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Best singer in one direction

An age-old maxim in the world of pop music is that what you do when you leave a band is far more important than what you did IN the band. This is true for some of the biggest stars pop culture has ever seen, those who made the most of every moment of post-band freedom, from Michael Jackson, to Diana Ross, Beyonce to George Michael. Now it is officially 10 years since One Direction were formed on The X Factor and went on to become global behemoths of the highest degree, it is the perfect time to rank the boys' solo careers. From R&B bangers, acoustic-tinged confessionals and big, dramatic rock ballads, Harry Styles, Zayn Malik, Louis Tomlinson, Liam Payne and Niall Horan have latter-career hits, so he's clearly a talented pop writer, which makes his detour into BritPop all the more confusing. For us, Louis has the most musically insincere aesthetic of all the boys - it aims for the sweet spot between commercial success and critical credibility, but doesn't really manage either. Someone clearly told him that to be taken seriously as a musician, you have to use guitars. We'd like to refute that claim right now. Ultimately, his solo music isn't bad, per se, it's just boring. It sounds at points like you're listening to someone sing Oasis karaoke. There's no originality here, or the desire to say something new or even interesting, and when you look at what some of his bandmates have gone on to achieve, it's a sad state of affairs indeed. Back To You is cute though, and maybe the first pop video ever set in Doncaster? Have to respect that. Best Track: Back To You with Digital Farm Animals and Bebe Rexha 4. Liam Payne We don't actually have much to add to the Liam Payne discourse, we really think this review of his debut album by the Guardian sums it up pretty well: 'LP1 is a bad pop album, but very effective contraception.' Ouch. To be fair to Liam, he did really go for broke trying to emulate stars like Justin Timberlake, and while debut single Strip That Down succeeded off the back of its trop-pop sonics (it is, to this day, a bit of a bop, stop lying to yourself), he's struggled to nail down an artistic identity of his own apart from the concept of 'likes sex a lot'. Tellingly, his best song Bedroom Floor combines both of these things but leaves the listener to shade in the more intimate details. And apparently it was Cheryl's favourite song of his, so who are we to argue? Best Track: Bedroom Floor 3. Zayn Malik The anti-Gen Halliwell, Zayn's decision to leave One Direction in 2015 was a water-cooler moment for pop culture in the 2010s, mostly because everyone thought that Harry would be the first one to dip. Zayn was wise, however, in making the most out of a bad opportunity - his solo music has the most immediacy out of all of his band mates, melding the styles of futuristic R&B stalwarts like Frank Ocean and SZA to a ridiculously modern, up-tempo beat. Pillowtalk, his debut single, is the most instantly enjoyable 1D star solo single - he ranks low on this list, however, since his overall output has been patchy to say the least. 2019's Icarus Falls was an overstuffed LP with moments of intense brilliance (Hands), but ultimately, it feels like he's lost his way. Best Track: Pillowtalk (obviously) 2. Niall Horan Yes, we know. We can't believe it either. Sorry Samantha Mumba, B*Witched and Una from The Saturdays - but we have a new favourite Irish pop star. Niall, out of all of the boys, had the least to lose but most to gain from his solo career, as let's be honest, no-one was really expecting him to come out swinging. Debut single This Town was a cute little acoustic ditty, but it was in Slow Hands that he found something truly special and, dare we say, even became a little... sexy? His latest album, Heartbreak Weather, was released earlier this year and while Fine Line may have soaked up most of the attention, Niall seems to be on the right track for a long and fruitful career. Best Track: Slow Hands 1. Harry Styles Could it have been anyone else? Yes, his debut, self-titled album in 2017 was a bit too serious for our liking, but Harry has always been the most natural pop star of the five, and it's been a joy to see him ratify this ambition in last year's blockbuster Fine Line. Harry just gets it, doesn't he? He knows what to do and how to do it. His recent singles - Lights Out, Adore You and Watermelon Sugar - all carry a distinctive style and gorgeous, somewhat outlandish visuals to match. He writhes topless with glistening wet hair in an orgy of male and female bodies, he tries to make out with a gigantic fish and uses watermelons as a metaphor for cumliningus. Adore You, especially, is the best track ever released by a 1D-alumni, and one of the best post-boyband singles ever, period. Harry, you can tell, has studied the careers of the greats; Bowie especially, but we also see shades of Sir Elton John, Janet Jackson and even Lady Gaga in his outlandish yet strangely personal approach to pop. Basically - he's the best. Obviously. Best Track: Adore You Got a story? If you've got a celebrity story, video or pictures get in touch with the Metro.co.uk Entertainment team by emailing us celebtips@metro.co.uk, calling 020 3615 2145 or by visiting our Submit Stuff page - we'd love to hear from you. MORE : Amber Heard continues evidence in Johnny Depp trial after claiming actor 'threatened to kill her' MORE : Lorraine Kelly in hiding for Strictly Come Dancing? Good Morning Britain presenters kick start rumour mill One Direction Romance Report Card: From Single to EngagedAs a fan of the band since before their first U.S. album dropped, here's my list:3) Liam Payne: Okay, as an actual songwriter, Liam is certainly one of the most talented members of One Direction. But personality-wise, it's always been harder to get a read on Liam than the others. This means A) He's probably the most normal one of them but B) He's the hardest to identify with. But hey, he did get in a good Bieber burn recently. 4) Louis Tomlinson: The Larry Shippers' conspiracy theory that Louis Tomlinson is secretly in a relationship with Harry Styles is probably the most interesting thing about him. And while Louis has the songwriting chops, he's probably the weakest singer in the group. Nevertheless, what a smile!Alleged One Direction Tour Rider Requests Only 4 Dressing Rooms3) Zayn Malik: When he's focused, Zayn has arguably the finest voice in the band. Also, have you seen those eyes? Normal eyes aren't supposed to sparkle like that! Also, he bought his mom a house, which is pretty adorable.2) Harry Styles: It's understandable why Harry is the international breakout of the band. Like John Lennon before him, he maintains a wry mystique. He's always smiling as if he knows a secret he'd like to share with you -- and only you! Plus, his name suits his strengths: He's the most stylish member of 1D by far, and his hair is probably the best in the entire realm of pop music.1) Niall Horan: Going by his fan interactions, it seems like there isn't a more down-to-earth, considerate pop star these days than Niall. Also, Niall dressing up as a disgruntled security guard in One Direction: This Is Us ("Who's your favorite?" "Darren") is probably the band's funniest moment. Additionally, Niall actually plays guitar and loves his Irish heritage with a passion. At the end of the day, Niall is the one you'd want to casually hang with.But yes, this is a very subjective list. How would you rank 1D? 44. Liam Payne feat. A Boogie Wit da Hoodie, "Stack It Up"Not a bad song in its entirety, but its "money on my mind" hook isn't among Payne's most charming, and melodically the single echoes Selena Gomez's Charli XCX-co-written "Same Old Love" smash from 2015 a little too closely.43. Zayn feat. Nicki Minaj, "No Candle No Light" A 2018 single that sounds at least a couple years too late for contemporary pop radio with its dancehall-inspired shuffle and the Jack U-like wordless wail that marks its refrain. Nicki Minaj is always a welcome guest presence, but her chemistry with Zayn isn't particularly sparking here.42. R3HAB, Zayn & Jung Kook, "Flames"inda like Blackstreet's "No Diggity" if it was covered by Rag n'Bone Man and produced by Alex da Kid. An interesting experiment, certainly, but to one whose results need revisiting all that frequently.41. Liam Payne feat. French Montana, "First Time" (feat. French Montana) beat has an interesting snake to it, but it doesn't ever quite build like you'd hope, and the chorus doesn't provide much payoff. Meanwhile, French Montana is always a better host than guest, and his rhymes here ("Tryna fight it like Tyson, but she snipe me with a rifle") prove largely uninspiring.40. Liam Payne feat. Cheat Codes, "Live Forever" If you were making a bet on the 1D most likely to borrow the chorus to Oasis' '90s anthem "Live Forever," you could probably have gotten 100 to 1 odds on it being Liam Payne -- and EDM duo Cheat Codes being in any way involved would've been off the board altogether. The two artists don't exactly recreate the magic of that Britpop classic here, but as far as late-'10s drop-pop goes, it's rousing enough.39. Niall Horan, "Put a Little Love on Me"A decent but disappointingly unexceptional ballad by Niall standards, with a title that really feels like it could've used a second pass. Lewis Capaldi probably would've gone top 10 with it, though.38. Zayn, "Let Me" Maybe a little better in its airy pop-rock sway than we're giving it credit for here, but sorta hard not to hold those "Our sex has meaning" muscle T-shirts against this one.37. Louis Tomlinson, "Don't Let It Break Your Heart"Coldplay got to this title first, of course, but more pressingly, Louis' own group got to the melody. Then again, "Steal My Girl" was one of the most underrated 1D singles, so it's hard to be too mad at the quasi-rewrite.36. Shaed & Zayn, "Trampoline" (Remix)Zayn certainly doesn't make alt-pop outfit Shaed's effervescent breakout hit any less bouncy, but his presence just doesn't do a ton to elevate a song that was already pretty seamless. It did add enough extra streams and downloads to give the song a nice bump on the Hot 100, though, so hopefully Shaed will be sending Zayn a nice Christmas card this year.35. Zayn feat. Kehlani, "Wrong" Easily the most forgotten of the early 1D solo singles -- bubbling under the charts on both sides of the Atlantic, and so sparsely promoted it barely even registers as a single -- and understandably so: Zayn's Mind of Mine duet with R&B star Kehlani gets a little too submerged in the watery production of the album's second half, with neither of the talented vocalists managing to make a particularly strong impression.34. Liam Payne, "All I Want (For Christmas)" Not exactly potent enough to supplant that similarly titled Christmas song in fans' hearts (or on top of Spotify search results) -- but on the whole, a heartfelt enough lyric and a powerful enough vocal performance to be a worthy entry in the modern holiday music canon. All any of us want is to make it through December, really.33. Zayn, "Entertainer" A fairly compelling melody and production, unfortunately spent on a chorus that feels like it should be a lot more pointed and a little less muddled than it actually is ("You were my favorite entertainer/ I watch you, I laugh with and f-k with you/ Don't you take me for a fool/ In this game, I own the rules"). One day, we can only hope it all comes together for Zayn to have a truly great betrayal ballad.32. Louis Tomlinson & Steve Aoki, "Just Hold On"Undeniably rousing and decently anthemic ("What do you do when the chapter ends/ Do you close the book and never read it again?"), but compared to the more distinctive directions the other 1Ders have taken their solo careers thusfar, also a little indistinct -- and maybe a couple years behind the EDM moment. Nonetheless, Louis Tomlinson's solo bow song has enjoyed a nice slow burn as a grower, quickly disappearing from the Billboard Hot 100 but amassing over 400 million plays on Spotify.31. Jonas Blue, Liam Payne & Lennon Stella, "Polaroid"Nothing overly revelatory here, but a perfectly competent dance-pop bounce with a solidly above-average chorus. Crowd-pleasing enough to become one of Jonas Blue's six (1) Dance Club Songs No. 1s since 2016.30. Louis Tomlinson, "Kill My Mind"Certainly gets points for novelty, as it's been a pretty long time since anyone seemed interested in actively reviving the post-Britpop, late-'90s-era rock of Kula Shaker and the Dandy Warhols. Ends up decently appealing in its trashy pseudo-pseudo-glam, but a little too much rallying here for it to be truly exciting.29. Rita Ora & Liam Payne, "For You (Fifty Shades Freed)" Pretty good! Particularly as far as soundtrack duets for franchise sequels go. The chorus is appropriately major, the synths are gratifyingly dramatic, even the beat has a little growl to it. Hard for it to escape the shadow of the other Direction + Pop Star Fifty Shades collab, particularly commercially, but it's probably better than you remember it being.28. Zayn & Sia, "Dusk Till Dawn"Capitivating as a showcase for two supremely skilled pop vocalists, and as a cinematic slice of big-balled bluster that calls out for a better action-packed drama to accompany than its own slightly flat music video. Still, you wish they hadn't aimed quite so dead-center with it: It's a tad trad for two pop personalities as generally vibrant as Zayn and Sia.27. Niall Horan, "Nice to Meet Ya" Kudos to Niall for not following down the path of either "This Town" or "Slow Hands" with his comeback single following his Flicker era, and he certainly sounds like he's having a time over the song's house-inspired piano and indie-dance drum sashay. But the song's friskiness ultimately feels a little edgeless, the sort of stuff Mark Ronson would be doing if he was just trying to rehash old glories rather than proving new ground. Fun, but a tad forgettable.26. Zedd & Liam Payne, "Get Low" Liam and Zedd's 2017 collab had the "One Dance" bounce with the "Pasionfruit" vibes, along with one of 2017's summeriest choruses outside of Calvin Harris' album, and a title that's about as chart-tested as any in recent memory. But that's kind of the problem: While the best 1D solo singles have been consistently inventive, surprising and delightful, "Get Low" feels a little safe in its hitmaking formula.25. Zayn, "Fingers"Not a particularly dynamite single coming from Zayn's Icarus Falls, but a gem on the album proper, with a plush little organ hook, and one of Zayn's better choruses: "I'm f--ked and I want ya/ I can't even text ya/ 'Coz my fingers ain't working, but my heart is." The rapturous wails that producer duo Saltivdes deploy around his vocal go a long way, too.24. Niall Horan, "Too Much to Ask"Given how dolorous this song starts out with its heavy piano plodding -- like it's about to turn into a Sam Smith ballad -- "Too Much to Ask" actually turns out to be much gentler than all that, with a delicately propulsive drum shuffle and a relatively delightful chorus vocal, melodically traced by piano underneath. It would've absolutely slayed on VH1 a decade earlier, even with the unexpected cursing on the second verse.23. Zayn, "Like 1 Would" Takes a minute to hit its groove, but eventually bursts into the kind of flashing neon synth-pop that could earn Zayn a spot on the next Drive soundtrack, selling beat has an interesting snake to it, but it doesn't ever quite build like you'd hope, and the chorus doesn't provide much payoff. 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Zayn, "Like 1 Would" Takes a minute to hit its groove, but eventually bursts into the kind of flashing neon synth-pop that could earn Zayn a spot on the next Drive soundtrack, selling one of his most muscular soul vocals to date. Could've used some evening out to get it played on radio as much as Mind of Mine's lead single, but I'll likely endure as a fan favorite regardless.22. Niall Horan & Maren Morris, "Seeing Blind" A rather endearing duet between Niall and his eventual Flicker World Tour mate, Maren Morris. The song splits the difference nicely between the strummy folk of his "This Town" and the country-soul stomp of her "My Church," and the duo's harmonies twist around each other like old friends. Both have better singles individually, but it still works as more than just a tour souvenir.21. Louis Tomlinson, "Two of Us"Not a single to be broken out lightly, Louis' piano ballad in honor of his late mother Johannah Deakin is devastating from its first verse, the singer's voice already cracking as he sings, "The day that they took you, I wish it was me instead." The song's message ends up hopeful rather than despairing, with a rousing "I'll be living in the early coffee-house footsteps of another European singer-songwriter notable for his hair color -- would've seemed pretty improbable five years ago that "Strip That Down" would be the one of these singles with a Sheeran co-write -- but after Niall's follow-up single proved he has far more in his bag of tricks than a softly plucked acoustic, "This Town" seems even more impressive.10. Louis Tomlinson, "We Made It" Shouldn't work as well as it does: A sentimental, capo'd power ballad with Louis doing his best Gallagher Bros. impression would seem pretty risky in 2019. But there's something legitimately resonant here, a real feeling of triumph and perseverance, with chord changes that keep you on your toes just enough, and a "yeahhh-ee-yeahhh" singalong hook that feels pretty well earned. After the year Louis has had, it's hard to say he doesn't know what he's talking about.9. Zayn feat. Timbaland, "Too Much"Of all the Icarus Falls singles that ended up underwhelming commercially, "Too Much" is the one that feels the most like a wasted opportunity. The song's aqueous groove is as infectious as any Zayn's ever had to work with, and the sound of Timbaland's filtered voice -- which has marked dozens of the best hip-hop, R&B and pop songs of the past 25 years -- exclaiming "Must be an addiction!" is just such a pleasant thing to hear on a new record again. Then again, not even Justin Timberlake was managing much in the way of hits with expert pop cad Charlie Puth.17. Harry Styles, "Two Ghosts"A plaintive strummer in the mold of Beck at his most contemplative or Ryan Adams at his most hungover, "Two Ghosts" is largely underplayed and undeniably effective, Styles sighing over capo'd acoustic chords: "We're not who we used to be/ Just two ghosts standing in the place of you and me." Not as grand or as riotous as some of Harry Styles' more obvious highlights, but sweetly winning all the same.16. Liam Payne feat. Quavo, "Strip That Down"Like Louis' opening salvo, a little too obvious in its chasing rather than leading -- in this case, Liam seems to be aiming for a DJ Mustard/Tyga vibe that would've felt impossible at home on the radio in 2014, but now seems almost like a throwback. Still, even moreso than "Just Hold On" or "Get Low," the song's undeniably fun -- the swaggering, Directioner-baiting pre-chorus especially, which is one the JT-est things any of the five members have done since going solo.15. Zayn & Taylor Swift, "I Don't Wanna Live Forever"Gets maybe 80% of the way to a classic Big Soundtrack Ballad -- hey, much closer than most this century -- but lacks that certain ineffable quality (Specificity? Chemistry? A key change?) to make it really Celine-worthy. Still, those "What is happening to me?" shrieks in the pre-chorus are pretty choice, and there's an overwhelming breathiness to the whole thing that at least makes it feel like something cinematic is happening in the background.14. Harry Styles, "Watermelon Sugar" I just want to taste it, watermelon sugar high! Harry Styles cries in falsetto on this mellow summer jam from his upcoming Fine Line -- possibly calling out for you-know-what, but definitely asking for something he wants badly enough to make himself like an over-anxious 14-year-old in the process. Very silly, but then again, so were many of Harry's heroes a lot of the time, and it's pretty fun to see this side of his songwriting -- particularly once the horns hit.13. Zayn feat. PARTYNEXTDOOR, "Still Got Time"Ah, the misfortune this jam had coming out the week after Drake's More Life -- what could've been a song of the summer contender ended up feeling like one Patron-smooth sail around the Caribbean too many. If you haven't listened to it since, though, this one's much more of a pleasure than you probably remember: The muted beat has the teasing thrill of hearing an awesome party going on one dock over, Zayn's smartly restrained pop cad Charlie Puth.17. Harry Styles, "Two Ghosts"A plaintive strummer in the mold of Beck at his most contemplative or Ryan Adams at his most hungover, "Two Ghosts" is largely underplayed and undeniably effective, Styles sighing over capo'd acoustic chords: "We're not who we used to be/ Just two ghosts standing in the place of you and me." 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