

Apple reveals best-selling iTunes content, iPhone apps of 2009

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Apple this week revealed the most critically acclaimed and best selling content of the year in the iTunes Store, the world's most popular online music seller and mobile application destination.

iTunes Rewind 2009 is a feature on the iTunes Store that gives a glimpse into trends for the duration of the year. Content is presented as an editorially chosen "Best of 2009," along with a list of the year's "Top Sellers."

But while Apple numbered individual songs in terms of sales rank for the year, App Store software for the iPhone and iPod touch is not as clearly defined.

Instead, the "Top Sellers" for 2009 in the App Store are divided into two sections: Games and Apps. Featured games among the top sellers are The Sims 3, The Oregon Trail, Madden NFL 10 and Flight Control. Among the top selling apps are MLB.com at Bat, Textfree Unlimited, ColorSplash and The Moron Test. None of the software listed are free downloads.

Most "Best of 2009" apps have earned at least four stars for their customer reviews. They include ReelDirector, I Am T-Pain, SketchBook Mobile and Jamie Oliver's 20 Minute Meals.

For music, the top selling single of 2009 was "Boom Boom Pow" by the Black Eyed Peas. The iTunes editorial staff chose Michael Jackson as Artist of the Year, and the album "Only by the Night" by Kings of Leon earned Album of the Year.

Some of the year's top-selling movies were "Twilight," "Quantum of Solace," "Star Trek," and "Up." Critically acclaimed were "Drag Me to Hell," "Anvil: The Story of Anvil" and "Sunshine Cleaning."

Also highlighted in iTunes Rewind 2009 are TV shows, podcasts and audiobooks.

In August, Apple's iTunes was found to be a quarter of all music sales in the U.S. That makes iTunes by far the largest music retailer, ahead of second-place Walmart with 14 percent. In all, digital downloads make up 35 percent of music sales, and iTunes accounts for 69 percent of online sales. But despite iTunes' popularity, CDs still remain the top-selling format, with 65 percent of overall sales.

But as the best of 2009 list implies, iTunes has become about much more than the music, particularly since the iPhone App Store opened in 2008. In November, Apple revealed that more than 100,000 applications are available for download on the App Store, a milestone reached less than a year and a half after the store's debut. And in September, the total number of downloads from the App Store topped 2 billion.

The future of iTunes could be changing even further. After Apple's purchase of music streaming service Lala last week, it has been speculated that iTunes could shift towards the browser with a cloud-based service that could let users access the content they own from anywhere, on any device.

