

# iTunes Festival / Digital Exclusives



## iTunes Festival 2008

July saw iTunes host their 2008 London Festival - a month-long programme of gigs held at Koko in Camden (known in its previous incarnation as the Camden Palace).

Although such festivals as a concept are nothing new - this wasn't even the first that iTunes had promoted, the inaugural event taking place in 2005 - the length of the programme (one concert for every night in July) was notable in itself. The added interest from a marketing point of view was that participating artists were invited to make available, almost immediately afterwards, EPs of a number of songs from their set for paid download exclusively from the iTunes store.

## Top 5 sellers (to end August) - iTunes Festival 2008

Pos	Artist	Date Recorded	Tracks	Price
1	The Script	26th July	6	£2.99
2	The Ting Tings	9th July	6	£2.99
3	Pendulum	28th July	6	£3.49
4	Feeder	19th July	6	£3.16
5	McFly	24th July	6	£4.74

Source: OCC

## The Releases

Typically these releases contained five or six tracks and a digital booklet although a handful of acts chose to effectively release a mini-LP's worth (the Foals release offered eight tracks) while others were more of a standard singles bundle size (Glasvegas' EP contained three tracks).

Pricing was also variable, as were the formats available. Some titles were posted as 'iTunes Plus' (ie higher quality with no DRM) while, as can be seen from the chart above, the amount charged varied. The highest price for a five-track release was £6.32 while some six-track titles retailed for £1.99.

Tickets were distributed to winners of competitions run on the festival website and in the Evening Standard. Over 60 acts performed in total with almost all making a bundle available for sale on the iTunes site. Sales have been variable, with the most popular titles selling well over 2,000 copies in the period from their initial posting to the end of August, but smaller totals were recorded for others. Some of the better sellers were especially well timed (The Script's EP, for instance, gave eager fans an early taster of their forthcoming album) and the event as a whole has given food for thought about new avenues for digital retail.

## Digital Exclusives

The recent launch of Universal's Lost Tunes webstore (as reported in issue 312), as well as the soundtrack specialist The Music From



Lost Tunes

has highlighted the increasing efforts made recently to make as great a range of music as possible digitally available. A key driver of traffic to such sites is the offer of exclusive content, with many retailers seeking to differentiate themselves by being the sole vendors of particular titles.

**Lost Tunes** offers high quality MP3 downloads of catalogue classics and 'hard to find' albums, aiming to replicate a specialist record shop experience online. One of the site's unique selling points is the number of

rare recordings by cult artists now being made available for the first time: long sought-after albums by Bill Fay, Leaf Hound and Mott The Hoople are all exclusive to the site.



The new **Music From** webstore also has a high-profile 'exclusive' - the soundtrack to the new Shane Meadows film *Somers Town* - while (as detailed above) a

large number of exclusive live EPs are a key USP for **iTunes**.

The subscription site **Napster** regularly posts sessions recorded at their in-house studios. These are available to download or stream, with recent featured artists including The Ting Tings and Gabriella Cilmi. It also



Napster Live

brings in artists who have yet to officially release an album or single - RCA signing Sam Beeton being an example from the week of writing. Digital-only EPs are becoming an increasingly common method of raising awareness of breaking artists - the first 'official' releases by Beth Rowley and Paolo Nutini were both digital-only bundles.

Larger track packages can add value to a site's offer; subscription site **eMusic** offers some albums exclusive to its site as well as a number of label samplers that are free to download (recent compilations have covered labels such as Arena and Simulacra). Some album releases also come with tracks only available on the version for sale on a particular site, a recent example being the debut by The Week That Was which was available with an extra track unique to the version on eMusic, but was also being offered on iTunes with a different extra track.

