



Midnights

"Midnights" : The Mastermind's Sparkling Album

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As the clock struck twelve, the long-awaited tenth studio album from Taylor Swift, titled "Midnights," was unveiled on all streaming platforms.

Prior to the release of the tracks, Swift described the songs as a reflection of 13 sleepless nights in her life, via an Instagram post. To the typical fan-base, a social media post would be recognized as scheduled marketing before a release; however, supporters of this superstar exceed the "standard" level of in-depth analysis in content.

Holding a reputation for trailing breadcrumbs of hints with her every move, Swift has accumulated quite an inquisitive following of listeners. It was only a matter of mere minutes before enthusiasts of the pop-star found the underlying implications of the post: each track represents various eras from her life, alluding to moments both public and private that played a role in shaping her being today.

Fans speculated "Midnights" to be a signal of change in the thematic aspects of Swift's music. Previous albums have been centered around a singular defining motif: "Reputation" acted as a response to the public scrutiny that followed after an online feud with rapper Kanye West; "Lover" articulated the significance of self-acceptance through rejecting the expectations of society; "Folklore" weaved together intricate details of American literature and Swift's imagination to create a musical epic reflecting upon

the beauty found in times of isolation.

As a pop-star of great caliber, Swift has mastered the art of effortless genre-switches and captivating lyricism alongside talent for creating sonically unique records. These components are exhibited in the new album, specifically in four distinct songs, all written during varying time frames, all differing in their theme, all redefining past expectations. The tracks "Snow on the Beach" and "Sweet Nothing" narrate vulnerable aspects of the pop-star's life featuring soul-baring lyrics and melodious sound. In contrast, "Bejeweled" and "Karma" carry an upbeat tempo paired with striking bridges and chorus.

Paving the way for a raw account of the entirety of Swift's journey to stardom, the release of the tenth studio album breaks free from the former established patterns. Scattered as the stars in the sky, "Midnights" encapsulated both the beauty and versatility of all previous albums, forming a distinctive constellation of its own.


Taylor started by explaining the incentives and emotions behind her multifaceted album in an unexpected way: "the [second] thing that kept me up at night is fantasizing about revenge." Swift has spoken out before about the pressure put on women in the music industry to fit into an unapologetic mold created by society, most notably in her documentary "Miss Americana." She elaborated on the double standards and strict rules of a nice girl: "a nice girl smiles and waves and says thank you. A nice girl doesn't make people uncomfortable with her views."

Past albums have featured song titles

such as "Better than Revenge," "This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things," and "Picture to Burn," all revolving around the guilty satisfaction of revenge. However, Taylor seemed to take a different approach to "revenge" in her new song "Karma"; after "13 sleepless nights of her life," she has finally found peace in taking the higher ground, which was depicted as a constant struggle in Miss Americana, by trying to appear as a "nice girl" to society.

She now believes in taking the higher ground for personal benefit instead of approval from society. She places cheeky, amusing lyrics like "karma is my boyfriend" and "karma is a cat purring in my lap" against an upbeat backdrop. The mood of "Karma" closely resembles the song "This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things" from the Reputation album. In this song, Swift painted a picture of her in power through a condescending manner with lyrics like "I'm shaking my head" and "This is why you can't have nice things, darling/ Because you break them, I have to take them away" as if she is talking to a small child. Now, in Midnights, Taylor's able still communicated her revenge in this signature, condescending manner but also showed listeners her evolution in finding peace.

In a similarly upbeat style, Swift used the song "Bejeweled" to further comment on her toiled experience in the music industry as a woman. Constantly held to the double standards that she first introduced in her other pop hit "The Man," she stated, "I think I've been too good of a girl/ Too good of a girl/ Did all the extra credit and then got graded on a curve." She also admitted to her constant want of validation in an unfor



industry: “put me in the basement when I want the penthouse of your heart.”

On Oct. 25, Swift released the music video for “Bejeweled,” the second song on the album so far. On trend with her signature storytelling, the music video centered around a parody of Cinderella, in which the Prince chooses his bride on the basis of talent. Cinderella – Taylor Swift – won the competition and the castle, greatly envied by her step-sisters. However, at the end of the music video, the camera panned out from Swift’s well-anticipated castle to reveal a crumbling facade as fires spread and dragons guard the walls. Swift once again painted a metaphor of society’s impossible standards for her. She had supposedly won the approval of the Prince – society – through her talent, but she still failed, “graded on a curve.” However, unexpectedly, she donned a smile while admiring her burning castle from her balcony, possibly conveying her acceptance of never truly being able to succeed in her industry. Similar to “Karma,” she presented the motifs of self-validation and peace.

All the glamor, recognition and adoration attached with fame is a ruse; those in the limelight are pawns at the feet of an industry mercurial in nature, basing its treatment entirely upon public sentiment. To its core fame is fickle in nature, luring in its participants by blurring the fine print reading: the constant stream of judgment.

Celebrities are under incessant scrutiny, every action, social media post, projects, personal struggle, and especially romantic relationships fair game for vicious commentary. The culture surrounding fame can begin to take a destructive toll

on public figures like it did for Swift. From her debut album, Swift has grappled with unwanted opinions of her romantic relationships and backlash accompanying her music inspired by those experiences. When one is put under pressure to be spotless in every aspect of their life, it creates animosity towards the idea of vulnerability, especially regarding matters of the heart: “The fourth thing that kept me up at night is falling in love.”

Swift has been open about her romantic endeavors from the beginning of her career. As she has evolved as an artist, so has her message about love.

From her past discography songs such as “Teardrops on my guitar,” “I wish you would,” and distinguishably “All too Well,” all center around the intense feelings of emptiness and betrayal that follows heartbreak. From a sonic standpoint, the songs mentioned carry a twangy tune with guitar chord progressions projecting feelings of melancholia.

In the fourth track “Snow on the Beach,” Taylor pivots from past heartbreaks to new found love. Featuring Lana Del Rey, the track is whimsical in its sound with harmonious breathy falsettos, similar to the tune of a lullaby - reinforcing the central motif of discovering a dream-like love. Using the power of dichotomy in the title of the track, Swift and Del Rey paint a picture of love so pure it does not seem real: “And it’s like snow at the beach/ Weird but it was beautiful,” “Flying in a dream/ Stars by the pocketful.”

Snow is not a force of nature that would be seen in a tropical climate such as the beach, but if this rarity were to ever occur it would be a sight to be-

hold. The kind of love that acts as an inspiration for the fourth track holds a similar feeling of beautiful oddity. The second set of lyrics explores the idealistic nature of that love, a feeling so powerful that living feels like dreaming. Similarly track 12 on the album “Sweet Nothing” continues the thematic of pure love. It is co-written with Taylor’s long-time boyfriend Joe Alwyn, with its chorus “They said the end is coming/ Everyone’s up to somethin’/ I find myself runnin’ home to your sweet nothings/ I find myself running’ home to your sweet nothings/ Outside, they’re push and shoving’/ You’re in the kitchen hummin’/ All that you ever wanted from me was sweet nothin’”. Sonically the track follows a similar lullaby-like tune. The lyricism is delicate, reflecting the essence of Alwyn and Swift’s love.

Tracks 4 and 12 represent the latter half of the album with soothing vocals and sound. It explores the themes in Swift’s life after she has healed, while tracks 3 and 6 discuss the aspects of her life she needs to heal from.

Through “Snow on the Beach,” “Sweet Nothing,” “Karma” and “Bejeweled,” Swift shows a unique facet of her life as listeners are taken along her personal journey to validation and long-awaited love. Swift explains her final dichotomy of inspiration for the album in a clip that she recently released on Spotify: “The fourth thing that kept me up at night is falling love. The fifth thing that kept me up at night is falling apart.” She beautifully and artistically executed this array of polar emotions that she was trying to achieve, making *Midnights* yet another must-listen album.