

= Aquemini =

Aquemini is the third studio album by American hip hop duo OutKast , released on September 29 , 1998 through LaFace Records . The title is a portmanteau of the two performers ' Zodiac signs : Aquarius ( Big Boi ) and Gemini ( André 3000 ) , which is indicative of the album 's recurring theme of the differing personalities of the two members . The group recorded the majority of the album in Bobby Brown 's Bosstown Recording Studios and Doppler Studios , both in Atlanta , Georgia .

Released as the follow @-@ up to the duo 's 1996 album ATLiens , Aquemini expands on the previous record 's outer space @-@ inspired compositions by incorporating live instrumentation . The commercial success of ATLiens allowed for more creative freedom for the group , which led to the members self @-@ producing the majority of the tracks . The band employed a large number of musicians for the album , who frequently entered and exited the studio throughout the recording process and had a major influence on the writing development of the album 's songs . Lyrically , Aquemini explores various themes including human nature , addiction , and interpersonal relationships .

The album was certified platinum in November 1998 , only two months after its release , and was certified double platinum on July 2 , 1999 by the Recording Industry Association of America . Aquemini peaked at number two on both the Billboard 200 and the Top R & B / Hip @-@ Hop charts . Four of the album 's tracks had already or would later become singles , although some were limited ( promotional ) releases and not available commercially . The record also received rave reviews from music critics , who praised the album 's musicality and unique lyrical themes . It was ranked at number 500 in the book version of Rolling Stone 's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time .

= = Background = =

In 1994 , the American hip hop duo OutKast released their debut album , Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik , which was recorded when members Big Boi and André 3000 were eighteen years old . Bolstered by the success of the single " Player 's Ball " , the record established OutKast as prominent figures in the Southern hip hop scene . After the album was certified platinum , LaFace Records gave OutKast more creative control and advanced money for their 1996 follow @-@ up album ATLiens . On ATLiens , André 3000 and Big Boi abandoned the " hard @-@ partying playa characters " of their debut album in favor of personas that were more futuristic , and produced many of the songs on their own for the first time . Critics praised the group 's maturing musical style on the record , which debuted at number two on the U.S. Billboard 200 chart and sold nearly 350 @,@ 000 copies in its first two weeks of release . The single " Elevators ( Me & You ) " reached number 12 and spent 20 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart .

After the release of ATLiens , André 3000 entered a relationship with neo soul singer Erykah Badu , who was part of a burgeoning movement in the urban music scene described as " more bohemian than ghetto " . André 3000 adopted a more flamboyant style of dress during performances in promotion of ATLiens that included large glasses , blond wigs , and marching band uniforms . Badu gave birth to his first child in November 1997 , which presented new artistic inspiration for the rapper .

= = Recording = =

Due to OutKast 's newfound commercial success and higher budget for the album , the group enjoyed a more relaxed schedule and " could really just live " at the studio . The duo and studio musicians lived and worked in the studio for weeks straight , with Big Boi noting , " It usually takes us two to three years to make a record because we take our time ; we ain 't giving you that fast food , trying to meet a deadline . It ain 't done until it 's done sonically . " For Aquemini , the duo used live instrumentation and improvisation , bringing a baby grand piano into the studio and hiring musicians who played " everything from stoner funk to prog rock " . Producer Neal H. Pogue recalled , " That was the beauty of making all those records - having musicians come in and out . It was almost like a

Motown , that 's what we had . Or like a Stax Records thing . That 's what I loved about it . It brought back that whole feeling of making records . It was organic . " Much of the music on Aquemini was formulated during jam sessions , in which one musician would begin with creating a chord pattern and the rest would incorporate their instruments following that sequence . While recording Aquemini , André 3000 drew influence from reggae music and listened to Bob Marley constantly during the sessions . After the musical aspects of a song were developed , André 3000 and Big Boi would then create lyrics that they felt would fit with the tone of the song .

For the record , André 3000 did most of the album 's production , while Big Boi crafted hooks for the songs . André 3000 and producer Mr. DJ learned about beat creation through observing the members of Organized Noize at work , with Mr. DJ observing that despite André 3000 's normally frugal lifestyle , his enthusiasm for production led him to splurge on costly recording equipment . At one point , André 3000 attempted singing and modifying his voice with pitch @-@ correction equipment , but Big Boi warned him that this would alienate the group 's urban audience . Another point of contention was the order of the track listing ; Big Boi wanted to begin the album with " Y 'all Scared " while André 3000 and the other producers and musicians wanted the first track to be " Return of the G " , preferring that the record start with a song with just the duo as opposed to one with multiple collaborators . Big Boi missed his flight to attend the album mastering session and by the time he arrived , the others had already settled on a cohesive tracklist for the record . After a long , heated discussion , Big Boi eventually agreed to opening the album with " Return of the G " . The album features the song " West Savannah " , which had been recorded during the Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik sessions , and was included on Aquemini to give listeners a " bonus " that had sentimental value for the duo , as well as to pay homage to Big Boi 's family living in Savannah .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Big Boi described the music on the album as " very experimental " noting that it featured live instrumentation that included horns , guitar , piano , and harmonica . AllMusic 's Steve Huey detected the " ethereal futurism " of ATLiens in the music on Aquemini , but also noted that " more often Aquemini plants its feet on the ground for a surprisingly down @-@ home flavor " . He also observed a " Southern earthiness and simultaneous spirituality " in Organized Noize 's production work on the record .

Lyrically , much of Aquemini features introspection about the desolation of the human condition . Overarching themes addressed on the record include drug addiction , precarious relationships , and freedom from self @-@ inflicted struggles . Other subjects include excessive reliance on technology and the Atlanta club scene . On the record , the group often shifts between science fiction @-@ inspired topics and the harsh realities of urban life . Saul Austerlitz of the Yale Herald notes the central theme of the group 's " ability to move between two worlds--the G @-@ funk glamorized by the Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur and the group 's own spacier , more poetic excursions " in the album . Another theme is the duality of the two members and their differing personalities , with Big Boi as " the player " and Andre 3000 as " the poet " , according to the album 's cover . Big Boi generally covers the more conventional hip @-@ hop topics such as his childhood in the South and attractive women , while Andre 3000 discusses more unorthodox themes . In contrast to much of hip hop music in the late 1990s , OutKast did not tone down the regional qualities , like the harmonica break on " Rosa Parks " and distinctive Atlanta slang and diction throughout . The duo experimented with several delivery styles on the record , using " relaxed , hyper , distorted , speedy and conversational presentations . "

= = Songs = =

= = = Tracks 1 @-@ 8 = = =

Aquemini begins with the introductory track " Hold On , Be Strong " , which was written by session guitarist Donny Mathis and was originally a full song with verses , but the group preferred to only use the hook . André 3000 played a kalimba on the song after purchasing the instrument at a flea market , drawing inspiration from Earth , Wind & Fire . " Return of the G " addresses concerns from fans who felt that the group 's style had changed too drastically since the release of Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik , as well as those who make poor decisions in order to keep their street credibility . When discussing the lyrical content of the song , André 3000 explained , " I was young and wilder and some of my fashion choices people didn 't accept at the time . I started getting flak from some people , so they were like , ' Either he 's gay or on drugs ' ... ' Return of the Gangsta ' was trying to give them a sense of , ' Hey , I 'm still a regular person . ' " " Rosa Parks " contains blues @-@ influenced guitar work and folksy harmonies that " announce OutKast 's distinctive style of Southern boogie . The groove goes into overdrive during a clapping , foot @-@ stomping breakdown funkified by a fierce harmonica as the kick drum pounds incessantly . "

The next track , " Skew It On the Bar @-@ B " features rapper Raekwon of the Wu @-@ Tang Clan and discusses the disappointment of the group 's debut album not achieving the coveted " five @-@ mic " rating from The Source : " I gotta hit the Source / I need my other half mic / because that Southernplayalisticadillacmusik was a classic right ? " . " Skew It On the Bar @-@ B " is followed by the title track , which has been compared to the music of soul singer Isaac Hayes . Pogue experimented with delays and echos in his production to make the song " dimensional , like you could actually put your hands through the song . " " Synthesizer " contains elements of electrofunk and features funk musician George Clinton . Emma Warren of The Guardian called the track " raw and woozy " , dubbing it the " weirdest moment of the record " . On " West Savannah " , Big Boi discusses his Southern roots , and references individuals who grew up outside of the South who fail to recognize different regional Southern identities by stating " You might call us country , but we 's only Southern " .

= = = Tracks 9 @-@ 16 = = =

" Da Art of Storytelling ' ( Part 1 ) " tells the story of a self @-@ destructive childhood friend named Sasha Thumper who dies of a drug overdose . Commenting on the song 's lyrical content , author Mickey Hess remarks that André 3000 " manages to walk the fine line between emotionalism and masculinity by articulating this highly emotional narrative with an almost emotionless tone . " The next track , " Da Art of Storytelling ' ( Part 2 ) " , is an apocalyptic song that represents the group 's vision of " the last song recorded in the world " , with André 3000 commenting , " I do remember thinking , ' What if it was the end of the world and we had to get to the Dungeon on some X @-@ Men superhero shit . I think I was vibing on some end @-@ of @-@ the @-@ world , last @-@ recorded @-@ song shit ' " . Following is " Mamacita " , which features Dungeon Crew rapper Madasa in a meditation on male @-@ female relationships , inspired by an ex @-@ girlfriend of André 3000 who began pursuing women after their breakup . " SpottieOttieDopaliscious " relates a story of ill @-@ fated romance , with André 3000 describing the infatuation during an encounter with a woman at a club and Big Boi noting the hopelessness of the relationship as the song progresses .

" Y 'all Scared " is a collaboration with three members of Goodie Mob and contains the chant " If you scared , say you scared " accompanied by prominent organ and guitar work . " Nathaniel " is an a capella rap by the group 's close friend who at the time was an inmate in a Georgia prison , and the song is a recording of an actual collect call during his time in jail . The track is an introduction to " Liberation " . The eight @-@ minute @-@ long " Liberation " combines a variety of musical styles , including gospel , jazz , blues , and world music . The song is notable for not including rapped vocals and instead features vocal alternations between singing and spoken word styles . Lyrically , the track utilizes images of slavery to symbolize artistic freedom and not being concerned with the opinions of the public and record labels . The album closes with " Chonkyfire " , which features a fuzzy guitar riff and snippets from OutKast 's speech at the 1995 Source Awards in which the group emphasized the Southern hip @-@ hop scene as a legitimate subgenre .

= = Release = =

The group originally planned to create a film in conjunction with Aquemini , completing a script three months before the release of the record . OutKast met with MTV for the project , who , despite liking the idea for the film , hoped to instead buy the project and cast Missy Elliott and Busta Rhymes instead , feeling they had more " star power . " Although the duo recalls being " heartbroken " at the time , André 3000 and Big Boi continued to work on ideas for a collaborative film , eventually resulting in the 2006 musical Idlewild starring the group . David Browne of The New York Times viewed the album art as an homage to blaxploitation films of the 1970s . The record 's title is a combination of the two members ' zodiac signs , with André 3000 being a Gemini and Big Boi being an Aquarius .

Aquemini debuted behind Jay @-@ Z 's Vol . 2 ... Hard Knock Life at number two on the Billboard Hot 200 , the same opening position of both ATLiens and the group 's next release , Stankonia . The record sold 227 @,@ 000 copies in its first week of release , ahead of A Tribe Called Quest 's The Love Movement and Lauryn Hill 's The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill . In Norway and Germany , the album peaked at numbers 39 and 66 , respectively .

In 1999 , civil rights activist Rosa Parks filed a lawsuit against OutKast for the song " Rosa Parks " , claiming that the song used her name without her permission , constituting false advertising and an infringement on her right to publicity , in addition to defamation of character . The lawsuit was dismissed on first amendment grounds that year by a federal judge , but the appeals court partially reinstated the suit in 2003 , stating that the group must have an artistic reason for titling the song with her name . The case was settled in 2005 with OutKast and LaFace Records agreeing to create educational programs to " enlighten today 's youth about the significant role Rosa Parks played in making America a better place for all races . "

= = Critical reception = =

Aquemini received widespread acclaim from critics . AllMusic 's Steve Huey called it " a stroke of brilliance " . He praised the record for avoiding the " hardcore clichés " and summed up his review by saying that Aquemini is " a virtuosic masterpiece , and a landmark hip @-@ hop album of the late ' 90s " . Robert Christgau also commented positively on the album , stating that the record " evolved G @-@ funk with denser instrumental crosstalk . " Los Angeles Times writer Soren Baker complimented OutKast 's " intelligent hip @-@ hop " and commented that " musically , the collection supplies some of the lushest tracks ever included on a hip @-@ hop record " , noting that the music will " stimulate the mind , touch the soul and pack the dance floor . " Q named it the group 's " third best offering . " Sia Michel of The Village Voice called it " an impassioned state @-@ of @-@ hip @-@ hop address " . In a brief review for Entertainment Weekly , Cheo Tyehimba qualified Aquemini as the hip @-@ hop album of the year .

Fernando Jr. of Rolling Stone wrote " OutKast prove that you don 't have to sell out to sell records . Sporting plenty of live chops and soulful harmonies , Aquemini 's fresh , original feel defies rap 's coastal clichés . " Steve Jones of USA Today commented that the duo 's " molasses @-@ smooth raps speak to the stark realities of urban streets . " Tony Green of Spin said that although they are not as spiritual as Goodie Mob , Outkast 's " streetcorner signifying " offers listeners more than simple musical pleasure and that they " have crafted some of the most seductive and dramadelic textures . " Giving it a five out of five " mic " -rating , Charlie Braxton of The Source praised the duo for " their superb use of the urban narrative . " Braxton called Aquemini " a brilliant record " and commented that it " possesses an uncanny blend of sonic beauty , poignant lyricism and spirituality that compels without commanding " .

In a retrospective review , Tim Stelloh from PopMatters described the album as a " loud , unpretentious , eclectic kick in the ass " . He praised it for being " full of both fear and curiosity , and those emotions were channeled through its production . " Dave Hughes , writing in Slant Magazine , stated : " Ten years on , Aquemini is the single strongest aspect of one of the art form 's deepest benches . Snappier and more experimental than the pair 's early work , and focused enough to feel

comfortable in a sprawl , it 's the moment when OutKast came fully into itself . "

= = = Accolades = = =

Aquemini has been included in several publications ' best album lists . In 2003 , Rolling Stone ranked it number 500 on its list of 500 Greatest Albums of All Time . The staff explained the inclusion by stating : " OutKast unleashed an explosive hip @-@ hop that deployed live musicians , social commentary and a heavy dose of deep funk " . The album was placed at number 11 on the list of the " 100 Best Albums of the Nineties " by the same magazine .

Paste called the album " the best Atlanta hip @-@ hop album of all time " . Pitchfork Media ranked the record at number 50 on their " Top 100 Albums of the 1990s " , describing it as " smooth and well @-@ conceived " . Spin included it on three of their lists . They ranked it number 35 on the " 90 Greatest Albums of the ' 90s " and number three on the " Top 20 Albums of ' 98 " . The magazine also ranked it 76th on their 2010 list of " The 125 Best Albums of the Past 25 Years " . In 2004 , Stylus ranked it 185th on their " Top 101 @-@ 200 Favourite Albums Ever " list . In 2013 , Vibe named it the 20th greatest album since 1993 . Ego trip ranked it the second greatest hip hop album from 1980 to 98 , while Hip @-@ Hop Connection ranked it the 11th greatest rap album from 1995 to 2005 . New Nation named it the 80th best album by black artists .

The album was included in Blender 's " 500 CDs You Must Own Before You Die " ( 2003 ) , Tom Moon 's 1000 Recordings to Hear Before You Die ( 2008 ) , Continuum Books ' 33 ? : A Series of Books about Critically Acclaimed Albums , and Q 's " The Ultimate Music Collection " ( 2005 ) The lead single " Rosa Parks " was nominated in the category Grammy Award for Best Rap Performance by a Duo or Group at the 1999 Grammy Awards . The album 's twelfth track " SpottieOttieDopaliscious " was ranked at number 16 on Pitchfork Media 's list of the top 200 tracks of the 1990s .

= = Legacy = =

Critics hailed the recording as OutKast 's most fully realized up to that time and one of the best of the 1990s . Steve Huey wrote : " Aquemini fulfills all its ambitions , covering more than enough territory to qualify it as a virtuosic masterpiece , and a landmark hip @-@ hop album of the late ' 90s " . Ebony observed that Aquemini is " perhaps OutKast 's best effort " and " a huge commercial and artistic success " . Matt Wink concluded that OutKast with this album " carved their place in the game and grabbed the world 's attention . No two people with a similar background could be more different and no two artists could have made this masterpiece . "

Los Angeles Times labeled the album " OutKast 's third brilliant slice of hip @-@ hop " . Rolling Stone wrote that " Atlanta 's reputation as hip @-@ hop 's most avant @-@ garde area code ? the Long Island of the Nineties ? was cemented " with this effort . In a column for Jazz Times , Tony Green wrote that " OutKast 's Aquemini dispels any notion that hip @-@ hop is out of sonic ideas . If anything , it shows that the genre 's appetite for new sounds is as ravenous as ever . " According to Emma Warren from The Guardian , this album is " a high point of 90s hip @-@ hop " and proof that " the old push and pull between the east and west coast of American hip @-@ hop was over " . Tim Stelloh of PopMatters felt that " Aquemini far surpassed OutKast 's previous release A @-@ tliens [ sic ] , and made the group one of those rare commercial anomalies ? kind of like Nirvana , Rage Against the Machine , or Public Enemy " . Several reviewers of Kendrick Lamar 's Good Kid , M.A.A.D City ( 2012 ) perceived influence from Aquemini in the record 's production and aesthetic .

= = Track listing = =

Track listing and samples compiled from album liner notes .

Notes

The vinyl edition moves " Chonkyfire " to the follow @-@ up track " Y 'all Scared " .

The clean version of the album has all of the skits in between those songs removed . The interlude

" Nathaniel " was omitted , as it was the fifth verse of " Liberation " .

#### Sample credits

" Return of the ' G ' " contains interpolations from " Superfly " by Curtis Mayfield .

" Rosa Parks " contains interpolations from " Cancion De Amor " by The Sandpipers .

" Skew It on the Bar @-@ B " contains an interpolation of " Police Woman " performed by Henry Mancini .

" Synthesizer " contains an interpolation of " Rock Dirge " performed by Sly Stone .

" SpottieOttieDopaliscious " contains excerpts from " Dancing With the Moonlit Knight " performed by Genesis .

" Y 'All Scared " contains interpolations from " Air Born " performed by Camel .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from AllMusic .

= = = Musicians = = =

= = = Technical personnel = = =

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =