Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

The Spectator Online   Newspapers

10-26-2022

2022-10-26 Sonic Stand-Out or Disappointment? A "Midnight's" Review

Natalie Schorr
Seattle University

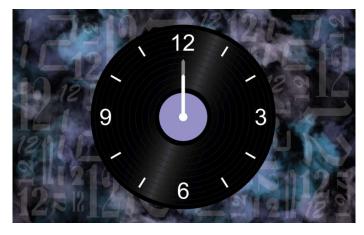Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online

Sonic Stand-Out or Disappointment? A "Midnight's" Review

Natalie Schorr, Social Media Manager

Taylor Swift released her first original album since 2020 entitled "Midnights" Oct. 21 at exactly midnight. Her last two album releases were re-recordings of her old albums "Fearless" and "Red." With mounting expectation, fans were wide awake at midnight.

Swift announced this album while accepting an award at the 2022 MTV Music Awards, later describing it in an Instagram post as "the stories of 13 sleepless nights scattered throughout [her] life."

Natalie Schorr

As with any Swift release, clues and easter eggs were sparingly doled out by the artist in anticipation of the release. One such clue was the prior announcement of the album's track titles. The song names were originally "Track One," "Track Two" and so on, something fans thought might remain for the actual release. However, Swift took to TikTok to reveal song names using a bingo cage with song titles listed on balls, announcing the different names one by one.

Swift also used billboards to tease lyrics from songs in the week leading up to release. Fans even decoded one lyric because it appeared first in a speech Swift gave at the NYU commencement in while receiving an honorary doctorate last spring.

The album was originally released with 13 tracks, Swift's self-proclaimed lucky number. Seven additional tracks were released at 3 a.m. as a special surprise following the initial release of the album. Swift called "Midnights" "a complete concept album," but wanted to share other songs that she wrote in the process of finishing the album.

"Midnights" cohesively has a much different sound than Swift's last two albums, "Evermore" and "Folklore," and feels like a return to the artist's traditional pop sound as established in earlier albums like "1989" and "Reputation," though it is noticeably more subdued in style. While listening to this album, I realized that I am much more of a fan of Swift's upbeat songs than her slower ones, which is probably why this album was not an immediate favorite.

Some of my favorite tracks on the album were "Anti-Hero," "You're On Your Own, Kid" and "Question...?." These songs were definitely on the more upbeat side, while still fitting in with the more subdued feel of the album as a collective. I especially like how "You're On Your Own, Kid" and "Question...?" started out slower and built up their intensity throughout the song, helping to channel the emotion portrayed lyrically.

There were quite a few songs on the album that I felt were reminiscent of previous Swift songs. She even sampled her own song "Out Of The Woods" in the beginning of "Question…?." I do think this makes sense when taking the concept of the album into mind, as it may represent Swift reminiscing on the time in her life when these songs were written. It also further cements the sound of this album as a return to older Swift eras.

Although there were parts I liked, overall, many songs on the album were not hits for me. There were too many tracks that felt flat and not enough musical interest to keep me captivated.

There were also a couple production choices that I found myself not a fan of. "Snow On The Beach" and "Labyrinth" both had very light, almost airy sounds that failed to engage the listener. In a similar vein, "Midnight Rain" and "Labyrinth" utilized some auto tuned vocals that felt out of place. When the overall sound of the album is much more soft and chill, heavy autotune is a very strange inclusion that can interrupt the intended mood.

Lana Del Rey's inclusion in "Snow On The Beach" was minimal at best, which was disappointing. There was a lot more potential for that feature, and her vocals were under utilized. Many fans were highly anticipating this collaboration, and it was definitely dissatisfying to see her voice only used for backing vocals. Their harmony sounded great, but I just wanted more.

Overall, a lot of the tracks on this album did not work super well. Many of the songs ran together and a lot were just okay, failing to showcase Swift's songwriting and vocal talent. I also did not think there were any standouts on this album. I had my favorites, but they were not as good as my other top Swift songs, such as "Forever & Always," "Cruel Summer" and "Message In A Bottle".

Although not one of my favorite Swift albums, I wouldn't say that I hated it, I just found some of the songs less relatable to her fanbase than her past work. There are still enjoyable songs on the album, and there are some 3 a.m. tracks that I like as well, like "Paris" and "High Infidelity." It is an interesting new direction for Swift, and I can't wait to see how her next album will sound.