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Olivia Rodrigo Spills Her Guts in Sophomore Album [REVIEW]

George Burquest, Staff Reporter

Olivia Rodrigo is inescapable. On her sophomore album, “Guts,” released Sept. 8, the 20-year-old singer-songwriter follows a similar formula to her debut, “Sour,” the 4x Platinum album featuring stand-out tracks like “good 4 u” and “deja vu.”

The unforgiving and relatable narrative, which makes Rodrigo stand out in the pop music landscape, is accentuated on “Guts” using a range of brutal honesty, humor, and vulnerability. Bypassing a sophomore slump, the album continues to boast Olivia Rodrigo’s uniqueness and charm.

Prior to full release, “vampire,” the album’s lead single, was released in June and made its way to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. This made Rodrigo the first artist to ever debut the lead singles from two career-opening albums at No. 1 on the Hot 100. (The other song is, of course, 2021’s “drivers license”, which you can probably hear playing in the back of your head right now.)

Described by Rodrigo as her “version of rock opera” in an interview with Billboard, “vampire” uses piano and rock instrumentation to elevate the bitter lyrics, hushed vocals and grand escalations. In many ways, “Guts” can be



Annabelle DeGuzman-Carino

thought of as the “High School Musical 2” to “Sour’s” “High School Musical,” with “vampire” being the trailer for a second album that leans into the things that made the original stand out.

Admittedly, a 21-year-old cisgendered guy may not be the most qualified of listeners to relate to what Rodrigo sings about on “Guts.” Likely unable to relate to being an “all-american b*tch”—the title of the album’s opening track where Rodrigo sardonically points out the contradictions inherent with being a woman in America. However, the album’s angst and honesty are not limited to the tastes of a teenage girl. “Guts” genre is pop because it is popular—and deservedly so—an open letter of radio hits, TikTok songs and heartbreaks makes Rodrigo’s album enjoyable for anyone and everyone.

The album starts off very strong, with “All-American B*tch,” which as mentioned, is critical but also incredibly fun-filled with screams and petty statements. Rodrigo leaves listeners bobbing their heads and potentially relating as she sings “All the time, I’m grateful all the time (f**king time).”

Following this track comes “bad idea right?,” a song which is perfect for both TikToks and blissful ignorance. All about making the wrong but tempting choice of going to see an ex, Rodrigo’s storytelling is both funny and easy to sing along to. An accompaniment that brings in scintillating guitars and drums helps to capture the convoluted nature of lying to yourself—“can’t two people reconnect? / the biggest lie I ever said.”

Moving further through the album, there is a shift that comes in the track, “lacy.” Ambiguous in its exact subject, the song is melodic, beautiful and even envious. Close to an obsession, on “lacy,” Rodrigo dips into the ways she struggles with comparing herself to other people. With “skin like puff pastry,” the woman Rodrigo describes is something delicately beautiful but desperately unattainable.



Photo by Fern Creson



Photo by Fern Creson

Listening to the album further, “ballad of a homeschooled girl,” “making the bed” and “logical” are tracks that have a few sing-song lines to smile at, but ultimately will likely not end up gaining the same popularity as some of the other standouts. Thankfully, it is “get him back!” a talk-sung track with a title that serves as a double meaning for both rekindling and revenge, that does a great job rejuvenating the album. The line, “I want to kiss his face with an uppercut” paints the perfect image of the conflicting nature of relationships, while also continuing the album’s theme of challenging expectations.

Following this standout track, you could say “the grudge” is the point in which Troy and Gabriella have their falling out. Which of course leaves the door open for a return to the album’s themes and finale in “pretty isn’t pretty” and then, finally, “teenage dream.” Rather straightforwardly, “pretty isn’t pretty” goes back to the themes the album started with on “all-american b*tch,” as Rodrigo points out the challenging fact that everyone else is keeping it up, but what is she supposed to do when “pretty isn’t pretty enough.”

For the end of the album and the end of this review, “teenage dream” begins to broach what may happen as the 20-year-old Rodrigo continues to grow up. “They all say that it gets better, it gets better, but what if I don’t?” is the line which is crescendoed into the end of “Guts.”

Following the formula of “Sour,” “Guts” is a continuation of the brutal honesty and challenging of expectations which makes Olivia Rodrigo inescapable, but endlessly enjoyable.