

= Champion ( Nicki Minaj song ) =

" Champion " is a song by Trinidadian American recording artist Nicki Minaj , taken from her second studio album , Pink Friday : Roman Reloaded ( 2012 ) . The song features additional vocals from hip hop artists Drake , Nas , and Young Jeezy . " Champion " was written by Minaj , Aubrey Graham , Jay Jenkins , and Nasir Jones , while the production and additional writing was handled by Pink Friday ( 2010 ) collaborators T @-@ Minus and Nikhil Seetharam . Musically , " Champion " is a downtempo hardcore hip hop ballad that also incorporates elements of R & B , new @-@ age , and space music . The lyrics speak of each artist 's rise to fame , as well as the trials and tribulations that it carries ; it references the death of Minaj 's cousin , Nicholas Telemaque , who was murdered near his Brooklyn home on July 3 , 2011 .

" Champion " garnered praise from music critics , with the majority declaring it a stand @-@ out track . The song is notable for the return of Minaj 's original low @-@ key sound , as well as her tame " gimmick @-@ free " delivery as opposed to her eccentric " Roman " songs . Critics generally praised the song for its serious tone and introspective nature . Minaj performed the song live for the first time on 106 & Park on April 3 , 2012 , along with " Beez in the Trap " , and " Roman Reloaded " .

= = Production = =

" Champion " was written by Minaj , along with T @-@ Minus , Nikhil S. , Drake , Young Jeezy , and Nas , with production handled by T @-@ Minus and Nikhil S. , who had previously worked with Minaj on her debut studio album Pink Friday ( 2010 ) . Minaj had wanted several artists to appear on the song , including fellow New York rapper Nas . She had stated that she did not think that she could get Nas on the song , saying " He 's always been so exclusive . He doesn 't work with everybody and I respect people that are like that . They take pride in their craft . " Minaj told Vibe , " I keep saying to be from Queens and to end up having him ... We know how picky he is [ for features ] . He said ' I like the song , I 'm a do it , you can wait ' til Monday and I got you ' and he kept his word . He murked it , for me to wait for a feature and it be that and murk the song and finish the song that way ... I was amazed . " After hearing the song , Nas agreed to be on the track , and sent his verse back to Minaj the following Monday . After collaborating , Nas said that he had fallen in love with the song : " Nicki hit us up , I got love , so it was nothin ' --I did the record .... If I feel it , I can get on it . I heard the track . I felt it . I loved it . " Another artist Minaj wanted on " Champion " was long @-@ time idol and fellow female rapper Lauryn Hill . " I wanted to get her on ' Champion ' ... That would have been crazy , right ? She was my fave . [ ... ] Lauryn to me is the goddess . I 'd love to meet her . I 'm pretty sure she 's heard me talk about her a billion times . " Although Minaj vouched for Hill to appear on the track , plans were never finalized and the collaboration ultimately fell through .

Recording of " Champion " took place at Conway Studios , in Los Angeles , California , as well as Jungle City Studios in New York City , New York . Mixing was handled by Jon Sher and Noel Cadastre at Conway Studios . Minaj was unsure if he would accept her offer to be featured on " Champion " , but after sending him the song , Nas replied back with his verse via e @-@ mail . On March 28 , 2012 , " Champion " leaked onto the internet six days ahead of its official release . In the following hours after the leak of " Champion " , the contents of the entire album were leaked online . On May 24 , 2012 , a poll was posted on Minaj 's official website asking fans to choose the next single ( s ) . The poll was divided into three categories . The second category prompted fans to choose between " Champion " , " HOV Lane " , and " I Am Your Leader " . " Champion " had the most votes and won the poll . " HOV Lane " came in second place and " I Am Your Leader " came in third .

= = Composition = =

" Champion " is a relatively slow @-@ paced , retrospective downtempo ballad that draws heavily

from hardcore hip hop . It is also influenced by other genres , such as R & B , new @-@ age , and space music . The " anthemic " and " inspiring " song features a low @-@ key , woozy , and snaky production , accompanied by prominent military @-@ style drums , heavy synths , and rough , hard strewn beats . " Champion " has been described as one of the few songs that Minaj 's delivery is " calm and collected " as opposed to her eccentric " Roman " tracks . The rise to fame , the trials and tribulations that ensue , and celebration are prominent themes that are discussed in the lyrics . Minaj also makes reference to her deceased cousin , Nicholas Telemaque , who was shot and killed near his Brooklyn home on July 3 , 2011 , in the line " ' Cause they killed my little cousin , Nicholas / But my memories only have happy images . " Multiple critics felt the lyrical content of " Champion " was the most sincere on the album . Lewis Corner of Digital Spy called them " genuinely heartbreaking " , and Alex Macpherson of Fact described them as " undeniably moving " .

= = Critical reception = =

" Champion " was met with critical acclaim by music critics , with many calling it an album highlight . Andrew Hampp of Billboard gave the track a positive review , stating Minaj " Sheds light in her journey from struggle to success . " While reviewing the album , Jody Rosen of Rolling Stone declared the song " beamingly triumphant " . Global Grind reviewer Brittany Lewis gave the song a very positive review , saying : " This retrospective track explores Nicki 's more serious side and details the trials and tribulations of Nicki 's now solidified success " , and later went on to say that " Champion " will make the listener evaluate their own life . Both the reviewer from The Washington Post and Mesfin Fekadu of The San Francisco Chronicle gave the song a positive review , calling it " top @-@ notch " . Adam Graham of The Detroit News said the song would please fans of early Minaj , while going on to praise her rap @-@ heavy delivery . Trent Fitzgerald of Popcrush was positive towards " Champion " , calling it the " biggest " song on the album , as well as a noting its potential commercial success . " Champion " was labeled as the most impressive hardcore hip hop song on the album , as well as being " anthemic " by Andy Gill of The Independent . In his review of Pink Friday : Roman Reloaded , ' Nathan S of DJ Booth said : " It has to be said that ' Champion ' , featuring an excellent Nas verse , is one of Nicki 's most engaging tracks in memory , precisely because she drops the posturing and fame @-@ hunting . It 's proof that behind all the acting is a legitimately talented artist . " Although , not all reviews were positive . Matthew Cole of Slant Magazine criticized the vocalist 's performance of the verses , claiming they were " incapable " . Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times gave the song a mixed review , highlighting Nas ' verse , while mildly criticizing Minaj 's . Entertainment Weekly named it one of the best songs on the album along with " I Am Your Leader " . XXL Magazine stated that " Though many of the early songs [ on the album ] lack real substance , the records remain generally exciting - ' I Am Your Leader ' , alongside Rick Ross and Cam 'ron , ' Beez in the Trap ' with 2 Chainz , and the triumphant ' Champion ' featuring Nas , Drake and Young Jeezy are all memorable moments . "

= = Live performances = =

Minaj performed " Champion " for the first time on 106 & Park on April 3 , 2012 , along with " Roman Reloaded " , " HOV Lane " , " I Am Your Leader " , " Beez in the Trap " , " Right by My Side " and " Fire Burns " . She performed " Champion " alongside " Beez in the Trap " with 2 Chainz at the 2012 BET Awards . The rapper also performed " Champion " on the Australian and Asian legs of her Pink Friday Tour .

= = Credits and personnel = =

Recording

Recorded at Conway Studios , Los Angeles , California ; Jungle City Studios , New York City , New York

Personnel

Credits adapted from Pink Friday : Roman Reloaded album liner notes .

= = Chart positions = =