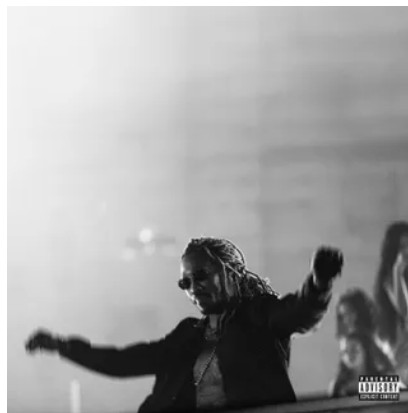


ALBUMS

High Off Life

Future

2020



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GENRE: Rap

LABEL: Epic

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The Atlanta icon releases another hour of music rendering tortured hedonism with painterly detail, meticulous production, and melancholy melody.

Future's legacy is secure: as one of the most influential artists of the past decade, he's managed to conquer the streets and the charts, crafting a sound that reshaped not just rap but pop music. All the while, he's maintained a pace that few of his peers could match—

depending on how you count, he's released somewhere between two and three dozen full-lengths in the decade since he first started calling himself Future. In the years since his creative hot streak peaked with DS2, he's continued releasing music at a steady clip. But where Future spent the first half of the 2010s relentlessly innovating, he's been content to spend the latter half tinkering with his signature sound.

High Off Life doesn't buck this trend in any significant way. It's another hour of music that renders tortured hedonism with painterly detail, meticulous production, and melancholy melody. There are exotic cars painted in candy-colored hues, designer sandals worn casually, women treated as if they were disposable, drugs sold and consumed. There are songs that glitter like a suitcase full of diamonds, songs that could soundtrack a crime procedural, and songs that will sound great when reduced to basslines blaring out of passing cars. Except for the previously released singles that pad the end of the record in keeping with industry norms, *High Off Life* is better-paced and sequenced than most of Future's recent releases—the whole thing seems to glide by frictionlessly.

In interviews, Future spoke about his previous album, *The Wizrd*, as a capstone for his career up to that point, setting the stage for a coming pivot. Sadly, *High Off Life* does not represent this major shift, though we do get a few new ideas. The errant guitar strums and saloon piano on "Too Comfortable" draw out Future's inner bluesman, while on the Bezos-baiting "Trillionaire," he goes bar-for-bar with YoungBoy Never Broke Again, discovering the sort of chemistry with his offspring that normally eludes him. On "All Bad," Future visits the cartoony world of Lil Uzi Vert's *Eternal Atake*, and it's genuinely refreshing hearing the normally morose rapper have this much fun.

That said, Future is still at his best when mining the depths of inner turmoil. On the Travis Scott-featuring "Solitaires," Future adopts an unhinged flow and jokes about needing a psychiatrist. On "Ridin Strikers," he owns up to his reputation as a dirtbag, admitting he "won't enjoy life if it ain't toxic." But at the album's end, we finally hear what sounds like a breakthrough. "Accepting My Flaws" comes spilling out of Future in one long verse, like a confession. Over a spectral choir sample, he acknowledges struggles

with addiction, tries to shake off a worldview shaped by the streets, and stands in awe of a partner willing to accept him, flaws and all. "I've been suffering withdrawals, missing out on real love," he admits. It sounds like he's done running from himself.

During a deadly pandemic that has much of the world on lockdown, the title *High Off Life* can feel a bit flippant. It could have been worse: Future apparently scrapped plans to title the album "Life Is Good," after [the Drake collaboration](#) that finds a home here as a tacked-on single. To his credit, Future has provided some context around the title ("So many tragedies and catastrophes and everything is going on in the world. And you want to enjoy life, as long as you have it," [he recently told XXL](#)) but even so, his tone-deafness is unsurprising. His appeal has always lay in an ability to craft a world that's not just self-contained, but airtight. Might Future still dramatically reinvent himself? He's certainly pulled it off before. But as *High Off Life* suggests, perhaps the more impressive feat would be reckoning with what he's already become.