

= The ArchAndroid =

The ArchAndroid is the second studio album and major label debut by American recording artist Janelle Monáe , released on May 18 , 2010 , by Wondaland Arts Society and Bad Boy Records . Production for the album took place at Wondaland Studios in Atlanta and was primarily handled by Monáe , Nate " Rocket " Wonder , and Chuck Lightning , with only one song without production by Monáe .

It consists of the second and third parts to Monáe 's Metropolis concept series . Incorporating conceptual elements of Afrofuturism and science fiction , The ArchAndroid continues the series ' fictional tale of a messianic android and features lyrical themes of love , identity , and self @-@ realization . The album has been compared to the work of artists such as David Bowie , Outkast , Prince and Michael Jackson . The album features multiple collaborations with artists ; Saul Williams , Big Boi , Of Montreal and Deep Cotton .

The album debuted at number 17 on the US Billboard 200 , selling 21 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . It achieved moderate chart success and produced three singles : " Come Alive ( The War of the Roses ) " , " Tightrope " and " Cold War " . Upon its release , The ArchAndroid received widespread acclaim from music critics , earning praise for its conceptual themes and Monáe 's eclectic musical range . It was named the best album of 2010 by several critics and earned Monáe a Grammy Award nomination for Best Contemporary R & B Album . As of February 23 , 2011 , The ArchAndroid has sold 141 @,@ 000 copies in the United States according to Nielsen SoundScan .

= = Background and recording = =

The ArchAndroid serves as the follow @-@ up to Janelle Monáe 's debut EP Metropolis : Suite I ( The Chase ) ( 2007 ) and consists of the second and third parts to her Metropolis concept series . Partly inspired by the 1927 film of the same name , the series involves the fictional tale of Cindi Mayweather , a messianic android sent back in time to free the citizens of Metropolis from The Great Divide , a secret society that uses time travel to suppress freedom and love .

In an interview for the Chicago Tribune , Monáe said that she was inspired by the quote " The mediator between the hand and the mind is always the heart " for the record . She discussed her incorporation of the android as a metaphor for a minority , whilst being the role of the story 's protagonist also . In an interview for Blues & Soul , Monáe said " she represents the MEDIATOR between the haves and the have @-@ nots , the minority and the majority . So in that way she ? s very similar to Neo , the Archangel from ' The Matrix ' . And basically her return will mean freedom for the android community " .

Monáe has said about the recording sessions " Over the last year and a half when we were recording the ArchAndroid I went through a very transformative period in my life " . Monáe completed the album in Atlanta at the Wondaland Studios and the famous asylum The Palace of the Dogs . Monáe has stated that the album signifies " breaking the chains that enslave minorities of all types " . She has said of recording the album , " Overall , this music came from various corners of the world ? from Turkey to Prague to Atlanta ? places we were on tour . While recording , we ? d experiment with different sounds . Once we became engulfed in the sound , we all had an emotional connection to the album . It has definitely transformed my way of thinking , the way that I approach the stage and overall , my life " .

= = Composition = =

= = Musical style = =

Monáe has noted that the album 's musical influences encompass " all the things I love , scores for films like Goldfinger mixed with albums like Stevie Wonder ? s Music of My Mind and David Bowie ? s Ziggy Stardust , along with experimental hip hop stuff like Outkast ? s Stankonia " . Huw Jones of

Slant Magazine described her sound as " a unique gray area between neo @-@ soul , funk , and art @-@ rock " . Music writer Greg Kot noted that the album " touches on " musical genres such as funk , hip hop , folk , electro @-@ pop , glam rock , big @-@ band jazz , rock and classical music . Conceptually , Kot described the album as " a self @-@ empowerment manifesto couched inside a futuristic ' emotion @-@ picture ' about an android ? s battle to overcome oppression . The notion of space travel and ' new worlds ' becomes a metaphor for breaking the chains that enslave minorities of all types ? a theme that has a long tradition in African @-@ American music , from Sun Ra and Parliament @-@ Funkadelic to Cannibal Ox and OutKast " . The Atlantic 's Brentin Mock called The ArchAndroid " unique , forward @-@ looking , and apoplectic ... something of a jitterbug between Prince 's 1986 movie Under the Cherry Moon and the 1977 Watts movie Killer of Sheep , and Daughters of the Dust " . Seth Colter Walls of Newsweek described the album as " rocking in parts like Dirty Mind ? era Prince , unfolding in a suite form that recalls Abbey Road 's side two , and bumping throughout with the best innovations of contemporary hip @-@ hop " .

= = = Songs = = =

Mon   has stated that the album 's lyrical themes and storyline were heavily influenced by Fritz Lang 's Metropolis . The song " Dance or Die " features performer Saul Williams and contains neo soul influences . It then transitions into " Faster " , which has new wave , gospel and retro pop influences . The song " Locked Inside " features a rhythm similar to the opening break from " Rock with You " by Michael Jackson , and it has been compared to Jackson 's music with Quincy Jones . It has also been noted for similarities to artists such as Estelle and The Jackson 5 , the track features a more mellow R & B style in contrast to the previous tracks . " Sir Greendown " continues with this theme and has been noted for its " old @-@ fashioned " pop themes . The track " Cold War " is a song with new wave tendencies which has been noted to have big hooks and " sugar fuelled " beat influences . It has been described by a few media outlets as being the next James Bond film theme tune . The track " Tightrope " features vocals from Outkast star Big Boi and it has been noted as having influences from their single " Hey Ya ! " , and a sound described as " funky soul " and neojump blues . The album 's ninth track is " Oh , Maker " , a song with English pastoral folk influences . " Come Alive ( The War of the Roses ) " has been described as having rock and punk themes . " Mushrooms & Roses " is the next track on the album and it has themes of psychedelic music and it has been noted for its influences by such songs as The Beatles ' " Strawberry Fields Forever " and Prince 's " Purple Rain " . The next track , " Make the Bus " , features Of Montreal on vocal parts and it has been compared to such artists as Placebo and George Clinton . The song " Wondaland " has a synthpop sound and has been compared to the work of Tom Tom Club . Then Deep Cotton guest stars on the song " 57821 " which has been described as " space @-@ folk " and has been compared to such works by Simon & Garfunkel . This is followed by the track " Say You 'll Go " and features an segment from " Clair de lune " by Claude Debussy .

= = Release and promotion = =

The album was released on May 18 , 2010 on Wondaland Arts Society and Bad Boy Records . For promoting the album , Mon   hosted a listening session for press and VIPs at Rubin Museum of Art in New York City on March 4 , 2010 . A short film , teaser trailer style , was released on April 14 on YouTube showing an aerial view of the fictional futuristic city of Metropolis . She joined recording artist Erykah Badu on the latter 's Out My Mind , Just in Time Tour during May to June 2010 . Mon   performed to her television debut on the Late Show with David Letterman where she performed the album 's lead single " Tightrope " to acclaim from critics . Mon   also performed the single on the television show So You Think You Can Dance . She also performed the same track on The Ellen DeGeneres Show and her mentor Sean " Diddy " Combs joined her on stage to introduce her to the show . Mon   also performed at the 2010 ESPY Awards and during her performance she was joined on stage by comedian Will Ferrell . Mon   also took to the stage on the Live with Jools Holland show where she performed the non @-@ released track " Faster " . She also performed her

single " Tightrope " on the Mo 'Nique Show . After performing her single " Tightrope " in the majority of her performances she performed her track " Cold War " live on the Last Call with Carson Daly . She has spent time supporting such acts as ; No Doubt , Paramore , and Erykah Badu . In February 2011 , Hooligans in Wondaland [ sic ] , a joint co @-@ headlining tour with Bruno Mars was announced . The concert tour was performed in North America in May and June 2011 .

= = = Singles = = =

The first official single " Tightrope " ( featuring Big Boi ) premiered on February 11 on Pitchfork Media 's website , with a companion song entitled " Cold War " debuting the following day via Monáe 's official website . On March 31 , 2010 , the video for " Tightrope " was released presenting Monáe dancing in the Palace of the Dogs also starring Big Boi . Monáe performed the song on the Late Show with David Letterman on May 18 , 2010 , The Ellen DeGeneres Show on May 26 , Lopez Tonight on May 27 , Last Call with Carson Daly on May 28 , and The Mo 'Nique Show on June 9 , 2010 . Rolling Stone named " Tightrope " the eighth best single of 2010 in its year @-@ end list .

= = Critical reception = =

The ArchAndroid received widespread acclaim from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 91 , based on 28 reviews . One of 2010 's best @-@ reviewed releases , the album received praise for its Afrofuturistic concept and Monáe 's eclectic musical range . Michael Cragg of The Guardian found its " sheer musical scope " " spellbinding " . AllMusic writer Andy Kellman praised Monáe 's creativity and called it " an extravagant 70 @-@ minute album involving more imagination , conceptual detail , and stylistic turnabouts than most gatefold prog rock epics " . Barry Walters of Spin noted German Expressionism and Afrofuturism as conceptual elements on the album and stated " She 's venturing so far away from soul that she 's come back around to it " . Chicago Tribune writer Greg Kot called it " an audacious , sometimes bewildering statement " . Jon Pareles of The New York Times commented that " Monáe gets away with most of her metamorphoses , and the sheer ambition is exhilarating even when she stretches too far " . Matthew Cole from Slant Magazine described it as " an elaborately performed and consummately freaky cyberpunk epic ... so stylistically leftfield in terms of its sound " . The A.V. Club 's Genevieve Koski wrote that " Monáe 's inexhaustible swagger and singular style sell both the high @-@ concept theatrics and the schizophrenic sonics " . Pitchfork Media 's Matthew Perpetua called the album " about as bold as mainstream music gets , marrying the world @-@ building possibilities of the concept album to the big tent genre @-@ mutating pop of Michael Jackson and Prince in their prime " . Perpetua elaborated on Monáe 's incorporation of science @-@ fiction and Afrofuturist concepts and the album 's " basic appeal " , stating :

Her imagination and iconography deepen the record as an experience and give her license to go far out , but it ultimately serves as a fun , flashy framework for pop songs with universal lyrical sentiments . The first of the two suites mainly deals with identity and self @-@ realization ; the second is essentially a set of love songs . As with all the musical genres blended into The ArchAndroid , Monáe uses the conventions of science fiction as a means of communication , tapping into mythic archetypes for their immediate resonance and power . And where many concept albums run a high risk of being pompous , cryptic , and self @-@ important , Monáe keeps things playful , lively , and accessible . It 's a delicate balancing act [ ... ] resulting in an eccentric breakthrough that transcends its novelty .

URB 's Dan Vidal called the album " a spectrum of sound ? packed and arranged perfectly into a masterfully composed ( debut ) full @-@ length body of work ... [ a ] genre @-@ defying masterpiece " . Comparing it to singer Janet Jackson 's Rhythm Nation 1814 ( 1989 ) , Brentin Mock of The Atlantic called The ArchAndroid " a smothered funk , though perhaps at times too thick , too inaccessible , but not so much I didn 't want to shake my ass " and viewed it as musically progressive , stating " Monáe has given pop music its first Toni Morrison moment , where fantasy ,

funk , and the ancestors come together for an experience that evolves one 's soul ... You really don 't know whether you want to diagram it , dance to it , or just be dumbstruck . It owes as much to Parliament @-@ Funkadelic as it does to Samuel R. Delany and Octavia E. Butler . She is finally doing what a number of artists ? particularly black artists ? have not been able to do in years , and that 's move pop music forward " .

= = Accolades = =

The album was nominated for the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary R & B Album , presented at the 53rd Annual Grammy Awards in 2011 . The ArchAndroid appeared on several music critics ' and publications ' end @-@ of @-@ year albums lists . It was named the year 's best album by several critics in their year @-@ end lists . Chicago Tribune writer Greg Kot ranked it number one on his top albums list . Nitsuh Abebe of New York ranked the album number six on his top albums list . Paste named it the second best album of 2010 in its end @-@ of @-@ year albums list . Chris Yuscavage of Vibe ranked it number five on his list of the 10 Best Albums of 2010 . NME ranked the album number 21 on its list of 75 Best Albums of 2010 . Spin placed The ArchAndroid at number six on its 40 Best Albums list for 2010 . Pitchfork Media included the album at number 12 on its year @-@ end list and called it a " hugely ambitious full @-@ length debut ? more Sign o ' the Times than Kid A " .

PopMatters named it the best album of 2010 in its year @-@ end list . MTV and Entertainment Weekly placed it at number eight on their lists of the 20 Best Albums of 2010 . The Guardian ranked the album number one on its list of 2010 's top 40 albums , stating in conclusion " No other album this year seems so alive with possibility . Mon   is young and fearless enough to try anything , gifted enough to pull almost all of it off , and large @-@ hearted enough to make it feel like a communal experience : Us rather than Me " . The ArchAndroid was voted the fourth @-@ best album in The Village Voice 's Pazz & Jop critics ' poll for 2010 . Five songs from the album were included in the poll 's singles list , including " Tightrope " ( number two ) , " Cold War " ( number 22 ) , " Wondaland " , " Locked Inside " , and " Sir Greendown " ( all tied for number 549 ) .

= = Commercial performance = =

The album debuted at number 17 on the US Billboard 200 chart , with first @-@ week sales of 21 @,@ 000 copies . The album dropped to number 40 in its second week on the Billboard 200 , and fell to number 49 on the chart in its third week , selling 7 @,@ 000 copies . Whilst its fourth week , the album moved to number 71 on the Billboard 200 . It has spent seventeen weeks on the Billboard 200 . In the week of February 23 , 2011 , the album re @-@ entered the Billboard 200 at number 171 , after selling an additional 3 @,@ 000 copies . As of February 23 , 2011 , The ArchAndroid has sold 141 @,@ 000 copies in the United States . It also entered at number four on Billboard 's Top R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Albums and at number seven on its Digital Albums chart .

In the United Kingdom , The ArchAndroid debuted at number 51 on the UK Albums Chart . The album also reached number 12 in Germany , number 15 in Denmark , number 22 in Norway , number 24 in Ireland , number 36 in Switzerland , and number 63 in Austria .

= = Track listing = =

All tracks produced by Nate " Rocket " Wonder , Chuck Lightning , and Janelle Mon   , except track 14 by Kevin Barnes and tracks 1 , 12 , and 18 by Roman GianArthur Irvin .

= = Personnel = =

Credits for The ArchAndroid adapted from AllMusic .

= = = Musicians = = =

== Production ==

== Charts ==