

= Confessions ( Usher album ) =

Confessions is the fourth studio album by American singer Usher . It was released on March 23 , 2004 , by Arista Records . Recording sessions for the album took place during 2003 to 2004 , with its production handled by his longtime collaborator Jermaine Dupri , alongside with Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis and Lil Jon , among others . Primarily an R & B album , Confessions showcases Usher as a crooner and incorporates musical elements of hip hop and crunk . The album 's themes generated controversy about Usher 's personal relationships ; however , the album 's primary producer Jermaine Dupri claimed the record reflects his personal story .

The album became the instant commercial success in the United States , selling 1 @. @ 1 million copies in its first week . Its continued success was bolstered by its four chart @- @ topping singles . To begin strategizing of boosting its sales amid threats of bootlegging , the special edition for the album was issued , which includes the hit single , " My Boo " ; a duet with Alicia Keys . Despite some mixed criticism towards its lyrical substance , Confessions received mostly positive reviews and earned Usher several awards ; including the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary R & B Album .

The album has been regarded by music writers as Usher 's greatest work , and according to Billboard , is the second best @- @ selling album of the 2000s decade in the United States . With over eight million copies sold in 2004 , the album 's commercial success was viewed as a sign of recovering record sales in the US , following three years of decline . It was also exemplary of urban music 's commercial peak and dominance of the Billboard charts in 2004 . Confessions has been certified Diamond by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) and , as of 2016 , has sold over 10 million copies in the US and over 20 million copies worldwide .

= = Background and recording = =

When he began recording Confessions in 2003 , Usher claimed he did not want to work with any new producers . Production began between Usher and Jermaine Dupri , who produced his last two albums , My Way ( 1997 ) and 8701 ( 2001 ) . In spite of his vision , Usher stated , " With this album I chose some new producers who I figured would definitely allow me to really articulate myself in a different way ... Every album you gotta grow . You gotta look for something different . " Dupri also invited his frequent collaborator Bryan @- @ Michael Cox . The album features productions by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis , Just Blaze , R. Kelly , and Usher 's brother James Lackey .

With forty recorded songs , Usher felt the album had already been completed . Initially , he submitted the album to his record label , Arista . He and the company 's then @- @ president , L. A. Reid , who listened to the record ; however , they thought something was missing in it , " You know what , there 's like one or two more records that we just gotta get . " Usher was displeased with the decision ; he felt returning to the studio was the hardest part and needed to re @- @ motivate himself . He went on recording a few more tracks with help from fellow Atlantian 's Lil Jon and Ludacris . Eventually , the team was able to produce songs like " Red Light " and " Yeah ! " . He also recorded songs with P. Diddy and The Neptunes during one of those sessions but were not released .

= = Composition = =

One of Usher 's first steps of recording Confessions was deciding to reveal " his own little secrets " . Friend and former A & R rep named Kawan " KP " Prather thought the album would let the public know Usher personally , as Kawan " KP " Prather speaks , " The music has never been the question , but people tend to buy into the artist . The more they know about you , the more they feel like they 're there with you . " Primarily because of its personal content , Usher said that this is his chance to be real . He named the album Confessions because he felt it is his most personal record to date : " All of us have our Pandora 's boxes or skeletons in our closets . I let a few of them out , you know . I 've got a lot to say . I 've got a lot of things and stuff built in me that I just want to let go of . " He

wrote more songs than he contributed to his previous album .

Several of the songs in this album were conceptually based on a situation . For instance , " Burn " which it has built around the situation where Usher 's two @-@ year relationship with Rozonda " Chilli " Thomas from an American R & B @-@ hip hop girl group TLC has almost ended . Dupri and Cox were talking and felt that there was a song in it , and started writing . Same through with the supposedly title track " Confessions Part II " ; they were conversing about an impregnated mistress , and its concept was written down . Usher has recorded " Confessions Part II " during a July 2003 's recording sessions in New York City , United States . With Usher singing the song 's lyrics , the theme of cheating inspired him and Dupri ; which both of them has decided to produce these two parts ; " Confessions Part I " and " Confessions Part II ( which the former has heard it at the beginning of the video for the latter ) .

= = = Music and style = = =

Confessions falls dominantly in the R & B genre . Usher commented that he chose to work with collaborators who know " ... how to interpret R & B from a jazz standpoint , an old school throwback standpoint , a new school point , a traditional classic standpoint ... " With producers and him set to produce such an album , however , other musical genres including hip hop were incorporated . While he wanted to do R & B , Usher also wanted his fans to experience hip hop at the same time : " I try to think outside the box . " When Lil Jon came on the scene , crunk was introduced to the R & B @-@ centered album , specifically on the Sean Garrett @-@ penned song " Yeah ! " . Usher said , " ' Yeah ! ' could be called the first consciously styled " crunk R & B " record . " The album also includes various slow jams .

This record also introduces a new style for Usher , focusing on his voice and technique . Andre " Dre " Harris and Vidal Davis listened to 8701 and felt that " Usher really needs to sing hard and let people know his vocal ability " . With efforts focused on the record to demonstrate his vocal ability to listeners , songs such as " Superstar " and " Follow Me " exhibited Usher in a type of " crooner mode " . The ballad @-@ oriented " Burn " also showcases his vocal aptitude .

= = Release = =

Confessions was slated to be released on November 6 , 2003 . However , due to marketing issues , the scheduled date was moved to March 23 of the following year . With several songs recorded , Usher faced the challenge of determining the final track listing . Usher , Dupri , Reid , and then @-@ A & R rep Mark Pitts have their favorites among the forty , but decided to choose those which " came up consistently more " . The collective was able to decide fifteen of them with two interludes completing the seventeen track list . Many songs were set aside for future use , including " Red Light " and a remix of " Yeah ! " . Usher and Arista held advance @-@ listenings for the album , few months before its actual release ; he also appeared on TV guestings to promote Confessions .

With strategies to boost the album 's sales albeit threats of stealing music in the internet , Usher and his management readied a follow @-@ up release of Confessions with additional marketing blitz . The idea was considered " musically driven " after Zomba , who absorbed Arista , management was excited about " My Boo " , a song that was recorded for the original version of the album but failed to meet deadline . However , it actually began when American R & B and soul singer Alicia Keys , who is featured on the track , " brought in that the talk of repackaging started " . With the inclusion of " My Boo " , they thought of the album as complete . While they knew of other artists releasing special editions of their albums , the label felt that Confessions had the edge because of its previous success and its physical changes , including a new cover art , an expanded CD booklet , pullout poster and a letter to fans from Usher . The new version includes " My Boo " and " Red Light " , which were leaked alongside other songs that did not appear in the album , and a remix of " Confessions Part II " , and " Seduction " ; original tracks were also improved like the extended version of " Confessions Part I " and a rap added by American rapper Jadakiss in " Throwback " . The label itself treated the version a new album , with full media advertisements . The

album was re @-@ issued in October 2004 , seven months after its initial release .

= = = Marketing = = =

When " Yeah ! " was issued , Usher and the label were plagued by marketing strategies . With many potential lead singles that could fare well in music markets , they were choosing between " Yeah ! " and " Burn " . Considering that the former sufficed what the label was looking for , they also believed the latter would be a blockbuster . Usher as well was skeptical that time if " Yeah ! " ? which is largely composed around crunk ? would be a good choice after doing an R & B record was in his mindset . Meanwhile , they felt " Burn " also failed to meet their expectations : " ' Burn ' being a great song is one thing , but it 's one of them things where people said , ' It 's strong , but can we make history with that ? ' At the end of the day , you want an event . " KP recalled , " Everybody was scared to make that first step . "

With much debate between two songs , " Burn " was originally chosen as the lead single , with plans of filming its music video in late 2003 . Meanwhile , Lil Jon leaked " Yeah ! " to DJs across the United States in November 2003 . Originally , the label did not intend " Yeah ! " as a proper single . Released to street DJs and mixtapes , it was meant to cultivate fans who waited for three years since the release of 8701 . While record labels stayed idle during the Christmas season , " Yeah ! " was getting favorable and quick response from radio stations though nobody was promoting ; it was finally released as the lead single . To keep the album atop the chart , " My Boo " was targeted for release after " Confessions Part II " was diminishing on the Hot 100 . The B @-@ side of the UK release includes " Red Light " and " Sweet Lies " . The single again topped the Hot 100 , giving the album its fourth consecutive number @-@ one . " Caught Up " was released as the album 's fifth and final single , and reached number eight in the United States .

= = = Tour = = =

Usher supported the album with a two @-@ month concert tour called " The Truth Tour " . The tour set featured a small stage up on top of the main stage , where the band played with Usher and his supporting dancers left with enough room to perform . The smaller stage had a mini platform attached to it ? which lowered to the main stage ? and had two big staircases on both sides of it . To the left , a group of circular staircases climbed to the top , and to the right , there was a fire escape replete with steps and an elevator . Kanye West , who had finished his own headlining tour for his 2004 album The College Dropout , was the opening act for " The Truth Tour " .

Preceding Usher 's entrance was a short movie showing him getting dressed , following on with him performing the opening song " Caught Up " , with Usher dressed in all white . The second song performed was " You Make Me Wanna ... " , where two dancers stayed on the top stage with Usher while two male dancers came out to the lower level with two chairs each in their hands . Each dancer threw one chair up to the top , with Usher already in hand with his own chair , with everyone following a set dance routine . Following this , Usher performed " U Remind Me " , where he danced by himself during a breakdown of the track . He then sang " That 's What It 's Made For " , following on with the song " Bad Girl " , where Usher was dressed up in a lavender suit and came out in a chrome chair . During the song , Usher picked out a female from the crowd , transitioning to " Superstar " , singing to the fan . Usher continued singing to the fan , performing " Can U Handle It ? " , closing the song by kissing the fan who then left the stage . Usher closed his performance with Confessions ' lead single " Yeah ! " .

" The Truth Tour " commenced on August 5 , 2004 in Hampton , Virginia and concluded on October 7 , 2004 in New York . It was ranked as one of the highest grossing tours of 2004 , grossing \$ 29 @.@ 1 million .

= = = Public reaction = = =

After Usher along with his label held a few listening parties for the album , controversies spread

about the mistress @-@ impregnating concept of " Confessions Part II " . Although Usher did not foresee such reaction of the album , Dupri already inferred , while making the album , what would be their reaction : " People are gonna question [ Usher ] on a couple of little lyrics ... " Coincidentally , Usher ended his relationship with Chilli early in 2004 . People were speculating about their breakup given the material of the album and his early interviews about its themes . With lyrics Usher admitted to have written because of his guilty conscience , people assumed that he and Chilli broke up because he was unfaithful . In a February 2004 radio interview , Chilli claimed that Usher " cheated " on her that caused their relationship to split .

Amidst widespread rumors , Usher stated , " People assume things , because as I said , I pull from my personal experiences to make my music . " He added that he loved Chilli , however , " ... it just didn 't work out . But cheating is not what caused the relationship to collide and crash ... " Although " Burn " is a reference to his dying relationship with Chilli ? hence the title ? Usher answered the press that the impregnating issue was not taken from a specific situation in his life . He also revealed that his friends who went through similar situations inspired him to write those songs : " ... it 's just something that I collectively got energy from everybody around me that had been through it . " In early 2006 , Dupri revealed that the story behind the album is his : " ... me cheating on my steady girlfriend , having a baby with that other woman and having to confess to everything that happened to my main girl . "

= = Commercial performance = =

Confessions was commercially successful , selling nearly 1 @.@ 096 million copies in the United States in its first week of release . It became the highest @-@ ever first week sales by an R & B artist , the second @-@ highest first week sales for a male artist , and the seventh @-@ highest first week sales of the recorded album charts history by SoundScan at the time of its release . It also equates the combined first @-@ week sales of his four previous album releases , including his live album called Live . The feat also carved history in Arista records having the first in any of their released albums to reach such sales . The success of the thirty @-@ year @-@ old record label , however , was attributed to its merging with Zomba Records . As of March 2013 it has the tenth highest first week album sales in history .

The album debuted at number one on the US Billboard 200 , becoming Usher 's first number @-@ one album . Confessions also hit number @-@ one on the Canadian Albums Chart and the US Top R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Albums . Its early , and successive , progress on the chart was said to be partly sustained by its strong single releases and plenty of press appearances and promotions . With " Yeah ! " propelling the album 's debut atop the chart , " Burn " , the second single off the album , facilitated Confessions 's continuing dominance as well . The first two released singles were competing on the Billboard Hot 100 ; the latter ended the twelve @-@ week number @-@ one chart run of the former . As the album 's third single , " Confessions Part II " , was about to top the chart and Usher to join with English pop and rock group The Beatles as the only acts to achieve three consecutive number @-@ one singles , American R & B singer Fantasia Barrino 's debut single " I Believe " prevented it from happening . Despite this , Usher became the first artist to top the Billboard Hot 100 Airplay with three consecutive number @-@ one singles . " Burn " achieved only eight non @-@ consecutive weeks on the Hot 100 after " Confessions Part II " topped the chart ; it became Usher 's second time to replace his own single at the top . " Yeah ! " and " Burn " were 2004 's top best @-@ selling singles in the United States , placing at number one and two respectively on the Billboard Chart Year @-@ Ender . Again , it honored Usher being the first act to achieve the feat since 1964 with the Beatles ' " I Want to Hold Your Hand " and " She Loves You " .

The album continued its dominance on the chart . D12 World by D12 ended its five consecutive weeks run at the top spot ; however , Confessions reclaimed the position the following week . The album spent a total 9 non @-@ consecutive weeks at number one on the Billboard 200 , becoming the longest @-@ running number one album of the millennium until 2009 , when country singer Taylor Swift spent 11 weeks atop the charts with Fearless . Over one month after its release , Confessions was certified three @-@ time platinum by the Recording Industry Association of

America for three million US shipments . Confessions topped the list of the most @-@ shipped albums of 2004 in the United States. Confessions was the second best @-@ selling album of the 2000s decade in the US , behind Eminem 's The Marshall Mathers LP . In July 2012 , it reached sales of 10 million copies in the US , according to Nielsen SoundScan . It has sold over 20 million copies worldwide . To date , the album has shipped 10 @.@ 3 million copies in the US and has received a Diamond certification from the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) .

= = Critical reception = =

Confessions received generally positive reviews from critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream publications , the album received an average score of 71 , based on 13 reviews . From an artistic viewpoint , the album has been considered as Usher 's best album to date , with writers calling it expansive and futuristic . Matt Cibula of PopMatters wrote that it " might be the best English @-@ language pop album of the year " . Entertainment Weekly 's Jem Aswad said that Usher " reveals his new @-@ found maturity by opening with the grittiest song he 's ever done . " Laura Checkoway of Vibe said that , " Though Confessions doesn 't bring Usher all the way to the artistic maturity one might hope for , tracking this star 's progression definitely has its satisfactions . " Q magazine observed " addictive R & B hooks and all @-@ dancin ' , all @-@ lovin ' subject matter boosted with hot production tweaks . " Amy Linden of The Village Voice commented that " Usher 's ( alleged ) character flaws are easily forgiven , though , because he can sing his cheating ass off , " and concluded , " Like 2002 's big @-@ selling but underrated 8701 , Confessions is a top @-@ of @-@ the @-@ line pop @-@ soul showcase that ... manages to be commercially savvy without coming off as too desperate . Sorta like Usher himself . " Kelefa Sanneh of The New York Times said that near the end , the songwriting " fails " Usher on a " heavily front @-@ loaded " R & B album , but felt that his performance is solid throughout :

The pleasure of listening to Usher is the pleasure of listening to a singer who knows exactly what he 's doing . ' Truth Hurts , ' a seemingly innocent ( if plaintive ) 1970 's throwback , turns nasty when the narrator suddenly reveals that the first two verses were full of lies . Which raises the question : are these supposed ' confessions ' true ? He loves toying with his audience this way , loves telling us exactly how bad he is , then daring us to believe him .

In a mixed review , Caroline Sullivan of The Guardian criticized its " production gloss " and said that , although Usher 's " fluid delivery " redeems weak tracks , there are only two " great songs " ? " Yeah ! " and the title track ? and " 17 less so . " Rolling Stone writer Laura Sinagra said that he " is coming of age , again " , but " still doesn 't quite cut it as a horny roughneck " . Jon Caramanica of Blender viewed that Usher 's songwriting " isn 't a strength , and his ballads often drown in their own inanity " . The Washington Post 's Elizabeth Mendez Berry called Confessions " Usher 's strongest recording to date " but found the more sexual songs mundane . Robert Christgau from The Village Voice cited " Confessions Part II " and " Bad Girl " as " choice cuts " , indicating " a good song on an album that isn 't worth your time or money " .

= = = Accolades = = =

The album earned Usher numerous accolades . At the 47th Grammy Awards , he was nominated for eight categories and won three : Best Contemporary R & B Album , Best R & B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal ( for " My Boo " ) and Best Rap / Sung Collaboration ( for " Yeah ! " ) . Usher won awards at the 2005 Soul Train Music Awards : R & B / Soul Album , Male ( for Confessions ) ; R & B / Soul Single , Male for ( " Confessions Part II " ) ; R & B / Soul Single , Group , Band or Duo ( for " My Boo " ) ; and R & B / Soul or Rap Dance Cut ( for " Yeah ! " ) . At the 2004 American Music Awards , he won four , including Favorite Soul / R & B Album and Favorite Male Soul / R & B Artist . At the 2004 Billboard Music Awards , Usher racked up eleven awards , including Artist of the Year , Male Artist of the Year , and Hot 100 Song of the Year for " Yeah ! " . In December 2009 it was ranked as the best solo album and second best overall album of the 2000 ?

2009 decade . Its singles Yeah ! , Burn , and My Boo were all ranked as some of the best songs of the 2000 ? 2009 decade , respectively placing in order at number two , number 21 , and number 36 .

= = Legacy and impact = =

With sales of more than eight million in 2004 , Confessions was the most @-@ shipped album of the year in the US . Along with the success of the American singer Norah Jones 's second album , Feels like Home ( 2004 ) , as well as breakthroughs albums by many new and old artists , it was seen as a sign that US record sales were slowly recovering after three straight years of decline due to competing DVDs and video games and the prevalent music piracy . By the end of 2004 , the industry had sold 667 million albums , an increase of about 1 @. @ 6 percent , as recorded by Nielsen SoundScan . Compared with sales records in 2003 , the figures showed eight percent increase . The album 's success also exemplified urban music 's commercial dominance during the early 2000s , which featured massive crossover success on the Billboard charts by R & B and hip hop artists . In 2004 , all 12 songs that topped the Billboard Hot 100 were African @-@ American recording artists and accounted for 80 % of the number @-@ one R & B hits that year . Along with Usher 's streak of singles , Top 40 radio and both pop and R & B charts were topped by OutKast 's " Hey Ya ! " , Snoop Dogg 's " Drop It Like It 's Hot " , Terror Squad 's " Lean Back " , and Ciara 's " Goodies " . Chris Molanphy of The Village Voice later remarked that " by the early 2000s , urban music was pop music . "

In a year @-@ end article for The New York Times , writer Ben Sisario dubbed 2004 " the year of Usher " . The success of the album put Usher in the mainstream , becoming the biggest artist of 2004 . Others also said that Usher might be the successor of Michael Jackson . The success of the album had also facilitated Usher to branch out to non @-@ musical ventures . He has opened a restaurant , starred in a film , launched his record label and recruited artists , and has done philanthropic activities like his efforts in helping 2005 Hurricane Katrina victims . Usher was not the only person who benefited from the album 's significant critical and commercial success . Bryan @-@ Michael Cox , who co @-@ wrote and co @-@ produced " Burn " , earned credibility in the music industry for his role in the album . Cox had been producing records for several notable American artists , including Alicia Keys , B2K , Mariah Carey and Destiny 's Child , among others , but he considered " Burn " as his crowning moment , which earned him two Grammy Award nominations . With 2004 deemed to be his introduction to a larger , more mainstream audience , Cox stated in an interview for MTV that many people were starting to recount what he had done .

= = Track listing = =

#### Notes

^ [ a ] signifies a vocal producer .

^ [ b ] signifies a co @-@ producer .

" Throwback " contains a sample of Dionne Warwick 's 1973 " You 're Gonna Need Me " .

" Superstar " contains a sample of Willie Hutch ' 1973 " Mack 's Stroll / The Getaway ( Chase Scene ) " .

" Truth Hurts " uses the production of Janet Jackson 's " Could This Be Love " , an outtake from Damita Jo .

" Take Your Hand " contains a sample of Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes ' 1973 " Is There a Place for Me ? " .

Faith Evans performs uncredited background vocals on " Superstar " .

= = Personnel = =

Credits for Confessions adapted from AllMusic .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =