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# Rage Against the Machine beats X Factor's Joe to Christmas No 1

After a Facebook campaign against Simon Cowell's chart domination, music fans celebrate their victory

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**Helen Pidd**

guardian.co.uk, Sunday 20 December 2009 19.00 GMT

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Zack de la Rocha of Rage Against The Machine performing at the Reading Festival. Photograph: Chiaki Nozu/FilmMagic.com

In recent years, it had become as predictable as elections in North Korea – singer wins X Factor, singer's debut single goes to No 1. So when Joe McElderry won the TV talent contest, he was no doubt confident he would celebrate Christmas at the top of the charts.

Alas for the 18-year-old from South Shields, it wasn't to be: a song almost his own age denied him the top spot after a successful online campaign.

Killing In The Name, an expletive-heavy rock song first released in 1992 by the Californian rock band Rage Against the Machine, won the battle for Christmas top spot on the basis of downloads only. It sold about 500,000 copies last week, about 50,000 more than The Climb, McElderry's earnest ballad.

Depending on your view, the Rage victory was either a delicious dismantling of the X Factor Christmas No 1 juggernaut or a cynical assault on the festive charts. There was, though, some indignation when it emerged both records had links to Simon Cowell, the entertainment industry's favourite pantomime baddy. With the Rage track having been released by Sony, and McElderry's by Cowell's Syco, a Sony subsidiary, some claimed the high-waisted X Factor judge would emerge triumphant whichever act won the chart battle.

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## Rock fan's campaign

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But arguably the real victor here was a rock fan from Essex who started a Facebook group a month ago with the (then) pie-in-the-sky idea of usurping the X Factor winner from the no 1 slot.

Jon Morter, 35, a part-time rock DJ and logistics expert from South Woodham Ferrers, near Chelmsford, decided it would be a bit of a giggle to start a campaign to encourage people to buy a record with pretty much the opposite vibe to the X Factor winner's ballad. While McElderry urges listeners to "keep the faith", the Rage track is best known for its now-ironic refrain: "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me."

He had tried a similar wheeze last year, when he attempted to get Rick Astley's Never Gonna Give You Up to the top of the Christmas charts. Alexandra Burke, the 2008 X Factor winner, won that battle, but having succeeded in propelling Astley to "the lower echelons of the chart", Morter was emboldened to try again. This time, he was helped by the comedian Peter Serafinowicz, who on 15 December urged his 268,000-plus Twitter followers to join in, and it snowballed from there. By the time Paul McCartney and former X Factor winner Steve Brookstein had pledged their support, poor McElderry seemed doomed.

When the Guardian broke the news to Morter that he had won, he was initially lost for words. "Oh bloody hell," he said, as the consequences of what he had done became clear. Composing himself, he said: "I think it just shows that in this day and age, if you want to say something, then you can – with the help of the internet and social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. If enough people are with you, you can beat the status quo."

But doesn't he feel guilty about denying McElderry his first No 1? "Umm. no," he said. "Not really. At the end of the day he has had a Christmas no 2 with his debut single, which is still a phenomenal achievement."

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## Gracious in defeat

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Morter, a big Iron Maiden fan, said the choice of a relatively obscure Miley Cyrus cover for McElderry's single helped the Rage campaign: "If he had released Don't Stop Believing [the Journey song McElderry sang in an X Factor heat] we would have been dead and buried." McElderry took his defeat graciously, saying: "Fair play to the guys who have organised the Facebook campaign – it's been exciting to be part of a much-hyped battle and they definitely deserve congratulations. This time last year I never thought for one minute I'd win The X Factor, never mind having a single out. I'm just delighted to be in the charts."

Despite Cowell giving some pseudo-grumpy interviews, he phoned Morter on Saturday night to congratulate him on the campaign. "He commended us on how we had marketed the campaign, and said if we won, he would be the first to congratulate us," Morter said.

Rage Against the Machine have pledged to give all profits of the single to the homelessness charity Shelter, and will perform a free victory gig in the UK to thank those who bought their single.

McElderry is off on an Alpine skiing holiday to ponder his next move.

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## X-facts

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**2005 Shayne Ward** That's My Goal. Aged 25, Ward, from Clayton, Greater Manchester, saw his first two albums sell more than 1.7 million copies and he is working on his third. Also reached No 1 in South Africa, Sweden and parts of Asia. **2006 Leona Lewis** A Moment Like This. The 24-year-old Londoner's first album, Spirit, earned several Grammy nominations and was No 1 in the US. She can command £1m a performance and is a worldwide star. **2007 Leon Jackson** When you Believe Dannii Minogue's protégé was proclaimed the winner of the competition, in spite of Simon Cowell's reservations. His doubts were proved right when the record label Sony dropped Jackson in March this year after his only album Right Now only sold 130,000 copies. Meanwhile X Factor runner-up Rhydian Roberts sold more than 500,000. **2008 Alexandra Burke** Hallelujah Alexandra Burke, 20, took part in the 2005 series but was eliminated before the final. She sold more than one million copies of Hallelujah last Christmas and recently topped the charts again with her second single Bad Boys. She has signed a five album deal with US label Epic. • The Spice Girls reached the No 1 spot three years in a row from 1996 to 1998 with 2 Become 1, Too Much, and Goodbye respectively. • Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen was top in both 1975 and in 1991. • Mr Blobby's song was voted the most annoying Christmas tune ever in a 2002 HMV poll. The follow-up at No 2 was There's No One Quite Like Grandma by the St Winifred's

School Choir while Cliff Richard's Mistletoe and Wine was rated No 3. • Merry Xmas Everybody by Slade was voted the most popular Christmas No 1 of all time.

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[Vyse](#)

20 December 2009 7:02PM

Thank f\*ck!

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[netSoundsunsigned](#)

20 December 2009 7:04PM

GIRFU Y Cowell.

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[banzaibee](#)

20 December 2009 7:04PM

Glorious.

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[epagny](#)

20 December 2009 7:04PM

'Rage against the machine' has been a pioneer in the grunge genre since the 90's. 'Killing in the name of' was and still is a highly charged cult song. Thank fuck its getting in the way of those souless flatpacked gooey songs. Bring back the crown to the real musicians. Not to someone who's been formated for 6 weeks. Thank god for that! It makes very happy.

Recommend (154)

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[carysc](#)

20 December 2009 7:05PM

Genius - democratic anarchy at its finest.

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[mildjazzdrink](#)

20 December 2009 7:05PM

With that kind of momentum and support we could've had a revolution. What a waste.  
Anyone up for marching on Parliament?

Recommend (283)

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[F101Voodoo](#)

20 December 2009 7:05PM

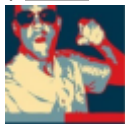
YESSSSSSSSSSSS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA  
VICTORY!

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[Lizardicus](#)

20 December 2009 7:05PM

Fuck you I won't do what you tell me!  
Or something

Recommend (22)

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[PizzaRe](#)

20 December 2009 7:05PM

Is it only me who feels some greater significance in this?  
Is it an appropriate start to the next decade whereby we'll all be trying to dismantle the machine?  
Or will the machine strike back?

Recommend (163)

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20 December 2009 7:06PM

Awesome

Although the song is actually about KKK members from the 1960s now holding political office / working in the police in the southern US in the 1990s, so perhaps not an ideal analogy for protesting Simon Cowell.

But hell, people have to unite around something, and I'm glad it won. I was listening to Joe McDingleberry on Radio 1 and thinking what a cynical piece of crap that song was, so all's good.

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20 December 2009 7:06PM

Ha Ha! That is all

Recommend (14)

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20 December 2009 7:06PM

A worthy victory. Musical common sense prevails at last.

Anyone for "Nazi Punks Fuck Off" by Dead Kennedys next year?

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[bitkari](#)

20 December 2009 7:06PM

Best xmas present ever.

Recommend (25)

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[Alexander2000](#)

20 December 2009 7:07PM

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



[PedroH](#)

20 December 2009 7:07PM

Amazing that people still care about the charts.

Recommend (35)

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[Oldmanmackie](#)

20 December 2009 7:07PM

Democratic anarchy at its best!

Excellent result and well done to Morter for organising this. People power indeed. When will this spirit be transferred to some real change in wider society?

Recommend (49)

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[netSoundsunsigned](#)

20 December 2009 7:07PM

Danni Minogue.....Louie Walsh.....Cheryl Cole.....ITV.....Simon

Cowell.....Simon Cowell can you hear me?

Your boy took a hellava beating.

Recommend (165)

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[extemporaneous](#)

20 December 2009 7:09PM

Excellent news! Can we have a people-powered general election next and not just passively assume that the inevitable will happen? As with this campaign, every track counts even though it was an upward struggle, so does every vote and it's free!

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[magnifier](#)

20 December 2009 7:09PM

Utterly hilarious.

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[grahamew](#)

20 December 2009 7:09PM

One didn't buy the RATM single as, quite frankly, one didn't want to do what that young man told me to do.

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[LorainK](#)

20 December 2009 7:10PM

DELIGHTED!!!!

Let's use this people power to bring down the governments of the world. This is just the beginning!

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[cheapside](#)

20 December 2009 7:10PM

now all we need is for everyone to draw their money out of RBS et al the banks that refuse to give up bonuses to pay back their debt to the nation and keep buying local produce.

people can make a difference, don't let anyone make us feel differently.

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[ntaylor](#)

20 December 2009 7:10PM

FUCK YOU I WON'T DO WHAT YOU TELL ME!

FUCK YOU I WON'T DO WHAT YOU TELL ME!

FUCK YOU I WON'T DO WHAT YOU TELL ME!

FUCK YOU I WON'T DO WHAT YOU TELL ME!

unless it is an order to buy a RATM single, then I will buy it. Yes Sir-e.

---

But...well done people of Britain. You showed that enough people are fed up with this tiresome music. Shame Malcolm Middleton did not do it 3 years ago with Radio 1 backing, and a much better song.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbL9Vsobx8I>

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[felixthecat](#)

20 December 2009 7:11PM

YESSSSS! \*anarcho air punch\*

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[MacPedro](#)

20 December 2009 7:11PM

It's amazing how many times I've heard and read young people complaining that *Killing in the Name* is "just noise" and not a "real tune" like dear Joe's.

FFS, they sound like my dad. What's happened to our country when old farts like me are buying tunes to rebel against the youngsters!

Now if we can just turn to a campaign for something that's important...

Recommend (278)

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[newlaplandes](#)

20 December 2009 7:12PM

Nice one.

I think we all learned something today. I learned that sometimes it's worth paying real money for music rather than downloading it all the Naughty Way.

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[MarchOnRome](#)

20 December 2009 7:12PM

This is glorious.

Recommend (25)

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[Clip](#)[| Link](#)[maiaH](#)

20 December 2009 7:13PM

Anyone remember the rather sad Eurovision Guardian interview with Andy somebody 'the singing dustman' who was dropped by his label after losing Eurovision? Andy Burnham?

Recommend (3)

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20 December 2009 7:15PM

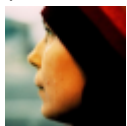
@PizzaRe

I think it's something that's been forgotten lately that people can make a change maybe it is time to start a revolution and I'm not talking about using my unlimited text package that that knob on the t mobile add suggests.

I'm glad the rage song got the number one spot it's a kick up the arse for the whole industry I fear though that this will be forgotten as quickly as it happened.

As for poor little Joe, I hated him as soon as I know that horrible, fake and frankly nasty Cheryl Cole was his 'mentor'. Christ I will know what to look out for when a shark comes in for the kill, it will have a smile like Cheryl Cole's on the xfactor panel.

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20 December 2009 7:16PM

I'm happy tonight!

Recommend (20)

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[Speranza86](#)

20 December 2009 7:16PM

This article claims that Simon Cowell will profit whoever wins.

This is lies.

Simon Cowell does not profit from the Rage Against the Machine track. Get your facts right. Rage are giving a big part of profits to Shelter, a UK charity.

He owns SyCo, a division of Sony. He does NOT own Sony.

I'm amazed by the kill-joys who were sneering at this campaign. Well done, Rage, anyway.

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[youandiaredominoes](#)

20 December 2009 7:16PM

thank you ;-)

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[Modernguitars](#)

20 December 2009 7:17PM

Excellent News! Simon Cowell as the entertainment arm of the Military Industrial Complex defeated! Heeeee Hawwwwww!

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[newneo](#)

20 December 2009 7:17PM

@cheapside

Already did it! Fucking RBS, don't get me started on those idiots Viva la Co-Op!

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[Valten78](#)

20 December 2009 7:17PM

Brilliant. Simon Cowell and his abysmal show brought to knees by a facebook campaign! Christmas 2009 is going to be a good one.

Recommend (72)

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[Gavthegardener](#)

20 December 2009 7:17PM

Fucking great news. Well done to all who participated.

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[BMAN28](#)

20 December 2009 7:17PM

Correct.

Recommend (4)

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[MikeyNoNotThatOne](#)

20 December 2009 7:18PM

What sort of sad, joyless people would celebrate the fact that a teenage lad has had his lifelong dream ruined? With each passing day I feel that I have less and less in common with my fellow Guardian readers.

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[Haywire](#)

20 December 2009 7:18PM

Amazing! there are much greater things to come from this type of online civil action. Swarm politics a-go-go...

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[Speranza86](#)

20 December 2009 7:18PM

By the way, WHAT IS X-FRACTION?

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[EverWonTheTreble](#)

20 December 2009 7:19PM

My faith in humanity is restored

Recommend (61)

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[Alexander2000](#)

20 December 2009 7:19PM

Yes, we need to transfer this in to real change. It's such a powerful example of what could be achieved. The people have spoken and we don't like the shit being shoveled down our throats. Time to tell the politicians, the bankers and the corporations.

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[PlanetGeli](#)

20 December 2009 7:19PM

^

He'll get over it.

Fucking great result.

Recommend (53)

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[extraordinaryrvanp](#)

20 December 2009 7:19PM

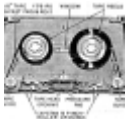
Superb.

Recommend (12)

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[JckKrc](#)

20 December 2009 7:19PM

all a bit daft really, isn't it

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[newneo](#)

20 December 2009 7:20PM

@MikeyNoNotThatOne

This isn't about Joe, who it seems is a nice lad but the mighty machine that is xfactor.

I fear that alas joe was collateral damage

Recommend (110)

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[Numbed](#)

20 December 2009 7:20PM

just found my Christmas spirit... leaping around the living room to RATM!

can't wait to hear the cowell cowed.

Recommend (19)

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[sproatocaster](#)

20 December 2009 7:21PM

Hurray!

FAITH IN BRITAIN IS RESTORED.

well done folks

Recommend (38)

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[livefromNYC](#)

20 December 2009 7:21PM

funny - but couldn't they have chosen a better song than this bunch ? its boring already.

Recommend (8)

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[Speranza86](#)

20 December 2009 7:21PM

To the poster above, stop feeling sorry for Joe.

Just because you win a T.V. show, does not mean you are entitled to the Xmas number one.

To be honest, Joe annoys the tits off me anyway.

Recommend (145)

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