

= Novacane (song) =

" Novacane " is the debut single by American recording artist Frank Ocean . It was released as the lead single from his mixtape Nostalgia , Ultra . The song was written by Ocean , Tricky Stewart and Victor Alexander , and produced by Stewart . Lyrically , the song narrates a tale of a young female dental student who makes a living doing porn and who recreationally uses local anesthetic drugs that she acquires from her place of study . The song explores themes of isolation , loneliness and a lack of feeling caused by numbness . The song received highly positive reviews from music critics and was listed as one of the best songs of the year by publications such as The New York Times , Spin , Ology , Zimbio and Pitchfork . Reviews praised the dark subject matter of the song , and praised Ocean 's ability to create narratives and the sonic atmosphere of the track .

When Nostalgia , Ultra was expected to be released as an EP by Def Jam , " Novacane " was released as the first single , though the EP release was later cancelled . The song peaked at number 82 on the Billboard Hot 100 and entered the top 10 on the Heatseekers Songs chart . The song received a music video directed by Australian director Nabil Elderkin released on June 16 . The highly stylized video shows a long take of Ocean sitting around in a darkly lit room . Ocean performed the song during a show in New York with alternative hip hop group OFWGKTA , and during his seven show tour through North America and Europe . It was also performed during his 14 show Channel Orange tour through North America .

= = Background = =

" Novacane " was written by Frank Ocean and Victor Alexander with co @-@ writing by Tricky Stewart who also produced the track . The song appears on his debut mixtape Nostalgia , Ultra which was released on February 18 , 2011 . When asked by The Quietus if the song drew from his personal experiences , Ocean commented that " I don 't do cocaine for breakfast ! " , a reference to the lyrics from the song . He continued , " My kitchen is usually pretty clean , you know . But you have fun with the imagery , and for me the whole concept that everything has to be ? Like , nobody gets upset with a director when a director 's film isn 't about his life . People think that with a recording artist that shit has to be like a fucking play by play of their whole life , but it 's not . It 's imagery , and a little bit of satire . " When asked if the song was an R & B track , Ocean replied that he disliked how that in the United States , " if you 're a singer and you 're black , you 're an R & B artist . Period . " Ocean stated that the song does contain R & B influences , though he didn 't feel it wasn 't entirely one in nature . The track was released as a digital download on May 31 , 2011 by Def Jam Records .

= = Composition = =

" Novacane " expresses a story through its lyrics , and has been described as " nightmarish " in nature . It has been called a " love song of sorts " , with influence taken from alternative hip hop group The Pharcyde . Lyrically the track explores a narrative in which the singer meets a girl attempting to pay her way through dental school by working in porn , or at least that 's what she told him . Protagonist meets the girl at Coachella , a musical festival which takes place in Indio , California . Ocean serves as the protagonist in the song , in love with a girl " so gone on drugs that Ocean , wanting to be close to her , has no choice but to get gone on those same drugs " . The pair get high using dental local anesthetics . Though Ocean serves as an unreliable narrator , Pitchfork wrote that he was " probably still the most reliable character in the whole song . " The song contains reference to film director Stanley Kubrick and his 1999 drama Eyes Wide Shut . In addition , it also makes a comparison of the numbness that drugs produce with the use of auto @-@ tune in the music business . Summing up the song , Pitchfork also commented that " Novacane " " is a song about personal connection but also about all the stupid numb human shit that gets in the way of personal connection , which means it 's probably the most honest song about personal connection on the radio . " Rappers Joe Budden , Tyga and Prodigy have all released freestyles to " Novacane "

= = Reception = =

" Novacane " received highly positive reviews from music critics , and has been described as the best song on Nostalgia , Ultra . Pitchfork editor Tom Breihman made the song " Best New Track " and commented that the song had a " stripped @-@ back melodic construction with Ocean crooning over a synthetic backing that practically fades into nonexistence " and that " it draws its power from tiny little details , like throwaway observations or catches in Ocean 's voice . Andrew Noz of NPR also praised the details in Ocean 's song writing , stating " in ' Novacane , ' Ocean sings about falling for a porn star who wants to be a dentist , it 's easy to believe that he 's more enticed by her dentistry aspirations than her day job . The New York Times critic Jon Caramanica described the song as a " story of meeting a cute girl at Coachella , tripping hard on intoxicants and getting quickly to love that he may or may not remember the next day " , and called the song " bliss . " Ology writer JT Langley noted that though the song was " massively depressing " and that " Frank makes a foul mouth sound sweeter than your usual R & B through his brand of crooning ... Tricky Stewart 's production adds yet another morose element to provide the more macabre side of the drugs @-@ for @-@ love @-@ lost genre . "

The song was listed as one of the best songs of the year by several publications . The New York Times placed the song amongst the best tracks of 2011 . Ology 's JT Langley placed the song amongst the best of the year , writing " Frank makes a foul mouth sound sweeter than your usual R & B through his brand of crooning , and Tricky Stewart 's production adds yet another morose element to provide the more macabre side of the drugs @-@ for @-@ love @-@ lost genre . " Pitchfork named the song the 41st best song of the year , musing that " he might be fronting like the Drakes and post- " 808s " Kanyes of the world , but there 's too much self @-@ effacement happening for Ocean not to realize the inherent humor in his own drama . If Ocean really is on that visionary Kubrick shit like he claims , then " Novacane " could very well be his Dr. Strangelove . Zimbio placed the song at number 2 on their best hip @-@ hop songs of the year list , writing " while every track on his mixtape , nostalgia , Ultra , warrants a listen , it 's the radio @-@ friendly " Novacane " that stands out as his most mature and enjoyable song to date . " Spin named the song the fifth best of the year , describing the track as " a fully evolved Drake song , where you 're slyly immersed in youthful , aww @-@ shit decadence , while simultaneously watching your dreams of recreational stripper booty and complimentary cocaine breakfasts get methodically dismantled . "

= = Promotion = =

According to Ocean , the music video for " Novacane " was a simple process . Talking about the concept of the video , he stated " I was just trying to connect or articulate visually the feeling of being numb . The feeling of wanting to feel something you can 't feel . A lot of things can cause that numbing , but in the video it was some sort of topical aesthetic and a little bit of special effects . " The video doesn 't last the entirety of the song , which director Nabil Elderkin stated was for artistic reasons . In an interview with Pitchfork , he reasoned " to me , videos don 't always have to be the length of the song . I like the idea of people thinking , ' What was that ? ' "

The video is shot as one long take , shot in a mostly dark room . Ocean sits in the room , smoking an unspecified drug . Eventually , he gets up and begins to smear an unknown substance onto his face . Random shots of pandas and rain forest imagery are also spliced into the video , and it ends with Ocean being slapped by the ghostly image of a woman . MTV further summarized the video ; " Ocean is surrounded by ghostly incarnations of beautiful women , tigers and pandas . At one point , Ocean smears what appears to be novocaine ? or Procaine ? on his solemn @-@ looking face . " Supposedly , it required several takes to achieve the correct angle for the slapping moment , and the spliced images were placed in the video because Ocean asked the director whether or not they " can we put some kind of Asian @-@ rain @-@ forest stuff in there ? " Billboard wrote that the video was " minimalist " and " eerie " . Pitchfork named the video amongst the best of the year .

Ocean embarked on a solo tour through North America and Europe to promote both the mixtape and his other musical projects . The set lists to the various shows varied , though " Novacane " was performed at all shows . Ocean performed " Novacane " and " She " with Tyler , The Creator at an OFWGKTA performance in New York . The track was included during Ocean 's setlist at the April 2012 Coachella Musical Festival . Complex magazine stated that he " left his most popular and best for last , wrapping the evening with " Novacane , " which shouts out the festival itself . " Ocean performed the track during his 14 show Channel Orange tour through North America .

= = Charts = =

The song peaked on the Billboard Hot 100 at position 82 . The song also charted at position 6 on the Billboard Heatseekers Songs chart and 17 on the Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs chart .

= = Certifications = =