

= Life Is Good ( Nas album ) =

Life Is Good is the eleventh studio album by American rapper Nas . It was recorded at various studios in New York and California , and produced primarily by No I.D. and Salaam Remi . Nas wrote the album after his divorce from recording artist Kelis and compared it to Marvin Gaye 's 1978 record Here , My Dear . He wanted to vent personal feelings and address moments in his life in his songs , while drawing on 1980s hip hop influences for the album 's production in order to complement its nostalgic tone .

Life Is Good features personal subject matter , themes of adulthood and nostalgia , and reflections on Nas ' personal life and experience in hip hop . His rapping is characterized by a relaxed , plainspoken flow , internal rhymes , and a tone that veers from malicious to nostalgic and introspective . The album 's production incorporates orchestral elements and musical references to both contemporary and golden age hip hop , including boom bap beats and old school samples .

When Life Is Good was released on July 13 , 2012 , by Def Jam Recordings , it received widespread critical acclaim and debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 in the United States . It also reached the top 10 of record charts in Canada , Switzerland , and the United Kingdom . It was promoted with three singles ? " Nasty " , " The Don " , and " Daughters " ? five music videos , and Nas ' touring during June to December 2012 . By February 10 , 2013 , Life Is Good had sold 354 @, @ 000 copies , according to Nielsen SoundScan .

= = Background = =

In 2010 , Nas released his tenth studio album Distant Relatives , a collaboration with Damian Marley that reinvigorated Nas creatively . He soon became distracted by tax problems and an expensive , highly publicized divorce from his wife Kelis months before their son 's birth , events that influenced his direction for Life Is Good . His songwriting on the album was also influenced by adjusting back to life as a single man . Nas also wanted to write more original subject matter rather than another album " about how you came up in the hood and how you had to make it out of the hood " .

Although he did not find his album " quite so much about the marriage or the divorce " , Nas likened Life Is Good to Marvin Gaye 's 1978 album Here , My Dear , which was written by Gaye in response to his own deteriorating marriage and released as a financial settlement . Nas said of the album 's personal subject matter in an interview for Billboard :

The album 's cover depicts a forlorn Nas in a polished white suit , sitting in a night club 's VIP lounge , and holding over his knee Kelis ' actual green wedding dress , which he said was the only item she left . When writing the album , Nas also reflected on aging and maturation , fatherhood , and his 20 @-@ year experience in hip hop music .

= = Recording = =

Recording sessions for the album took place at the following recording studios ? 4220 Studios , Conway Recording Studios , and East West Studios in Hollywood , Instrument Zoo Studios in Miami , Jungle City Studios and Oven Studios in New York City , Record One in Sherman Oaks , and Westlake Studios in Los Angeles . Nas worked with several musicians , including Amy Winehouse , Mary J. Blige , James Poyser , Anthony Hamilton , Miguel , Large Professor , and Hal Ritson , among others .

For the album , Nas wanted the production to complement his lyrics ' nostalgic themes with 1980s hip hop influences . He primarily worked with hip hop producers No I.D. and Salaam Remi , a frequent collaborator of Nas . Remi said that he wanted his production " to be something that a mumble @-@ mouth rapper can ? t rap on . You better have something to say and be speaking up . " Along with producer Swizz Beatz , No I.D. and Nas related to the latter 's lyrics concerning divorce during the recording sessions . During the sessions , Nas recorded the song " No Such Thing as White Jesus " with singer Frank Ocean and producer Hit Boy , who misplaced the track while sorting

through music he had produced for Jay Z and Kanye West's album *Watch the Throne* (2011). Although he later recovered it, the song was not included on *Life Is Good*.

= = Music and lyrics = =

The album incorporates musical references to both older and contemporary hip hop. Its production features live instrumentation, orchestral music, R & B, and boom bap elements. Music journalist Evan Rytlewski denotes "boom bap drums, lush keyboards, smooth saxophones, and the occasional Run D.M.C. and MC Shan sample" to be "tasteful accents" from golden age hip hop. Ryan Hamm of *Under the Radar* views that Remi and No I.D.'s production "lean[s] toward opulent and epic", while Pitchfork Media's Jayson Greene writes that the latter's produced songs "exude the warm TV fireplace crackle of ... throwback production." Anupa Mistry of *Now* writes that "boom bap classicists Salaam Remi and No I.D. weave a raw, funky, orchestral lattice customized for Nas's age-appropriate raps".

*Life Is Good* features nostalgic and adult themes, including aging and maturity. Nas's rapping is characterized by internal rhymes, a relaxed, plainspoken flow, and transparent lyrics addressing moments in his life, including his youth and the personal events leading up to the album. Erika Ramirez of *Billboard* observes "stories of internal and external battles, some of which he won and some he lost." David Dennis of *The Village Voice* writes that his lyrics address hip hop's "golden era" and "the trials and tribulations of adult relationships". Brandon Soderberg from *Spin* asserts that his lyrics "constantly remind nostalgics that the good ol' days were often chaotic and desperate". *Slant Magazine*'s Manan Desai finds Nas's comparison of his album to Gaye's *Here, My Dear* apropos. "Like Nas, Gaye was pushing 40 when he recorded his album", Desai wrote. "He'd cemented his position as one of R & B's greatest, and yet, he never sounded more anguished about where all that fame was leading him. There's something similar going on throughout *Life Is Good*; the more we hear Nas repeat that titular refrain, the less convincing he sounds." AllMusic's David Jeffries said the lyrics about his divorce were "unfiltered carpet bombing of love and marriage"; both Jeffries and Jason Birchmeier of AllMusic characterize the content as "venomous". Conversely, Jon Dolan of *Rolling Stone* views that Nas "cuts his rhymes with midlife realism and daring empathy". Ken Capobianco of *The Boston Globe* writes that the songs "mix anger, nostalgia, and insight."

On the opening track "No Introduction", Nas reflects on his impoverished upbringing and maturation into a "graphic, classic song composer". The song's subject matter ranges from lifestyle boats to revolutionary ideals: "Hood forever, I just act like I'm civilized / Really what's in my mind is organizing a billion Black muthafuckas / To take over JP and Morgan Goldman and Sachs / And teach the world facts and give Saudi they oil back". "Loco Motive" has an underground vibe and keyboards similar to Nas's 1994 song "N.Y. State of Mind". "A Queens Story" has boom bap and classical elements in its production, including classical piano, orchestral strings and funky drums. Its lyrics pay homage to Nas's native Queens and his creative influences. "Accident Murderers" incorporates pipe organ in its production, and its lyrics addresses senseless violence with a rags to riches narrative by Rick Ross.

On "Daughters", Nas is bewildered at the responsibilities of fatherhood, as he addresses his daughter's social networking activity and worries about his past undermining his parental authority. Killian Fox of *The Observer* writes that Nas's observations on his ex-wife's "hefty childcare payments" and his 18-year-old daughter "dating unsuitable men" are resonated by his "recollections of his early years as a Queensbridge hustler? just the kind of unsuitable young man he's warning his daughter about these days". "Reach Out" features Mary J. Blige and incorporates the piano loop from Isaac Hayes's 1970 song "Ike's Mood". Its lyrics address Nas's feeling displaced "when you're too hood to be in the Hollywood circles, you're too rich to be in the hood that birthed you". "You Wouldn't Understand" addresses life struggles and features a mellow production and neo soul influences. "Back When" has flickering production and mythologizing lyrics by Nas: "check out the oracle bred by city housing".

The up-tempo "The Don" samples Super Cat's 1982 song "Dance inna New York" and has

a 1990s hip hop sound . Its lyrics extol both Nas ' rapping prowess and New York City . According to No Ripcord 's James McKenna , " Stay " mixes soul and jazz elements , " bringing to mind Low End Theory era A Tribe Called Quest and Tupac 's Me Against the World , and lyrics " questioning the line between love and hate " . " Cherry Wine " features vocals by Amy Winehouse and a narrative between ill @-@ fated lovers . The song was titled after Winehouse 's guitar , which she called " cherry " . Jesal Padania of RapReviews cites it as " quite possibly the best ' ladies number ' that Nas has ever delivered , though it is infinitely classier than that label . " On " Bye Baby " , Nas ' lyrics address his ex @-@ wife and recount their marriage in a narrative that follows the wedding , counseling sessions , marriage counseling , and the legal process of their divorce .

= = Promotion = =

Nas promoted the album with television appearances and performances on The Colbert Report , Late Show with David Letterman , Jimmy Kimmel Live ! , and 106 & Park . He also headlined the Rock the Bells music festival and embarked on a three @-@ week European tour during June and July 2012 . Nas co @-@ headlined the " Life Is Good / Black Rage " tour with Lauryn Hill , performing from October 29 to December 31 , when he performed an exclusive show at Radio City Music Hall in New York City with Elle Varner as the supporting act .

Three singles were released in promotion of the album ? " Nasty " on August 9 , 2011 , " The Don " on April 3 , 2012 , and " Daughters " on July 17 . A music video for " Nasty " was filmed by director Jason Goldwatch in Queensbridge , Nas ' hometown in New York , and released virally on October 11 , 2011 . A video for " Daughters " was directed by Chris Robinson and premiered May 27 on MTV Jams . Its storyline chronicles the relationship between Nas and his daughter through her point of view . On April 27 , Nas released the Aristotle @-@ directed video for " The Don " , which featured lavish images of Nas ' lifestyle .

On August 30 , Nas released a video for " Bye Baby " , featuring scenes of Nas in an empty home , at his divorce proceedings , and in a setting that revisits the cover image of Life Is Good . It also featured singer Aaron Hall of Guy , whose 1988 song " Goodbye Love " is sampled on " Bye Baby " . A video for " Cherry Wine " was also released on October 2 . It was dedicated to guest vocalist Amy Winehouse , who is featured as a projection on a wall in the video 's scenes . On September 19 , " Cherry Wine " was sent to radio in the United Kingdom .

= = Release and reception = =

Life Is Good , Nas ' eleventh studio album , was released by Def Jam Recordings ; it was also his last album for the label . It was first released on July 13 , 2012 , in Germany , where it reached number 24 on the Media Control Charts . In the United Kingdom , it debuted at number 8 on the Official Albums Chart , on which it spent three weeks . The album also debuted at number 2 in Canada and sold 5 @, @ 700 copies in its first week there . In the United States , the album debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 and sold 149 @, @ 000 copies in its first week . It was his sixth number @-@ one album in the United States . In its second week on the Billboard 200 , the album sold 45 @, @ 000 copies . By February 10 , 2013 , the album had sold 354 @, @ 000 copies , according to Nielsen SoundScan . The album charted for 16 weeks on the Billboard 200 .

Life is Good received widespread acclaim from critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a weighted mean rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream publications , the album received an average score of 81 , based on 30 reviews . Kevin Perry of NME called it " a grimy , back @-@ to @-@ basics return to form " , while Pitchfork Media 's Jayson Greene said Nas had " settled gracefully into strengths " , Slant Magazine 's Manan Desai said Nas sounded " inspired " and praised the album 's " narrative unity " as " a wide @-@ angle look of the artist as a grown man . " Evan Rytlewski of The A.V. Club deemed Nas ' lyrics " beautifully expressed " and the music just " as thoughtful " . Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times called it a " thoughtful , fierce , honest and ? most important ? heavy @-@ duty work " and stated , " Nas has gotten better at rolling with the punches ? and you can hear it in every verse " . Carl Chery from XXL said it is " arguably Nas ' best

LP since Stillmatic " and asserted , " At this juncture ? 21 years and 10 solo albums in ? no other MC has ever rhymed at such a high level this deep into their career . "

In a less enthusiastic review for MSN Music , Robert Christgau gave Life Is Good a three @-@ star honorable mention , citing " Daughters " and " Accident Murderers " as highlights and deeming the record " reflections of a bigshot who , as he mentions several times , is damn big " . AllMusic 's David Jeffries called it a " puff @-@ chested bitch session " and felt " Nas needed to get [ this album ] out of his system , acting as a clearing house for all venom and bile , plus some gloss that doesn 't fit but needed to go as well . " New York Times critic Jon Caramanica felt his narratives were " sometimes distractingly fanciful " and his lyrics occasionally " overstuffed " , even though the record possessed " a simulacrum of the sound that made him legendary " . Matthew Fiander from PopMatters was more critical , finding the production " uneven " and calculated " as product " , with " half @-@ done ideas " .

Life Is Good appeared on several critics ' year @-@ end top albums lists . It was named the best album of 2012 by The Source and Okayplayer . The album was also ranked number 18 by Rolling Stone , number 12 by Complex , number 16 by James Montgomery of MTV , number six by Martin Caballero of The Boston Globe , and number seven by Jon Caramanica of The New York Times . Life Is Good received a Grammy Award nomination in the category of Best Rap Album for the 2013 Grammy Awards . It was also nominated for Album of the Year at the 2013 BET Hip Hop Awards , while " Daughters " won the Impact Track award at the 2012 BET Hip Hop Awards .

= = Track listing = =

Samples :

" No Introduction " contains samples of " Don 't Cry " by Kirk Franklin

" A Queens Story " contains samples of " Peter Piper " by Run ? D.M.C. and " Queen 's Story " by Salaam Remi .

" Accident Murderers " contains samples of " They Said It Couldn 't Be Done " by Norman Feels and " The Bridge " by MC Shan .

" Daughters " contains samples of " Dust to Dust " by Cloud One and " Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye " by Wayne McGhie and the Sounds of Joy .

" Reach Out " contains samples of " Ike 's Mood " by Isaac Hayes and an interpolation of " Once in a Lifetime Groove " by New Edition .

" World 's an Addiction " contains a sample of " The World " by Salaam Remi .

" You Wouldn 't Understand " contains samples of " Let 's Start Love Over Again " by Miles Jaye and " Eric B. Is President " by Eric B. & Rakim .

" Back When " contains samples of " Double Agent Jones " by Barry Moore Combo , " Live Routine " by MC Shan , and " The Bridge " by MC Shan .

" The Don " contains elements of " Dance inna New York " by Super Cat .

" Stay " contains samples of " Seven Steps to Nowhere " by L.A. Carnival .

" Bye Baby " contains samples of " Goodbye Love " by Guy .

" The Black Bond " contains samples of " Praguénosis " by Salaam Remi .

" Where 's the Love " contains samples of " Brooklyn @-@ Queens " by 3rd Bass .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Release history = =