

= Nostalgia , Ultra =

Nostalgia , Ultra (stylized as nostalgia , ULTRA. and occasionally nostalgia / ultra) is the second mixtape by American recording artist Frank Ocean . It was released on February 16 , 2011 . Ocean was inspired to make the mixtape , after Hurricane Katrina in his native New Orleans and his subsequent relocation to Los Angeles . After joining alternative hip hop group Odd Future in 2010 , he self @-@ released the mixtape , without initial promotion . Nostalgia , Ultra has a unique R & B aesthetic and features surreal themes and nostalgic lyrics . The songs mostly focus on interpersonal relationships , personal reflection , and social commentary . Following its release , the mixtape received rave reviews from music critics . The cover features a picture of a bright orange 1980s BMW E30 M3 , Ocean 's " dream car " , in plain sight amidst lush greenery .

In May 2011 , Def Jam announced its plans to release the mixtape as an EP on July 26 , 2011 . However , the release of the EP was indefinitely delayed in July 2011 and has since been cancelled . Two singles were released from the aborted EP version : " Novacane " , and " Swim Good " . Both songs received music videos directed by Australian director Nabil Elderkin . Ocean embarked on a solo concert tour through North America and Europe to promote the record , playing a total of 7 shows . In addition , his 2012 performance at the Coachella Music Festival included several live renditions from the release including " Strawberry Swing " and " LoveCrimes " .

The mixtape appeared on several music critics ' and publications ' end @-@ of @-@ year albums lists . Controversy arose in March 2012 over the song " American Wedding " , a remake of the song " Hotel California " by American rock band Eagles . Recording artist Kanye West was reportedly a fan of the mixtape , which led to Ocean appearing on the album Watch the Throne . Subsequently , Ocean collaborated with artists Beyoncé Knowles and Jay @-@ Z after they were introduced to the mixtape through West . Following its release , both Ocean and the mixtape have developed a cult following . The mixtape was followed by the release of Ocean 's debut album Channel Orange to similar critical acclaim in 2012 .

= = Background = =

Frank Ocean was born in New Orleans , Louisiana . He made the decision to pursue a career in music at a young age , and as a teen , he did neighborhood chores to fund his early studio sessions . After Hurricane Katrina hit his hometown of New Orleans , Ocean moved to Los Angeles to pursue a recording career . He initially had problems maintaining a career while juggling a job , due to spending too much time in the recording studios , making him late for his jobs . He began to write songs and he sold them to other recording artists ; selling his first song to Noel Gourdin at the age of 19 . Discussing as to why he chose to write songs , Ocean commented that " I feel at a higher level of consciousness when I 'm being creative . "

Eventually , he landed songwriting gigs for established artists like John Legend and Justin Bieber where he made substantially more money . In late 2009 , he met producer Tricky Stewart , who helped Ocean sign a contract with Def Jam Recordings as a solo artist . However , he was initially unable to build a relationship with the company . In protest , Ocean joined the rap collective Odd Future which introduced him to artists such as Tyler , The Creator and Hodgy Beats . His debut song was " SteamRoller " on the Domo Genesis album Rolling Papers . Ocean garnered acclaim and generated interest while in the group , and Rolling Stone magazine 's Jonah Weiner called him a " gifted avant @-@ R & B smoothie " . During his time with the group he recorded and self @-@ released Nostalgia , Ultra without any pre @-@ release promotion on his Tumblr account .

= = Music and lyrics = =

The mixtape samples songs from Radiohead , Coldplay , MGMT , Mr. Hudson and The Eagles , which Ocean sings over . Ocean , when uploading the album to iTunes , labeled it as bluegrass and death metal , out of arbitrariness . When asked about why he uploaded the songs in that way , he replied ; " I don 't want to seem like I have a cause against genres , or maybe I do ... Bluegrass is

swag . Bluegrass is all the way swag . " Ocean described the making of his mixtape as a labor of love , stating that " It was like difficult to make . Not like writing the songs [or] arranging the songs . That had a level of difficulty , too . But just piecing together all the levels to do it at the level , the quality of records I wanted to make ? But , it was a process I appreciate so much . "

In his own words , Ocean calls the album " nostalgic . " He explains , " it 's a longing for the past . That 's what this record felt like . " The lyrical content , according to Ocean , relates to heartbreak and other familiar tropes of interpersonal relationships : " I wasn 't trying to make a record that people could relate to . I was just trying to make a record with the shit that I wanted to express . The shit that I wanted to get off my chest . [...] A lot of this record is influenced by one relationship , but I don 't owe that whole project to one situation . It doesn 't matter what the details of it are . " Discussing the writing process behind the album , he mused that he was just inspired to tell stories . He continued , " you gotta make sure the listener is listening to you , so if you put it into a song , often times , if the song is striking enough , then you can really deliver the story most effectively while keeping the ear of the listener the whole time . I guess it all starts with the stories for me . "

When asked by The Quietus if the songs from the album drew from his personal experiences , Frank commented " 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 he made R & B music , 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 songs on the mixtape do contain R & B influences , but that it is not an R & B album entirely .

= = Songs = =

The album begins with a melodic cover of " Strawberry Swing " by English alternative rock band Coldplay . Connor O 'Neill of The Miscellany News writes that the cover begins the album with " so much atmosphere you almost melt into it " and then " spreads you over an apocalyptic swan song " . The song ends abruptly with the rude sound of an alarm clock , followed by the " nightmarish " song " Novacane " . 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 . Ocean 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 . Ocean serves as an unreliable narrator .

Several interludes are placed throughout the album , named after video games , such as Street Fighter , Metal Gear Solid , GoldenEye 007 and Soulcalibur . This is reported to give the album a more nostalgic feel ; the record is " held together by tiny interludes named after 1990s video games in which the unmistakable sounds of a cassette player rewinding , fast @-@ forwarding , and stopping are heard " . On the track " We All Try " , Ocean speaks out against homophobia . According to The Guardian , " Odd Future 's frequent use of the word ' faggot ' unsettled liberal stomachs " , and that " Ocean was brave enough to stand alone once more , declaring on ' We All Try ' : ' I believe that marriage isn 't between a man and woman , but between love and love ' . On the same song he reveals his opinion of the pro @-@ choice debate : ' I believe a woman 's temple , gives her the right to choose / But baby don 't abort . ' " He obliquely " announces his support of a woman 's right to choose and gay marriage " , both of which are " hardly typical r & b tropes . " The song contains " smooth , bedroom @-@ type grooves " .

Pitchfork Media wrote that " in a skit called " Bitches Talkin " , the ladies tell him to cut it out with the damn Radiohead , while " Optimistic " is playing in the background ; in ' Songs 4 Women ' , he obliges ? he 's an indie kid when it comes to alienation but a pragmatist when it comes to sex . " " Songs 4 Women " is a song where Ocean can 't decide whether to rue or revel in his conflicted feelings about women . The song offers a self @-@ effacing perspective , with a numbed ,

restrained delivery . Lyrically the track expresses a narrative where he tries to arrange an after @-@ school meeting in his dad 's empty house and brags about harmonizing to Otis , Isley and Marvin . He laments that his woman doesn 't listen to him or his music : " It 's like she never heard of me . " In spite of the " suave delivery and the song 's inherent tunefulness " , the object of Ocean 's affection soon ditches his love songs in favor of those sung " by real R & B big @-@ shots (Drake included) " .

The mixtape also contains several references to American director Stanley Kubrick and his films , most notably Eyes Wide Shut . Nicole Kidman 's adulterous soliloquy from the film can be heard during the song " Lovecrimes " , adding a sense of manic dread . " The film is also referenced on the track " Novacane " , where Ocean also sings that he 's " feelin like Stanley Kubrick " . Following that is the track " There Will Be Tears " . The song has been described as emotional in nature , containing a glitchy beat sampled from Mr Hudson , with heavily synthesised vocals . " There Will Be Tears " has a thundering bass flat over a hyperactive 808 beat . Ocean sings about not having a father ; " Hide my face , hide my face , can 't let ' em see me crying / Cause these boys didn 't have no fathers neither / And they weren 't crying " , where he " lets his guard down completely . "

" Swim Good " has been called an " astonishing suicide song " and that Ocean finds himself dressed in black (' Like I 'm ready for a funeral ') , tormented by heartbreak and on the verge of driving his car into the sea . The song is a grim escape fantasy describing a murder suicide , which " has the singer driving his car to the shore , his trunk ' bleeding ' with ' broken hearts ' . " The hook of the song ends with the refrain of " I feel like a ghost , no Swayze , ever since I lost my baby . " " Dust " uses books as an extended metaphor for memories and experience , with lines like " so many pages I wrote , wish I could revise ' em / But there 's no erasing " .

The penultimate track is " American Wedding " , a 7 @-@ minute remake of " Hotel California " by American rock band Eagles . The track expresses an extended tale of a shotgun marriage and subsequent divorce . Its here that we " might get a little peek into the psychology of the man shirking the foremost genre for love songs : He doesn 't believe in love . At least not in the United States . " The song has a " totally unexpected ending for a song told as a flashback . " The album ends with " Nature Feels " , a reinterpretation of MGMT 's " Electric Feel " . The song exhibits Ocean as an " openly fun character " , opening the song with the line " I 've been meaning to fuck you in the garden . " According to Pitchfork , no matter the mood , Ocean is always " quick to add fine particulars that make his songs his songs " . Pitchfork called " Nature Feel " an " MGMT @-@ sampling Garden of Eden fuck ode " .

= = Critical reception = =

Nostalgia , Ultra received critical acclaim from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the mixtape received an average score of 83 , based on nine reviews , which indicates " universal acclaim " . Anupa Mistry of Exclaim ! called it " sophisticated " , " pulsing and expansive " , and wrote that Ocean 's " alt sensibilities " prove " musically intuitive " AllMusic 's Andy Kellman felt that Ocean 's uniqueness lies in his " wistful , often self @-@ effacing perspective and numbed , restrained delivery " rather than his production choices , which he found " neither exceptional nor particularly left of center " . AbsolutePunk praised the beats as " unique , well @-@ executed originals " and commented that songs such as " Swim Good " and " Strawberry Swing " show that " Ocean 's voice is as great as his knack for writing thoughtful pop songs . " Steven Hyden of The A.V. Club called the mixtape " dark , playful , a little tasteless , and absolutely riveting " . Connor O 'Neill of The Miscellany News wrote that , " by funneling [the primary means of R & B decadence] through his diverse and diverging palette , Ocean literalizes both his nostalgic impulses and the odd future of which he is a part . " The Village Voice 's Sean Fennessey called him " an intuitive r & b stylist , with a firm sense of song structure . " Rudy K. of Sputnikmusic felt that the mixtape sounds " so fresh , so real " for a member from Odd Future and stated , " With Ocean , it never sounds contrived . "

In his review for MSN Music , Robert Christgau described Ocean 's " romantic laments " as " models of texture , respect , and profound loss , their beats subtle , seductive , weird , and seized

like time whether he 's deploying ' songs for women ' that are soon trumped by Drake 's , not feeling a porn @-@ moonlighting dental student and her ' novacaine , ' or annulling a courthouse wedding solemnized just before his bride turned in her term paper on hijab . " Pitchfork Media 's Ryan Dombal commented that " There are distinct elements of Drake 's melancholic paranoia and The @-@ Dream 's high melodrama , too . But there 's also a heady surreality surrounding Nostalgia , Ultra that makes it unique . " Jon Caramanica of The New York Times called it " slick and intuitive ... full of astral soul that owes debts to Terence Trent D 'Arby , Pharrell Williams , even Drake " , adding that " [Ocean] sings casually but precisely , stretching out syllables as if he 's forgetting to let them go . " NPR 's Andrew Noz commented that " It 's his songwriting , smart and subtle , that sets Ocean far apart from that pack " , adding that " The finest moments of Nostalgia , Ultra orbit the same soul @-@ baring and minutiae @-@ obsessed space as Marvin Gaye 's breakup opus Here , My Dear or any number of Prince 's more idiosyncratic ballads " . No Ripcord 's Charlie Jebb wrote that " Nostalgia , Ultra has more than enough good stuff to establish Ocean as an artist to watch , " calling it " [an] R & B record with crossover potential without sacrificing soul that creates a complete picture of its author , warts and all . "

= = Planned reissue = =

On May 19 , 2011 , Ocean 's record label Def Jam announced its plans to release an EP containing tracks from nostalgia , Ultra . Ocean announced that the re @-@ release would have been titled Nostalgia , Lite and that it was expected to feature seven tracks . The EP was originally scheduled to be released on July 26 , 2011 , however , Ocean noted on his official Tumblr page on July 24 , 2011 that Nostalgia , Lite would no longer be released on July 26 and that the project was cancelled . Both " Swim Good " and " Novacane " were set to be featured on the release . Talking about which other songs would make it onto the reissue , Ocean commented that " The Eagles sample ' American Wedding ' has no chance in hell of being cleared " . He continued , " Coldplay sample ' Strawberry Swing ' , possibly . I hear ' possibly ' from people who say they know . MGMT , those guys seem chill . I heard they heard the record ' Nature Feels ' and they liked it a lot , so hopefully that can go some way . " Other tracks on the reissue were set to be " Acura Integurl " , which appeared on the unofficial release The Lonny BreauX Collection , and " Whip Appeal " which was released in 2012 . In 2012 , Ocean commented again on his blog that " Nostalgia Lite is " never coming out . "

= = Singles = =

" Novacane " was officially released as the first single from Nostalgia , Ultra on May 31 , 2011 . " Novacane " first charted on the US Billboard Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs on May 11 , 2011 at number 65 . The subsequent week , it rose to number 58 , and on its third week , the single rose to number 52 . In its fourth week , it rose to number 17 . The music video for " Novacane " was released on June 16 , directed by Australian director Nabil Elderkin . When discussing the video , Ocean commented " 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 song also charted on the Billboard Hot 100 at position 82 and at 6 on the Billboard Heatseekers Songs .

" Swim Good " was released as the second single from the mixtape on October 18 , 2011 , and the song charted at position 70 on the Billboard R & B chart for three weeks . It entered the top 40 in Belgium . The music video (directed by Nabil Elderkin) was released via Ocean 's tumblr account on September 16 . Ocean performed " Novacane " and " She " with Tyler , The Creator at an Odd Future performance in New York . During Odd Future 2012 's tour promoting The Odd Future Tape Vol . 2 , Frank performed with the group .

= = Tour = =

Ocean embarked on a six @-@ date concert tour from November 5 to November 15 , 2011 , through North America and Europe to promote both the mixtape and his other musical projects . Originally , six shows were scheduled with a New York performance at the Bowery Ballroom on the 6th . The original date for that show was postponed to the 27th , and that an additional show on the 28th had been added . The reported reason was because Ocean was sick . The performances featured no opening act , and the only performer on stage at any given time was Ocean .

Rolling Stone reviewed the debut show , calling Ocean awkward at times , though they stated that " fortunately his dispassionately told stories of love and loss in a world that assumes impermanence could handle the load of the audience . " MTV commented that it took Ocean " some time to warm up to the crowd " at his debut New Orleans performance , though they noted the performance started the tour to a " promising start " . MTV later reviewed the New York performance on the 27th and called Ocean " an audience charmer " . The New York Times critic Jon Caramanica gave a positive review to the same New York performance , calling Ocean a " versatile singer " and writing that " in his elegant , savvy , slightly crooked postsoul , he shifts sneakily between the two topics , singing about love as a byproduct of music and using the subject of music to dig deep about love . "

The set lists to the various shows varied , though singles " Swim Good " and " Novacane " were performed at all shows . Others tracks like " LoveCrimes " , " Dust " and " American Wedding " were performed at a majority of the shows , and " Strawberry Swing " " We All Try " were performed four times each . Portions of " No Church in the Wild " and " Made in America " , along with " I Miss You " and " Thinkin Bout You " were also performed . The performances of " American Wedding " were accompanied by comedic moments where Ocean played Guitar Hero . Ocean performed at the April 2012 Coachella Musical Festival .

= = Impact = =

Before the release of Nostalgia , Ultra , Ocean was a relatively unknown artist who made a majority of his money from ghostwriting . Within six months , it was noted that Ocean had become the " go @-@ to vocal hook man . " The release of the mixtape interested rap recording artist and producer Kanye West , who was reported to be a big fan . West invited Ocean to write and sing on two songs off Watch the Throne , a collaborative record with rapper Jay @-@ Z. Frank wrote and provided vocals on tracks " No Church in the Wild " and " Made in America " . Singer Beyoncé Knowles heard of the mixtape through her husband Jay @-@ Z and was a fan of it . She subsequently invited Ocean to co @-@ write " I Miss You " for her album 4 . Discussing how she first heard of Ocean and Nostalgia , Ultra , she commented ; " Jay @-@ Z had a CD playing in the car one Sunday when we were driving to Brooklyn . I noticed his tone , his arrangements , and his storytelling . I immediately reached out to him ? literally the next morning . I asked him to fly to New York and work on my record .

West also offered to appear on Ocean 's debut album , but Ocean refused , saying " as much as I want to work with you ? I kind of want to do this without you . I kind of want to do it on my own . " Rapper Nas was also a fan of the mixtape , writing that " He 's new , he 's fresh . He doesn 't sound fly @-@ by @-@ night . The moment you hear it ? I hear what he 's sayin ' , and I relate . " Nas also stated on Twitter that he and Ocean were collaborating on a song from Nas 's tenth studio album Life Is Good , though the material never made the album . Chicago born rapper Lupe Fiasco expressed a positive opinion of the release too .

Ocean quickly became Odd Future 's main singing highlight , providing vocal hooks on Odd Future albums like BlackenedWhite , Goblin , and The Odd Future Tape Vol . 2 . Ocean toured with the group on several occasions and made appearances during their shows . On January 5 , 2012 , the BBC announced that Ocean had finished in second place of the BBC 's Sound of 2012 poll . In addition , MTV described the mixtape as a " cult classic " . On August 2 , 2012 , the music video for " Swim Good " was nominated for three MTV Video Music Awards : Best Direction and Best Male Video , with Ocean being nominated for Best New Artist for his work with the video .

= = Accolades = =

The record was nominated for Best International Album at the 2012 Swedish Grammis Awards . Despite being a mixtape , Nostalgia , Ultra was featured on several music critics ' and publications ' end @-@ of @-@ year albums lists . Pitchfork Media put it number 35 on its list of the year 's top albums , writing that " Chris Breau , who goes by Frank Ocean , is a male R & B singer with male R & B contradictions : As much as he wants to listen to his heart , he can 't completely ignore his dick . " The Guardian writer Tim Jonze named it the year 's third best album , musing " unafraid to tackle suicide , abortion and absent fathers , this free mixtape introduced one of our most refreshing new R & B stars . " The A.V. Club ranked the album number 15 on its year @-@ end list , commenting that " Nostalgia , Ultra became a runaway Internet hit that showed off Ocean 's coaxing croon as well as his outré songwriting skills . Sweetly romantic , yet pensive and moody , Nostalgia is an R & B record for manics , from the hazy lament of ' Novacane ' to the inward @-@ looking contradiction of ' Songs For Women ' to the clever pop remakes of The Eagles ' ' Hotel California ' and Coldplay 's ' Strawberry Swing ' . "

Rolling Stone named it the 24th best album of the year , writing " the debut mixtape from the 24 @-@ year @-@ old singer (and Odd Future member) is an avant @-@ R & B killer . " Complex named it the fourth best album of the year and the second best mixtape . Time named it the fifth best album of the year , and wrote that " Ocean also weaves audio of a tape recorder in rewind , video games and Nicole Kidman 's adulterous monologue from Eyes Wide Shut into his songs to give the album a personal feel ? as if Ocean were gifting us with a collection of sounds that he finds emotionally meaningful . " Spin named it the 41st best album of the year while Mojo placed the album at number 49 . Robert Christgau named it the fourth best album of the year in his Pazz & Jop dean 's list .

The track Novacane also received widespread critical acclaim . It was listed as one of the best songs of the year by The New York Times , Ology , Spin , Zimbio , and Pitchfork Media named both the video and the song as amongst the best of the year .

= = Controversy = =

In March 2012 , controversy arose over the track " American Wedding " , which samples The Eagles ' song " Hotel California " . Don Henley of the Eagles " had threatened legal action over Ocean 's track " , claiming that Ocean 's version of the song was illegal . The track was widely removed from the internet following this controversy , being removed from music sharing sites such as YouTube . A spokesman for the band announced that a lawsuit would be filed against Ocean if performed the song live .

" Frank Ocean did not merely ' sample ' a portion of the Eagles ' Hotel California ; he took the whole master track , plus the song 's existing melody , and replaced the lyrics with his own . This is not creative , let alone ' intimidating . ' It 's illegal . For the record , Don Henley has not threatened or instituted any legal action against Frank Ocean , although the Eagles are now considering whether they should . "

Several publications noted that the song was released for free on a non @-@ profitable mixtape , and that " live covers of famous songs are common in live performances " , and that sampling is a common practice on mixtapes . Ocean responded to the controversy via his tumblr account :

" He (They) threatened to sue if I perform it again . I think that 's fuckin awesome . I guess if I play it at Coachella it 'll cost me a couple hundred racks . If I don 't show up to court , it 'll be a judgement against me & will probably show up on my credit report . Oh well . I try to buy my shit cash anyway . They asked that I release a statement expressing my admiration for Mr. Henley , along with my assistance pulling it off the web as much as possible . Shit 's weird . Ain 't this guy rich as fuck ? Why sue the new guy ? I didn 't make a dime off that song . I released it for free . If anything I 'm paying homage . "

= = Track listing = =

Sample credits

- " Strawberry Swing " contains samples of the song of the same name by Coldplay .
- " Bitches Talkin ' " contains samples from " Optimistic " as performed by Radiohead .
- " Lovecrimes " contains dialogue excerpts from the film " Eyes Wide Shut " .
- " There Will Be Tears " contains samples of " There Will Be Tears " as performed by Mr Hudson .
- " Swim Good " contains additional background vocals by Tyler , The Creator .
- " American Wedding " contains samples from " Hotel California " as performed by Eagles .
- " Nature Feels " contains samples from " Electric Feel " as performed by MGMT , and uncredited background vocals by Brandy and Rich King .