

= Climax (Usher song) =

" Climax " is a song by American recording artist Usher , released on February 22 , 2012 , by RCA Records . It was released as the lead single for his 2012 studio album Looking 4 Myself . It was written by Usher , Ariel Rechtshaid , Redd Stylez , and Diplo , who also produced the song . Usher and Diplo worked on the song for two months as part of their collaboration for the former 's album . The song is a quiet storm slow jam with electronic influences , and lyrics about the turning point of a relationship . According to Usher , the song is primarily about the complications of a relationship , despite the lyrics ' sexual overtones .

As a single , " Climax " debuted at number 81 on the Billboard Hot 100 , with 31 @, @ 000 digital units sold in its first week . It peaked at number 17 and charted for 20 weeks , and also reached number one on the Billboard Hot R & B / Hip @- @ Hop Songs , becoming Usher 's 12th number @- @ one single on the chart . " Climax " was well received by music critics , who commended its musical direction , Usher 's singing , and Diplo 's production . Rolling Stone and Entertainment Weekly named it one of the best singles of 2012 . In 2013 , " Climax " won Usher a Grammy Award for Best R & B Performance .

= = Writing and recording = =

" Climax " was written by Usher , Redd Stylez , Ariel Rechtshaid , and Diplo , who also produced the song . Diplo introduced the song 's concept to Usher , who was working with him on a new album . Usher wanted to expand his music 's style and depth by working with Diplo . Diplo recounted the experience in an interview for The Guardian , saying that " I had explained to him about a moment I had with a girl where I felt like I could die with her and be content , but I didn 't and life moved on , and that point in my life was over . It was a sad feeling but it was beautiful . He was relating with me about the idea and how many times you think things are perfect and feel that way but they can pass . " They discussed the concept throughout the song 's development and how it relates to Usher 's life , as Diplo " tried to help realise these lyrics and feelings . " After conceiving some melody lines , they wrote the song in about an hour .

Usher and Diplo worked on the song 's production for two months , recording in studios in Los Angeles , New York , and Atlanta . Diplo originally pursued a house music sound based on a chord progression he wrote , but changed his direction after working in the recording studio alone on what he called a " wildfire " beat . He later said of his direction for the song , " the idea of pushing cut @- @ off on a synth used so much in progressive house music but pulling back . I was making something like a minimal techno record with Atlanta strip clubs in mind . " According to Diplo , Usher proposed the idea of " tak [ing] the strip club to the stadium " with the song 's production . Classical music composer Nico Muhly contributed with the song 's string arrangement .

= = Music and lyrics = =

" Climax " is set in common time . Diplo called the style " Radiohead quietstorm " , and both Spin and Rolling Stone agreed that the song was a mix of quiet storm style and electronic music . It is written in the key of C minor , and Usher 's voice ranges from B ? 3 to G5 . The music is built around a haunting riff , complemented by sparse drum machine and some musical accompaniment . Its varying soundscape incorporates electronic effects such as clicks , hisses , whooshes , and low @- @ frequency synths , as well as subtle strings and scattered piano notes . Music writers have noted Diplo 's production as uncharacteristically reserved and understated .

The song 's musical structure is characterized by intervals in which the music builds to a potential break , but softly decrescendos instead . As each verse concludes , the song 's snapping , electronic rhythm track gradually softens and rippling synth chords repeat throughout the song . Marc Hogan of Spin writes that Diplo " teases us with the sort of wubba @- @ wubba subwoofer noises that have become inescapable in the past year or so of pop radio . But he never actually gives in with the full dubstep drop ... the song keeps swelling to one big wave after another , without ever really reaching

a single , song @-@ stopping crescendo . " Hogan cites the bridge at around the three @-@ minute mark as " the closest thing to a climax " on the song , " when the track gets as quiet as it ever has before becoming as lush as it ever gets . " Pitchfork Media 's Carrie Battan calls the song " an exercise in the power of restraint " , commenting that " Diplo shows uncharacteristic subtlety behind Usher 's sentiment , with a beat that seems to hang suspended in midair . "

The song is a breakup lament dealing with the theme of commitment . Its title refers to the turning point of a relationship . The lyrics address a relationship in a state of tension and uncertainty : " We 've reached the climax / We 're together / Now we 're undone / Won 't commit so we choose to run away / Do we separate ? " Usher sings in a pleading falsetto and a plaintive tone on the song , alternating restrained vocals and anguished howls . In an interview for V @-@ 103 , Usher stressed that " Climax " focuses more on the complication of relationships rather than sex , saying that " it 's really about the ultimate experience or lack thereof . Or the finale of an experience of love and life . When you 're in a relationship and it has kinda reached the climax of where it can go , you gotta let it go if you are not going to commit . " He viewed that his falsetto vocals and the song 's tone give the song a sexual feel with music that works as a " double entendre " .

= = Release and reception = =

The song was first released onto the internet on Valentine 's Day 2012 through SoundCloud . Upon its release , Diplo commented on Twitter : " Seriously the best record I 've been part of ... I 'm pretty sure in 9 months there are gonna be a lot of new babies that this song is responsible for " . It was released as the lead single for Usher 's 2012 album Looking for Myself .

" Climax " debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 chart at number 81 , with 31 @,@ 000 digital units sold in the week of March 10 , 2012 . It peaked at number 17 and spent 20 weeks on the chart . The song also reached number one on the Billboard Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs , on which it charted for 33 weeks , and became Usher 's 12th number @-@ one single on the chart . It peaked at number three on the Dance / Club Play Songs , on which it charted for 13 weeks . In the United Kingdom , " Climax " debuted and peaked at number four on the UK Singles Chart , selling 41 @,@ 617 units . It charted for seven weeks and peaked at number 29 in Australia .

= = = Critical response = = =

Jody Rosen of Rolling Stone gave the song four out of five stars and stated , " Quiet storm gets a freaky sci @-@ fi makeover " . Pitchfork Media 's Carrie Battan commended Usher 's collaboration with Diplo as " a doubly satisfying departure from their respective strains of club @-@ ready fare . " Jason Lipshutz of Billboard called the song " an ode to the bewildering thoughts and feelings of relationship purgatory " and wrote that it is " a sound that Usher should explore more often . " Marc Hogan of Spin felt that the song is " as vividly communicative as it is decoratively beautiful " and praised its articulation , calling it " a tour de force of pacing and dynamics , giving listeners more and more , but then always easing up just enough to keep us begging for one more verse . "

Priya Elan of NME cited " Climax " as Usher 's " best song in absolutely years " and stated , " Goodbye cringe factor , hello Diplo , subtle electronic nuances and an expectation @-@ defying vocal performance which is more Prince falsetto than depth @-@ free showman . The results are jaw dropping . " He also compared it to the work of The Weeknd and commended its " lack of smut " in the lyrics , stating " it 's just Usher playing it fast and loose in falsetto . The result is as subtle as it is unbelievable . " Eric Arredondo of Beats Per Minute viewed the song as an improvement over Usher 's 2010 album Raymond v. Raymond and addressed the comparisons to The Weeknd , writing that , " though it still doesn 't hold much of the innovations and risks of something like The Weeknd 's House of Balloons , ' Climax ' can do something that most songs on that album can 't do without losing most of their fun : be played on the radio . "

Rolling Stone ranked " Climax " number 15 on their year @-@ end best songs list for 2012 . Entertainment Weekly ranked it number 14 on their year @-@ end list of best singles . It was voted as the third best single of 2012 by The Village Voice 's 40th annual Pazz & Jop critics ' poll and the

official best single of 2012 by Time magazine . At the 2013 Grammy Awards , " Climax " won Usher a Grammy Award for Best R & B Performance .

= = = Accolades = = =

= = Music video = =

The music video for " Climax " was directed by Sam Pilling , filmed in Atlanta , and released on March 9 , 2012 . Director of photography was Adam Frisch . After filming , the video was given to the studio Surround for post @-@ production , including editing its structure , title animation , and effects . The video shows Usher sitting in a car contemplating on whether to go inside his ex @-@ girlfriend 's home and rekindle their once @-@ passionate love affair or leave and never return again . It shows different scenarios played out in Usher 's mind , including him confronting his ex @-@ girlfriend 's new boyfriend with a gun .

In the video , Usher sits in a car outside a house where his ex @-@ girlfriend is being intimate with another man . He pulls a gun out of his glove compartment and agonizes over whether or not to enter the house . After ruminating over the different scenarios , Usher drives off at the end of the video . Jason Lipshut of Billboard found the " narrative arc " for the video to be " a bit perplexing " . Jeff Lapointe of MTV News viewed that it " depicts the darker side of human nature as Usher drives up to his girlfriend / ex @-@ girlfriends house to discover another vehicle , another man , another side of his love . In the realization of fury and anger , images distort Usher 's reality with thoughts of taking his gun and shooting the intruder . Thoughts of running away with the girl . Thoughts of driving off to never be seen . "

= = Live performances = =

Usher first performed the song on the show " Off @-@ Broadway 's ' Fuerza Bruta ' " . In the show , he entered from the dark in a white suit and black tie , and walked across a conveyor belt in beat to " Climax " . As the song 's tempo increased , he clutched his stomach as a gunshot fired and blood spread across his torso . Usher appeared on Saturday Night Live on May 12 , 2012 , to perform " Scream " and " Climax " .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from liner notes for Looking 4 Myself (2012) .

Manny Marroquin ? mixing engineer

Chris Galland ? assistant mixing engineer

Delbert Bowers ? assistant engineer

Nico Muhly ? piano , strings , string arrangements

Diplo ? vocal production

Natural ? arrangements

Mark " Exit " Goodchild ? engineer

Jacob Dennis ? assistant engineer

Jorge Velasco ? assistant engineer

Kory Aaron ? assistant engineer

Ramon Rivas ? assistant engineer

Ariel Rechtshaid ? keyboards , synthesizer

Usher ? vocals

= = Charts = =

= = Release history = =