody could be good to you. You need a bad girl to blow your mind,” belts Jessie J on the climax of this sassy and sexy pop number. Jessie, Ari, and Nicki served up bad chick realness on a platter, and we were all begging for seconds. With its thumping beat, soaring background vocals, and unapologetically sexual lyrics, “Bang Bang” was destined to be a hit. This was one of the best all-female collabs of the 2010s, and we haven't had a triple-female collaboration as epic as this one since.

“Adorn” – Miguel

In 2012, Miguel dropped arguably the best R&B song of the 2010s. Unlike much of the talk-singing style of R&B that became popular during this era, Miguel delivered impeccable vocals over a smooth, midtempo groove. The soulful tune showcased Miguel at his finest. Unfortunately, his unforgettable 2013 Billboard Awards performance of "Adorn" wasn't his finest hour. During his number, he made [a failed attempt to jump across the stage](#) and accidentally hit two audience members upon landing. Clearly, he's better at singing than long jumping.

"We Can't Stop" – Miley Cyrus

Miley tried to warn us that she was about to toss her innocent Hannah Montana image deep into the trash with her semi-raunchy video "Can't Be Tamed." But it was her racy single "We Can't Stop," that introduced us to the fierce and fully grownup Miley Cyrus. The laidback track produced by Mike Will Made-It seamlessly blended catchy pop vocals with head-bopping trap. Gone was the nervous Miley sitting in a taxicab relieved to hear a Jay-Z song. The new Miley confidently sang about owning the night and proclaimed how she was "bout that life." Miley was a bit of a mess back then, but just like this infectious pop tune, we just couldn't get enough.

"All About That Bass" – Meghan Trainor

People tend to either love Meghan Trainor or find her downright annoying. Regardless of how you feel about her, M-Train changed the game with her body-positive debut single and thick girl anthem, "All About That Bass." The playful tune incorporates a '50s doo-wop sound that was unlike anything else on the radio at the time. The accompanying video showcased a diverse mix of body types dancing along to colorful pastel backgrounds. Visually and musically, "All About That Bass" was a spectacular presentation. So, it's no wonder it gained [2 billion video views](#) and [sold 10 million copies](#).

"Without You" – David Guetta feat. Usher

You can't talk about the late 2000s or early 2010s without mentioning the EDM king of the era, David Guetta. Whether producing classics like Black Eyed Peas's "I Gotta Feeling" or taking the lead role, David Guetta kept hits on the radio. One of his standout singles was the 2011 smash "Without You." With Usher's emotional vocal delivery atop David's slick production, "Without You" yielded a soulful electropop number appreciated by EDM fans and R&B lovers alike. The lyrics may be

melancholy, but the song's feel-good groove ultimately made you wanna dance the night away without a care in the world.

"Tik Tok" – Kesha (formerly Ke\$ha)

Few songs define the early 2010s sound as fittingly as the party anthem, "Tik Tok." This nightclub-friendly ditty combined rapped verses with a sung chorus and introduced us to our favorite, reckless party girl, Kesha. With lyrics like "before I leave brush my teeth with a bottle of Jack," it was impossible to take Kesha or this song seriously. While Kesha's amateur rapping may not have been your vibe, you likely caught yourself singing the catchy "oh-oh-oh-oh" part at some point. This fun song was everyone's guilty pleasure, leading it to become the [biggest Billboard hit of 2010](#).

"Thinking Out Loud" – Ed Sheeran

If you got married in 2014, finding the perfect wedding song was easy. That year, radio was taken over by two ballads destined to be used as the first dance song for many brides and grooms: John Legend's "All of Me" and Ed Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud." The latter is a beautiful tune showcasing Ed's soulful vocal delivery over a soft rock track reminiscent of Van Morrison. (If you have no idea who that is, please go YouTube the legendary song, "[Brown Eyed Girl](#)." You'll make your parents—or grandparents—very proud). Even the most bitter person could fall in love after a few listens of "Thinking Out Loud." It's an exceptional love ballad that will be played at wedding receptions for years to come.

"Somebody That I Used to Know" – Gotye feat. Kimbra

Before Ed Sheeran helped us fall in love, Gotye and Kimbra helped us get over our ex. In 2011, these two artists from down under gave us the breakup anthem of the year. The incredibly relatable lyrics discussed everything from gaslighting to giving your ex the cold shoulder. For anyone who'd ever gone through a breakup, this song hits different. With its indie-pop sound, it was also a refreshing change from the electropop dance tunes that were dominating the airwaves. Gotye and Kimbra may have become forgotten one-hit wonders, but "Somebody That I Used to Know" will be forever remembered as one of the greatest songs of the 2010s.

"Starships" – Nick Minaj

Many of the early 2010s dance-pop hits can be credited to the talented producer RedOne, including Nicki Minaj's technopop mega-hit, "Starships." If you were in the clubs when this song was out, then you know the excitement this song brought to the dancefloor. Every time that pulsating instrumental break dropped after the chorus, the whole club erupted into a frenzy of hands waving in the air and people jumping up and down. It was a good time for sure! This is a classic club track that stills get a crowd going to this day.

"Dynamite" – Taio Cruz

What's better than a one-hit-wonder? A two-hit-wonder of course! After his breakout hit "Break Your Heart," British singer Taio Cruz made sure to give us one more banger before he faded from our memories. "Dynamite" was a heavily auto-tuned ditty with silly lyrics, but we didn't care. As Taio said, we came to the club to "move, move, move, move," and Mr. Cruz made sure we did just that with this fun, up-tempo single.

"On the Floor" – Jennifer Lopez feat. Pitbull

In the late 2000s, J-Lo's music career seemed to lose steam. But In 2011, the chart-topping queen reclaimed her throne on the Billboard charts with her high-energy mega-hit, "On the Floor." This nightclub staple found J-Lo hitting the top 10 on multiple Billboard charts, including the [Global Dance Chart](#), where it spent 7 weeks at number one. The song displays some of Jennifer's most amusing lyrics as she proudly encourages "party freaks" and "animals" to tear up the floor." If you need to wake the party up, this dancefloor classic will surely reignite the energy on your Spring Break trip.

"Teach Me How to Dougie" – Cali Swag District

From The Soulja Boy to The Jerk to The Stanky Legg, the 2000s provided no shortage of dance crazes. The trend carried over into the 2010s with the popular hip-hop tune "Teach Me How to Dougie." The Dougie was a viral dance sensation that both hip-hop heads and pop lovers could get down to. Even former First Lady Michelle Obama said the Dougie was [her favorite dance](#) at the time. Sadly, [two members of Cali Swag District have passed away](#), but their memories will live on through this incredible hip-hop classic.

"What Makes You Beautiful" – One Direction

Besides introducing us to the swagalicious Harry “Watermelon Sugar” Styles, One Direction gave us one of the greatest bubblegum pop tunes of the 2010s era. “What Makes You Beautiful” splendidly channels (or rips off, depending on who you ask) “Summer Nights” from the classic musical *Grease*. One Direction had the girls and the gays singing and dancing around their apartments with this light-hearted throwback. It’s a fun tune that will certainly bring on the nostalgia and have you and your friends in the feels.

“I Knew You Were Trouble.” – Taylor Swift

Even if you’ve never been a Swiftie, there’s at least one Taylor Swift song you’ve appreciated over the years. A popular favorite was her 2012 smash “I Knew You Were Trouble.” (And yes, Taylor puts a period at the end of the title). The song was a taste of the pop music gems she would later unleash on the world. With its well-written tale of falling for someone you knew was wrong for you, this relatable tune could have you headbanging your heartache away to its dubstep-flavored chorus. Taylor definitely knows how to write a heartbreak record, and “I Knew You Were Trouble.” was hands-down one of her best.

“Roar” – Katy Perry

Katy Perry’s Tarzan-inspired video for “Roar” has an astonishing [3.5 billion views on YouTube](#). But it’s not entirely surprising. With its vivid colors, adorable monkey, and a tiger wearing a necklace that says, “Kitty Purry,” what is there not to love about this over-the-top video? The song features a head-bopping drumbeat, catchy chorus, and soaring vocals from Katy. It’s a pop music masterpiece and the perfect song for a road trip.

“Treasure” – Bruno Mars

Singer, songwriter, musician, dancer: Bruno Mars is a quadruple threat who knows how to make a great song and own a stage. He showed us that he always understands the assignment with his 2013 disco funk hit “Treasure.” The accompanying video transports us back to the ‘70s with a mirror ball, disco lights, and tightly choreographed routines that would make The Jackson 5 proud. Bruno reassured us that pop stars could still make timeless music in the early 2010s. [Like the YouTube commenter OMG said](#), “This song is like wine, the older it gets the better it becomes.”

"Give Me Everything" - Pitbull feat. Ne-Yo, Afrojack, and Nayer

If you've never danced to "Give Me Everything" on a packed dancefloor with 3 cocktails in your system, you may not fully appreciate this wild yet surprisingly uplifting club anthem. Pitbull, aka "Mr. 305" aka "Mr. Worldwide," dominated radio during the late 2000s and early 2010s. His high-energy tracks like "I Know You Want Me (Calle Ocho)" and "Timber" were nightclub staples. But "Give Me Everything" was on a level all its own. This technopop rap mashup had us living our best life on the dance floor because as the lyrics say, "we might not get tomorrow." This throwback tune is one of the quintessential songs of the early 2010s music era and the perfect playlist choice for a nostalgic night of tipsy dancing with your friends.