

Best gay songs: 30-21

30

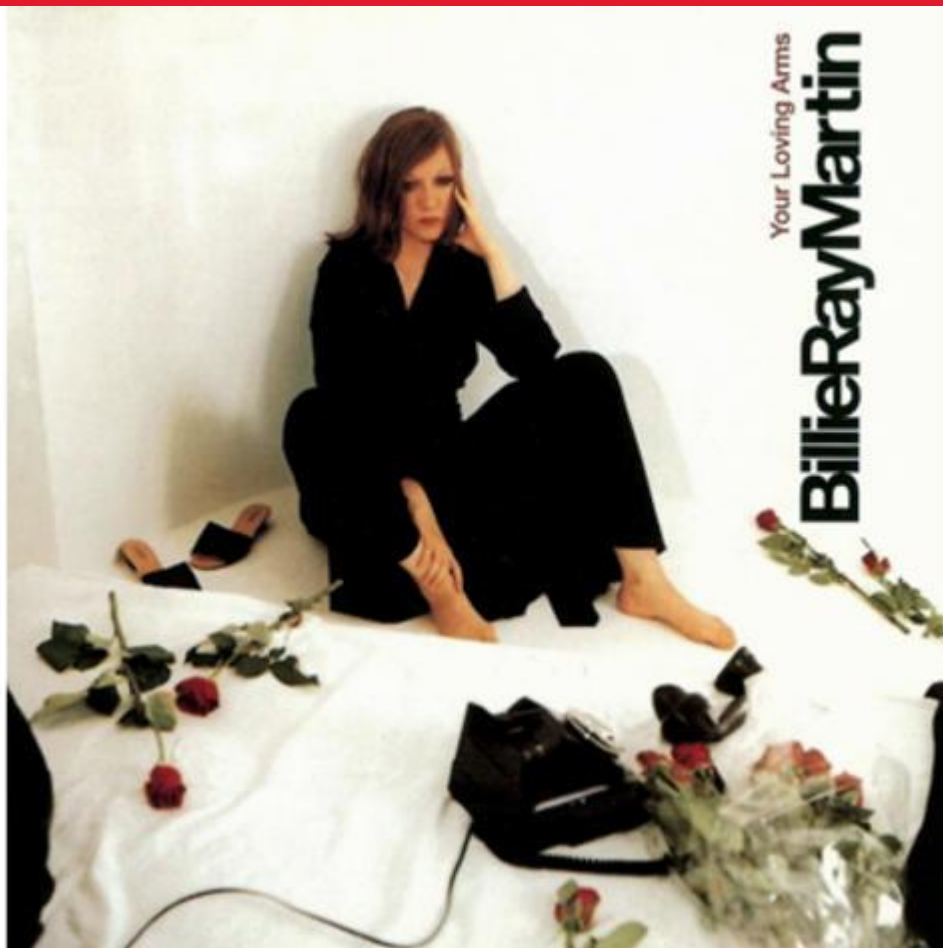


“City Grrrl” by CSS

Bad girls and gay boys have always been besties, and this 2011 track from Brazilian combo Cansei de Ser Sexy is a loving ode to that special relationship. Lead singer Lovefoxxx looks back on adolescent fantasies of "being busy with my job and my gay friends, laughing and drinking with my one-night stands" in the "big city." Anyone who's ever felt trapped in a small town (and eventually escaped) will definitely relate. – *Ethan LaCroix*

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"Your Loving Arms" by Billie Ray Martin

Most gay dance anthems are packed with drama of both the lyrical and vocal variety. But in 1994, German singer Billie Ray Martin invaded clubland with this icy floor filler that's so calm she almost seems detached. Don't let that near-monotone fool you, though – Martin is a formidable vocalist, and when she finally cuts loose ("Burning inside, burning inside, yeah!"), it's a master class in the art of delayed gratification. – *Ethan LaCroix*

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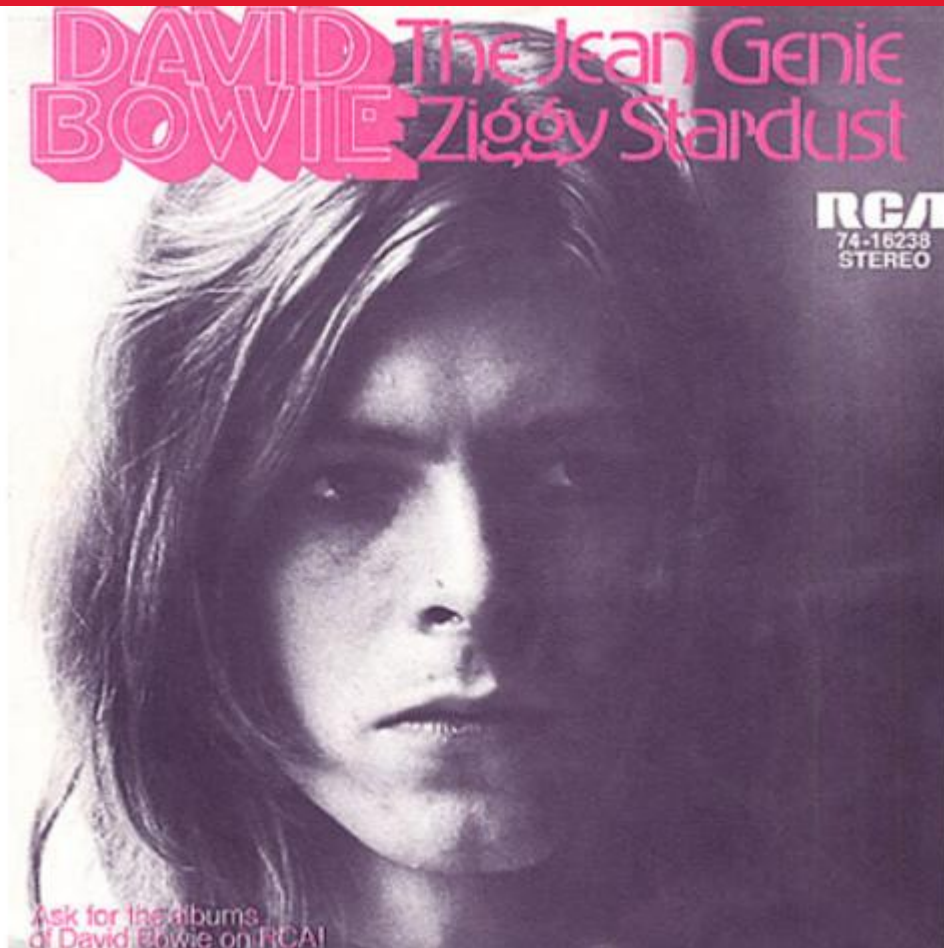


“Viz” by Le Tigre

Before forming her dance-DJ-production project MEN, JD Samson stepped up to the mike as a member of this electro-rock trio. "Viz" (2004), about butch-lesbian visibility, offers an early glimpse of Samson's sly humor and her ability to make radical queer politics into dance-floor fodder. Bandmates Kathleen Hanna and Johanna Fateman join in on the final chorus for a joyous feminist sing-along. – *Ethan LaCroix*

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“The Jean Genie” by David Bowie

The copper mullet, the lightning bolt across the face—in 1972, Bowie was at the peak of his androgynous alien phase, pushing Ziggy Stardust closer to the sun until he incinerated in a flash. A year before, in a *Melody Maker* interview, the glam rocker had declared himself gay. Though he later sloppily retracted the statement in a drug fog (he was living on a rumored diet of coke, milk and peppers), it remained a momentous occasion in pop music. As "Mannish Boy" echoed through Mick Ronson's dirty blues riff, the Jean Genie, or Aladdin Sane, or whatever Bowie's avatar might have been at the moment, proved you could growl through tough and gnarly rock while sporting perfectly applied lip gloss. — *Brent DiCrescenzo*

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"Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)" by C+C Music Factory

A gag in a 1997 episode of *The Simpsons* found a manly steel mill turning into a flamboyant gay club when this 1990 track came over the loudspeaker – an indication of just how thoroughly gay this song is. "Gonna Make You Sweat" is the second song on our list featuring the powerhouse vocals of Weather Girls singer Martha Wash, who never quite achieved mainstream fame (she was replaced in this track's video by C+C Music Factory member Zelma Davis), but has been beloved by the gay community for decades. – *Ethan LaCroix*

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"Raise Your Glass" by Pink

"Don't be fancy, just get dance-y," instructs the chaotic force known as Pink in this rowdy 2010 toast to misbehavior. "Why so serious?" She's the first one to honor her own advice. The song is a defiantly anticool anthem – a call to the underdogs of the world, the "loud and nitty-gritty dirty little freaks," to ignore convention and just let loose. Before the final chorus, she even throws in a slyly self-undermining false start: "So raise your – (oh, fuck) / So raise your glass..." In the land of Pink, party foul is party fair. – *Adam Feldman*

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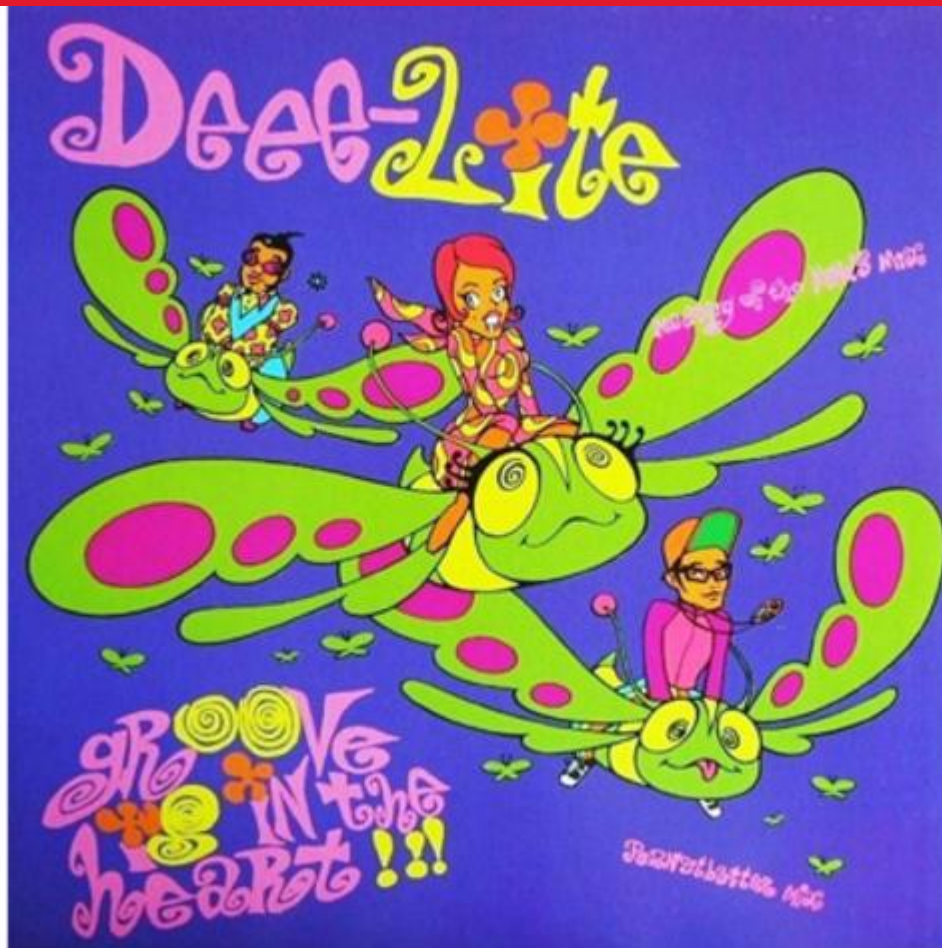


"Let's Have a Kiki" by Scissor Sisters

In the summer of 2012, "Let's Have a Kiki" was so ubiquitous in New York gay bars and clubs that it nearly crossed over into annoying. By the time Sarah Jessica Parker sang it on *Glee*, we were officially over it. But after a brief break, it's time to accept this song for what it is: A hilarious primer on queer underground culture (as with "Vogue," the New York ball scene is the inspiration here), set to an irresistible techno beat. No wonder it got so big that your mom now thinks that MTA stands for "Motherfuckers Touching my Ass." – *Ethan LaCroix*

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"Groove Is in the Heart" by Deee-Lite

Try not to smile when this one comes on. A tall glass of sweet bubble tea, Deee-Lite's 1990 dance hit offered an adorable version of New York club culture to the world, bouncing a message of love and good times on a bed of funky-psychedelic house music. Though a biological lady, frontwoman Lady Miss Kier brought more than a hint of winking drag-queen sensibility to her colorful retro style, and it was all in the spirit of togetherness – "Not vicious or malicious / Just de-lovely and delicious." – *Adam Feldman*

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R U P A U L

Supermodel
(YOU BETTER WORK)

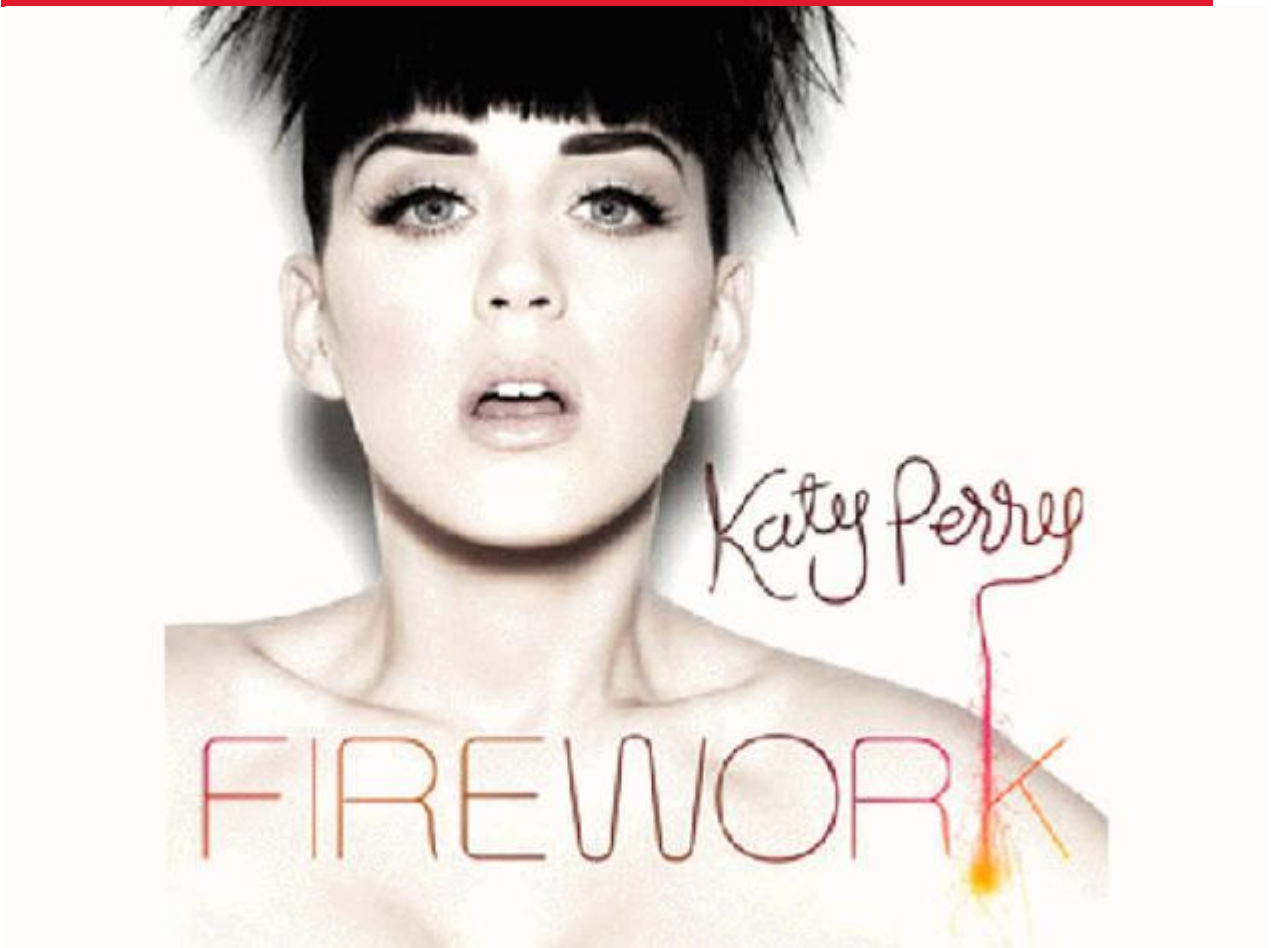


“Supermodel (You Better Work)” by RuPaul

RuPaul, you are a goddess. The drag queen next door debuted this sassy hit in 1992, winning over not only gay fans, but an audience as wide as that of Nirvana's Kurt Cobain, who cited the song as one of his favorites a year later. RuPaul is full of catchphrases ("lip-synch for your life," anyone?), but the ones in this song are by far her most widely known and most oft repeated. Sashay, shantay! Shantay shantay shantay. – *Kate Wertheimer*

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"Firework" by Katy Perry

Only a grinch of the highest caliber could dismiss the feel-good factor of this 2010 smash. Katy Perry's sweetest and most dazzling pop moment, "Firework" is a clarion call to the down-at-heart and disenfranchised.

"Do you know that there's a chance for you?" sings Perry, as this rainbow anthem builds to its explosive chorus and the line "Come on, let your colors burst!" The enjoyably dramatic (and predictably firework-heavy) video features a tender gay kiss to boot. – *Sophie Harris*

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