Tickets quickly sold out Wednesday for the Coachella music festival where hard rockers Guns N' Roses will reunite after more than two decades. Passes for the three-day festival in the southern California desert went on sale online at 11 am (1900 GMT) and one hour later Coachella social media accounts said that all tickets were gone. Coachella, which has become one of the world's best-known festivals, draws more than 180,000 people a year over two consecutive three-day weekends with identical lineups.

Guns N' Roses, whose 1987 album "Appetite for Destruction" remains the top-selling US debut ever, are scheduled as headliners on the two Saturdays-April 16 and April 23. The festival will mark the first time that singer Axl Rose and guitarist Slash play together since 1993 when they ended a tour in Argentina amid personality disputes. Other prominent acts at Coachella this year will include LCD Soundsystem, the influential New York electronic band from the 2000s that is also reuniting, as well as pioneering gangsta rapper Ice Cube and singers Ellie Goulding and Sia. — AFP

In this image released by NBC, Adele performs at Radio City Music Hall in New York. — AP

In this April 23, 2014 file photo, Axl Rose, left, and Duff McKagan of Guns N' Roses perform at the 6th Annual Revolver Golden Gods Award Show in Los Angeles. — AP

"Star Wars" passes "Avatar" for N America box office record

The upcoming release on Saturday in the huge Chinese market of the film directed by JJ Abrams could help give it a further push to light speed. The success of "The Force Awakens"—detailing the adventures of classic "Star Wars" characters Princess Leia and Han Solo as well as new heroes like Rey, Finn and Poe Dameron—helped propel the overall American box office to a record $11.1 billion last year, the Rentrak website reported. Robert Thompson, a professor of popular culture at Syracuse University in New York, said the hype and marketing surrounding the latest "Star War" had helped ensure its success but so was the fact that it is a good movie.

"The film was a disappointment, the numbers after the first weekend would have been a very different story," he told AFP. "My prediction is that "Avatar" will retain its global crown, but I could certainly be wrong on that." Disney, which purchased Lucasfilm from "Star Wars" creator George Lucas for $4 billion in 2012, plans two more films in the space saga and a spinoff. James Cameron is also planning three sequels to "Avatar," which should ensure that the two franchises will continue battling it out for the top spot at the box office. — AFP

The rapid growth of streaming and sensational success of Adele triggered a rebound of overall music consumption last year in the United States and Britain, industry trackers said Wednesday. The growth came despite a persistent fall in CD sales and a growing decline in digital downloads on service such as iTunes as consumers turn to online streaming services and their unlimited, on-demand selection. US music consumption rose 15.2 percent in 2015 from a year earlier to 549.4 million albums or their digital equivalent, reversing a decline in 2014, Nielsen Music said in an annual report.

British music consumption also reversed a slump, with album equivalent sales rising 3.7 percent, according to data released separately Wednesday by the British Phonographic Industry trade association. Both the United States and Britain, the world's largest and fourth-largest music markets respectively, saw streaming volumes nearly double as new competitors such as Apple Music and Jay Z's Tidal helped expand a sector led by Sweden's Spotify. Music streams went up 92.8 percent year-on-year to 317.2 billion songs in the United States and rose by 81.7 percent in Britain. "You're going to continue to see the types of growth that we've been seeing for a long time to come," I think," said David Bakula, Nielsen's senior vice president of industry insights.

"More listening, but more profits?" 

Nielsen looks at consumption and not directly at revenue—which is a major sore point for many artists who argue that their compensation from streaming is puny. Industry bodies will report detailed figures on profits in the coming months. Bakula said that the Nielsen data showed a growing industry in net terms. "People have been conditioned to look at album numbers for so long as the health of the industry," he said. "Down six percent" the year’s decline in total album sales without factoring in streaming—"doesn't sound as bad when you add in billions of streams, he said.

Yet leading the way in 2015's rebound was one of the few artists to reject streaming—Adele. Backed by public anticipation due to a more than four-year wait since her previous album, Adele's "25" enjoyed the biggest first-week sales on record in the United States and Britain. "25" full of ballads of heartache and childhood nostalgia, was by far the top-selling album in both countries for the year even though it did not receive a November 20. Nielsen said its research found that about one-third of US consumers planned to buy "25," with around 20 percent of them not generally music consumers.

Adele effect

Yet even with its record-breaking numbers, "25" accounted for just 3.1 percent of US album sales for the year, meaning Adelemania likely had knock-on effects. "I think the impact, beyond just the sales part of it, is the fact that people were talking about it—people who are not your traditional music buyers," Bakula said. Another deep source of growth, but on a much smaller scale than streaming, is its low-tech foil-vinyl, which has enjoyed a rebirth led by collectors. Vinyl sales rose by nearly 30 percent in the United States and shot up by more than 64 percent in Britain.

British sales of jazz, classical, children's or holiday-oriented music. Pop star Taylor Swift's "1989," the top US album in 2014, was the second best-seller last year, beating out Justin Bieber's new work "Purpose."

On Britain's full-year chart, Adele was followed by Ed Sheeran and Sam Smith—two recent English stars whose albums came out in 2014 — while fourth place went to the late Elvis Presley. His album, "If I Can Dream," features archival recordings of The King accompanied by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. — AFP

Adele, streaming services lift 2015 music sales

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