

commARCH Hip-Hop News - July 24, 2021

So Kanye didn't drop his album. Am I surprised? No. Disappointed? Yes. I, along with millions of others once again fell into his trap. Whether it was intentional or not, who knows. The listening event at Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta went on as planned, albeit starting about 90 minutes late. From the reaction on social media sites such as Twitter and Reddit to what was played during the event, many did not enjoy it very much, with frequent criticisms being the lack of drums and sloppy mixing. This could very well have been the motivating factor for Kanye to have not released it, which could turn out to be a good thing. There were some refreshing surprises, however, such as a feature from longtime Kanye collaborator Jay-Z, which had allegedly been recorded four hours earlier. This news began fueling speculation that a *Watch The Throne 2* could be on the way. So when can we expect *Donda* to drop? The short answer is no one really knows for certain considering how unpredictable Mr. West is. However, Justin LaBoy, a podcaster who has recently had some inside knowledge of the doings of Kanye says that the new release date is August 6th, roughly two weeks from now.

Something that did drop on Friday, however, was Lil Nas X's most recent track, featuring Jack Harlow entitled INDUSTRY BABY. Simultaneously releasing with the song was the music video, which was truly something to behold. I can guarantee that you have never seen anything quite like it, as Lil Nas X is just creating his own path in the music industry, doing it his way. I would highly recommend checking it out. If there's one thing that has always impressed me about him, aside from his authenticity, is his music videos. The production is always top tier and no stone is left unturned.

Also beginning this week, I would like to begin a new segment for everyone who is reading this to listen to my most listened to song of this week. This week, the tune is Clarity by Mac Miller. Whether you have heard it before or not, hearing it play is pure bliss. While listening, keep in mind that Mac was barely 20 years old when it came out.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - July 31, 2021

This was a week in hip-hop with no shortage of shameful controversy, but in the midst of all that, there were plenty of bright spots as well. I'll start with some happier news from within the genre before I bring it down a bit, then back up one more time.

Top Dawg Entertainment's Isaiah Rashad quenched the thirst of his fans on July 30th with the release of his first album in nearly five years, *The House Is Burning*. The sixteen track project employs features from Lil Uzi Vert, Duke Deuce, Smino, 4r Da Locals, Amindi, Jay Worthy, Iamdoechii, YGTUT, 6LACK, and TDE labelmates Jay Rock, SZA, and Kal Banx. I will say, I feel that this album is much more for late nights when you're just trying to unwind from the long day and think about life's bigger questions than it is for blasting during the day when you're trying to be productive; there are quite a few heavy lyrics throughout. All that being said, this is one of my top albums of 2021 thus far, it feels extremely complete - which I would hope it would after five years of being put together.

▶ Isaiah Rashad - Lay Wit Ya ft. Duke Deuce (Official Music Video)

The most notable hip hop festival in the world, Rolling Loud, took place last weekend from July 23-25 in Miami, Florida. Headlined by A\$AP Rocky, Travis Scott, and Post Malone, it also featured performances from many of the big names in the game that have released music in the last couple of years. The festival seemingly went off without a hitch, aside from the one incident that really dampened the weekend and still has plenty of people talking. DaBaby, the eleventh most listened to artist in the world on Spotify, made it clear the kind of person that he is when he made several unprompted homophobic and misogynistic comments in the middle of his set in Miami. I won't repeat his words here as they are quite explicit, but if you're curious, they are easy to find through Google. His comments sparked some major backlash from many notable names in the music industry including Elton John, Madonna, Questlove, and Dua Lipa. Unfortunately, there were some artists who publicly came out in support of the hateful words including T.I. and Boosie Badazz. I, along with millions of others won't be listening to his music as frequently and with as much enjoyment. Homophobia in hip-hop has been a problem within the genre for the entirety of its existence and it is hard to see this issue coming to an end anytime soon. It's almost as if these discriminatory artists feel threatened by artists like Lil Nas X who have no fear in being themselves. Hopefully inclusivity within the culture reigns supreme in the coming years.

▶ Rolling Loud Miami 2021 Aftermovie


Lollapalooza, an annual music festival in Chicago took place this past weekend and is actually still going on as of this writing. It was available to stream live on Hulu and I was able to catch

Tyler, The Creator's performance to cap off Friday's festivities. All I can say is WOW. Easily one of the best live performances I've seen (even if it wasn't in person). The pure passion that Tyler has for his music is so admirable. To top things off, he even performed some of his earliest music, which if released in today's day and age simply would not be received well at all. His evolution as an artist has been so great to bear witness to over the past decade or so.

 Tyler, the Creator Full Performance Live @ Lollapalooza 2021

In the weekly Kanye update, not too much certainty is out yet surrounding the release of *DONDA*. In an Instagram post on Tuesday, he shared a photo showing his living situation at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta where he is completing the album. From what I could tell, it looks like a deluxe prison cell, probably because the stadium isn't used to hosting overnight guests. He did say through another Instagram post that it is due out on Thursday, August 5th. Frankly, I won't believe it's being released until I'm on my fourth listen.

Finally, my most listened to song of the week that I think deserves all the attention in the world is DITTO by ARIES. For me, this is easily the song of the summer. Every time I've been out for a drive with the windows down since first hearing in mid-June, I blast DITTO at full volume for all to hear. I can absolutely see him becoming the next big thing, the man has an absolutely angelic voice.

 Aries - DITTO

commARCH Hip-Hop News - August 7, 2021

This past week was another busy one in the books for hip hop, headlined by who else but Kanye West with the seemingly never ending saga of the release of *Donda*.

This past Friday, Mr. West was once again due to release his much anticipated tenth studio album following the second album listening event he hosted at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. To say the least, the listening event on Thursday was quite the spectacle, bringing out some of the most Kanye moments the general public has been witness to in years. We saw him running circles around a mattress in the middle of the stadium while dressed in a cloak looking like the phantom of the opera. He also wore a bulletproof vest, a wildly spiky jacket, and a mask covering his entire face. To cap off the event, he ascended to the roof of the stadium via a harness and straps, truly a sight to behold. To put it simply, Kanye is quite the character.

As far as the actual album goes, I thought it was absolutely incredible. Easily his best work since his 2018 collaboration with Kid Cudi, *Kids See Ghosts*. It contains features from an extremely large variety of prominent artists. The list includes Pusha T, Don Toliver, Kid Cudi, Fivio Foreign, Donda West, JHE Rooga, Lil Yachty, Playboi Carti, Travis Scott, Baby Keem, Young Thug, Vory, Kaycyy, Roddy Ricch, Lil Durk, 070 Shake, Westside Gunn, Conway the Machine, Jay Electronica, Sheek Louch, Jadakiss, Styles P., Larry Hoover, Jr., Pop Smoke, Francis and the Lights, Jay-Z, Sunday Service Choir, Lil Baby, and The Weeknd. Of course, in typical Kanye fashion, midnight came and went and there was no sign of the album. I'm just glad audiences were at least able to hear it in some fashion. It's safe to say that whenever Kanye does decide to make *Donda* available on streaming platforms, it's going to be an absolute hit.

 Kanye West Donda Full Concert

In news of new music that actually dropped, Abstract Mindstate, a Chicago duo, released a new album entitled *Dreams Still Inspire*. What makes this such a significant release is the entire album was produced by none other than Mr. Kanye West and features a vocal appearance from him as well. So, he did technically release some new music this week. Upon first listen, it's a great record to just sit back and relax to - highly recommended.

 Abstract Mindstate - A Wise Tale (Official Music Video)

Nas released a new project, *King's Disease II*, which I admittedly have not listened to all the way through yet. However, I did hear the song that everyone was most excited about, entitled EPMD 2, featuring Eminem and EPMD. This track is so significant because it marks the first time that Nas and Eminem have collaborated on a track after each being big players in the industry for 20+ years. It did not disappoint and I highly recommend giving it a listen.

▶ Nas - EPMD 2 feat. Eminem & EPMD (Official Audio)

The Weeknd also released a new song and video, Take My Breath, which to me honestly just sounds like what an AI would generate if it was attempting to make an imitation of a Weeknd song. I had no strong opinion on it.

▶ The Weeknd - Take My Breath (Official Music Video)

For some other general hip hop news, Tyler, The Creator announced a 34 show tour for his number one album *Call Me If You Get Lost* beginning February 10, 2022. The tour will feature Kali Uchis, Vince Staples, and Teezo Touchdown as openers. With a lineup like that, tickets will be worth every penny.

Something unexpected that appeared on my Twitter timeline this week was a tweet from A24, the film production company. It was a photo of a screenplay entitled *UTOPIA*, written by none other than Travis Scott. I'm not sure what to expect from a film written by the man who brought us *Astroworld*, but I'm genuinely excited. He's doing a little bit of everything these days, something I hope more artists begin to dip their feet into.

To add on to last week's top story, I'm happy to say that DaBaby was dropped from the lineup of essentially every festival he was due to perform at in the near future because of his homophobic comments made at Rolling Loud. The festivals included Lollapalooza, Day N Vegas, and Governor's Ball. Following this turn of events, when he realized his pockets would be affected, he issued an apology on his social media accounts that was almost certainly written by his publicist.

▶ DaBaby Apologizes For Rolling Loud Comments Again Amidst Getting Dropped From M...

For my favorite/most listened to song of the week, it was one of my favorite songs ever, Sundress by A\$AP Rocky. This song reminds me of a time that used to be, and makes me feel nothing but good vibes. It features a great sample from Tame Impala and has one of the greatest music videos I've ever seen.

▶ A\$AP Rocky - Sundress (Official Video)

commARCH Hip-Hop News - August 14, 2021

This week was relatively tame in hip hop as far as the big names go. But there was still your fair share of news relating to the newer and/or less known artists.

Injury Reserve, a group hailing from Tempe, Arizona, where my alma mater of Arizona State University is located, announced their sophomore album this past Tuesday, titled *By the Time I Get to Phoenix*, due out September 15th. This is their first release since one third of their original lineup, Jordan Groggs, better known by his stage Step J. Groggs, passed away on June 29th, 2020. In a lengthy Instagram post, the duo, consisting of Ritchie With a T (Nathaniel Ritchie) and beatmaker Parker Corey, explained that the inspiration for the album title came from a phone conversation that they had with Groggs shortly before his passing, where he explained the love he had for the idea of repurposing the name of Isaac Hayes' 1967 masterpiece of a song, the nearly nineteen minute long *By the Time I Get to Phoenix*. Over a year after his passing, they now feel comfortable releasing the record, which they dedicated to the memory of Jordan Groggs. They put out the first single this past Friday, entitled "Knees".

▶ Injury Reserve - Knees

An artist releasing new music even sooner on this upcoming Friday, August 20th is Trippie Redd, who will be putting out an album called *Trip At Knight*. On the tracklist that he revealed late last week had a song with Drake, removed that song from the tracklist that is listed for the pre-save on iTunes, so who knows if we'll get that song. A fun fact is that Trippie was originally supposed to be featured on Drake's smash hit "God's Plan" when it came out in January 2018, but sent his verse in after the deadline he had been given. This album officially features SoFaygo, Lil Uzi Vert, Playboi Carti, Ski Mask The Slump God, Lil Durk & Polo G, Babyface Ray, Sada Baby, & Icewear Vizzo.

▶ Trippie Redd Trip At Knight TRACKLIST & Release Date (Juice WRLD Matt Hardy)

Also coming out this past Friday was a collaborative album and effort from Boldy James & Daniel Maman, better known as The Alchemist, *Bo Jackson*. I have not had the chance to give it a listen yet, but I've always enjoyed the production of The Alchemist. Named after one of the greatest athletes the world has ever seen and featuring incredible cover art that was actually put together by TA himself, I have high expectations.

▶ Fake Flowers

In shameful news and some I hope is untrue, Don Toliver was accused of sexual assault and rape by a woman on Instagram, who claimed to Kali Uchis, Toliver's current girlfriend, that the

rapper had assaulted her about two years prior in 2019. It's always so disappointing when an artist whose music you enjoy is accused of such a heinous crime, someone like that does not deserve to have fans, if accusations are true.

 Don Toliver - No Idea [Official Music Video]

For my song of the week, I've chosen none other than *Love Sosa* by Chicago's own Chief Keef. Coming out when he was only sixteen years old, the visuals are absolutely wild to see - when it came out in 2012 and still when I watched it a few minutes ago in 2021. That song is one of many in his discography that keeps me coming back, excited for what is to come.

 Chief Keef - Love Sosa

commARCH Hip-Hop News - August 21, 2021

So Kendrick Lamar is alive - fantastic news. For the first time in nearly 18 months, the Compton rapper sent out a tweet from his account. Following the release of his fourth studio album, 2017's *DAMN.*, Kendrick seemingly dropped off the face of the earth. Fans have really just been sitting around since then wondering if the legendary emcee would release another project or if he had retired, feeling he had nothing else to prove. Well, that question was answered with his tweet this past Friday. Along with an image of a computer desktop folder labeled "nu thoughts," a website was linked, "oklama.com." Accessing the website, you're presented with the folder, which, after clicking on, you are brought to a candid letter written by someone called oklama, who one can only assume is an alter ego of some for Kendrick. He revealed some bombshell news in these few short paragraphs, including that he is in the process of making his next album and that it will be the last with his label, TDE (Top Dawg Entertainment), a team that he has been a part of since beginning his career in music in 2004. It seems like Kendrick has been in his head quite a bit these last four years and is finally ready to step into his next era of life and music. "I spend most of my days with fleeting thoughts. Writing. Listening. And collecting old Beach cruisers. The morning rides keep me on a hill of silence."

<https://oklama.com/>

The other news from this week that really stuck out is the reignited feud between Drake and Kanye West. On Saturday at midnight, one day after releasing his fourth studio album, *Trip at Knight*, Trippie Redd put out an additional song that is sure to shoot up his sales totals. "Betrayed" featuring Drake, upon first listen, sounded like an absolute hit. Upon second and third listens, paying closer attention to the lyrics, I realized that one Mr. Kanye West would not like what Aubrey Drake Graham had to say. In his verse, he says "Forty-five, Forty-four (Burned out), let it go, 'Ye ain't changin' s--t for me, it's set in stone." These lines took me a few minutes to decode, but the lyric annotations on Genius helped me understand further and confirm the shots I suspected. For starters, Drake is dissing Kanye's age of 44, one that is quite up there for someone who is still releasing music. He segues into calling 'Ye burnt out, saying that his best days are far behind him, wanting him to let go of the thought that he can capture that level of extreme success once again. Not only that, but he tells him to let the beef that the two of them have had for the past three years or so fizzle out. It doesn't seem like however, at least in my eyes, that Mr. West is someone who lets something like this go easily. There is also a working theory that for their last couple of projects, Kanye has aimed to drop during or around the same week as Drake in an attempt to disrupt the Certified Lover Boy's album rollouts.

 Trippie Redd – Betrayal Feat Drake (Official Visualizer)

Much of the current feud stems from early summer 2018 when Drake released “Duppy Freestyle,” hitting back on rumors that he had previously used ghostwriters by claiming he himself had written for Kanye. Not long after, longtime Kanye collaborator Pusha T put out a Drake diss, “The Story of Adidon,” in which he reveals to the world that Drake has a child that he had been hiding, having been waiting for a press run regarding a collaboration with Adidas to reveal Adonis Graham to the public. There are many other scathing insults issued in the track.

▶ Pusha T - The Story of Adidon [Drake Diss]

This all led to an Instagram post from Kanye this past Saturday, a screenshot of a group text conversation with eight other people including Pusha T and someone who is speculated to be Drake. In the conversation, all that is able to be seen is a message from Kanye to the others that reads “I live for this, I’ve been f----d with by nerd a-- jock n----s like you my whole life. You will never recover, I promise you,” accompanied by a photo of Joaquin Phoenix as the Joker. Suffice to say, this beef is not ending anytime soon, and we may be getting more diss tracks in the near future.

In additional Kanye news, he announced another listening event for *Donda* this coming Thursday, August 26th, at Soldier Field in his hometown of Chicago. But at this point, with everything that is going on and the new developments coming up seemingly every day, who knows what’s going to happen. Maybe we won’t get the event or the album. Maybe we’ll get both, no one has a concrete answer. That’s Kanye being Kanye.

In other news, one of my most anticipated tracks of 2021 was released and most certainly did not disappoint. “Running Wild (Tumblr Girls 2),” which, as you can tell from the title is meant to be a continuation of the beloved track from his 2014 debut album *These Things Happen*, “Tumblr Girls.” The latter is one of my favorite songs of all time, so when it was announced by Gerald himself that it would have a sister track, I was simply off the walls. The tune features Kossisko, who I had not listened to previously, but he blew my socks off with an incredibly unique and gorgeous voice. If you haven’t heard either or even just one, please do yourself a favor and play them back to back, it’ll improve your day.

▶ G-Eazy - Running Wild (Tumblr Girls 2) (Official Video) ft. Kossisko


Silk Sonic, the joint project between popstar Bruno Mars and singer/rapper Anderson .Paak was finally given a release date, one that has most likely been pushed back multiple times by COVID and everything that came with it. *An Evening with Silk Sonic* is due out on January 22, 2022 barring any unforeseen circumstances. Personally, I’m so excited for a project of this magnitude between two artists with such great energies and personalities. It’s not very often that collaborations like these come to fruition.

 Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak, Silk Sonic - Leave the Door Open [Official Video]

In news that is hard to believe and makes me feel old even at just 23, Frank Ocean's two most recent projects, *Endless* and *Blonde*, released on back to back days in 2016, turned five years old this past week. Two absolute masterpieces, I remember laying in bed under the covers and watching the livestream of *Endless* that included Frank building a staircase to nowhere. Over these five years, not only have I undergone a major transformation in nearly all aspects of my life, but I've only gained a further appreciation of these two wonderful works of art. *Blonde*, especially, has aged like fine wine, becoming one of my top five albums of all time.

 FRANK OCEAN - ENDLESS: VISUAL ALBUM VIDEO [2018]

My song of the week is by the man who may very well be the hottest name in hip hop at the moment, none other than Houston's own Travis Scott. "90210" featuring Kacy Hill was a track that I thoroughly enjoyed these last seven days. Off of what I think is Travis' best project in his discography thus far in 2015's *Rodeo*, it captures a feeling of what I can only describe as wonder, unfamiliarity, and self reflection. At least that's what I'm hearing throughout this track. It's also worth mentioning that it was announced this week that Scott and socialite Kylie Jenner are expecting their second child together. Exciting times in the life of La Flame.

 90210

commARCH Hip-Hop News - August 28, 2021

Alright, let's just go ahead and get this week's Kanye news out of the way. As has been throughout the *Donda* era, there was once again plenty this week. For starters, he announced a partnership with tech company Kano to produce a "DONDA STEM PLAYER," a music player of sorts preloaded with the brand new album, which gives the listener the ability to customize songs. You can have it for only \$200; what a deal.

As I talked about in last week's post, Kanye announced a third listening event, which took place late this past Thursday at Soldier Field in Chicago. And you bet I watched the event in its entirety. I have to say, it was some kind of experience, even though I was watching it on a relatively small screen from the comfort of my bedroom. I was foolish enough to believe that Kanye, who, by the way, filed paperwork recently to legally change his name to Ye, would be starting the livestream on time at 10PM EST as scheduled. Once the show started nearly two hours later, the visual spectacle in the middle of the field immediately caught my attention. Mr. West had arranged to have a full scale model of the Chicago home that he grew up in be built for this event. For the majority of the performance, Kanye was seen hanging out on the porch of the model home with several famous friends including Marilyn Manson and DaBaby, who, for some reason had replaced Jay-Z on one of the tracks. This wasn't the only change to the album either. Kid Cudi was taken off the song he had been featured on at the second event, only to be put aside in favor of the voice of a literal animated character from a children's film, the Globglogabgalab. I genuinely had no idea how to react at first, but, alas, I've learned to expect the unexpected when Kanye is at the center of things.

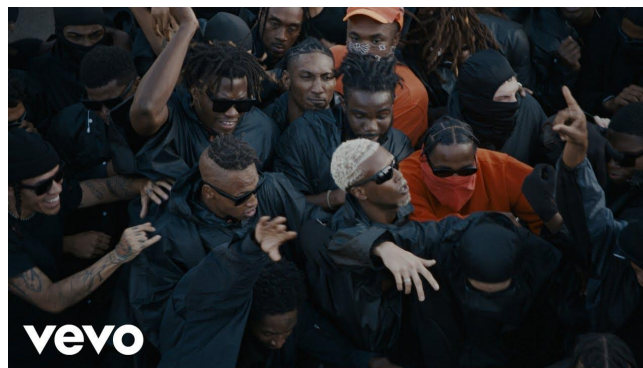
I can confidently say that this was my favorite piece of performance art I've ever had the pleasure of viewing. Visually, it was simply stunning, even it was goofy and had the potential to sound better at times. I highly encourage anyone who has an hour and a half to kill to watch the entirety of the event and give it a chance, even if you don't think it's your "thing." Now, will he ever actually release the album on streaming services for the masses to enjoy? I'm not sure if anyone in this world has a definitive answer for that question, but I'll keep my fingers crossed.



📺 KANYE WEST FULL DONDA LISTENING PARTY CHICAGO

📺 Globglogabgalab

This past Friday, for the first time in well over three years ago, we were given a brand spanking new verse from Kendrick Lamar. The track he appears on, “family ties,” is a single from his cousin, fellow California rapper Baby Keem’s upcoming album. Being completely honest, I was not crazy about Keem’s flow, though I didn’t hate it. Just wasn’t anything to write home about. Then, Kung Fu Kenny came in and saved the day with an aggressive, unfamiliar, and incredibly entertaining flow that I can’t think of anything it compares to. And I mean that in the best way possible. Whether Kendrick releases his forthcoming album later this year or in early 2022, he is already officially back.



📺 Baby Keem, Kendrick Lamar - family ties (Official Video)

In other news regarding a huge name in hip hop, maybe even the biggest, it appears that Drake has set a release date for his sixth studio album, *Certified Lover Boy*. During the airing of an episode of ESPN’s SportsCenter, what appeared to be a glitch or hack at first glance, in which cryptic images appeared to be shown on screen, a piece of posterboard was presented to viewers about five seconds later reading “CLB September 3rd.” With how large of a sports fan Drake is and how he has been ramping up promotion and a feud with Kanye as of late, it is hard to imagine this message stemming from a hack and not being planned. I’m very happy to hear this news, especially since the world has been craving a brand new Drake album since 2018’s *Scorpion*.



Drake Hacks SportsCenter To Announce Certified Lover Boy Release Video

Everyone's favorite hip hop/popstar/cowboy Lil Nas X announced over the past few days that he plans to release his debut album *Montero* on September 17th. With multiple hits released in the past year that prove that he is all but a one hit wonder, including "MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)," "HOLIDAY," and "INDUSTRY BABY," it is easy to see that Lil Nas X is a man on a mission.

Playboi Carti, one of the hottest names in the game, whose latest album *Whole Lotta Red* was released on Christmas 2020, made a cryptic post on Instagram about a week ago that teases a mysterious project entitled NARCISSIST, set for release on September 13th. It seems likely, however, that this is not new music considering that day is a Monday and new music traditionally releases on Fridays.



In your weekly five year flashback to music in 2016, this past week was half a decade since the release of Young Thug's most critically acclaimed work, his *Jeffery* mixtape. Though I've never been a mega fan of Thugger's style, it is a project viewed as a classic for a variety of reasons. My favorite moment from the rollout/content released for it is easily the music video for "Wyclef Jean." I implore you to give it a watch.

Young Thug - Wyclef Jean [Official Video]

This unfortunately was not a week of just good news in hip hop. Two artists on the come up had their lives ended prematurely, two absolute tragedies. Lil Duke, also known as Duke Acapela, a Chicago artist who was on his way to making a name for himself was shot and killed. Lil Kawaii, an associate of the GothBoiClique that was made famous by the late Lil Peep, passed away early Friday from an accidental overdose. Violence and drugs continue to take young artists with so much to offer. It really is such a tragedy, I wish there was a simple solution to life's painful problems like these.

Seeing stories like those usually make me think about mortality, as many of the young artists who unexpectedly pass are right around my age. These thoughts were deepened this week when I lost my grandmother. It's been a very odd feeling knowing that she isn't here anymore considering I've been fortunate enough to have never really lost anyone I was close to. A song that has helped me this past week cope and get by some of these feelings of sadness and existential stress has been "Poppy" by the late, great Mac Miller. 18 year old Mac shares some similar feelings in this song about losing his grandfather and dealing with death. I've loved this track since the first time it blessed my ears, but it's taken on providing a level of comfort I've never felt from music before. It will never cease to amaze me how wise beyond his years Mac was. Give it a listen, you won't regret it.

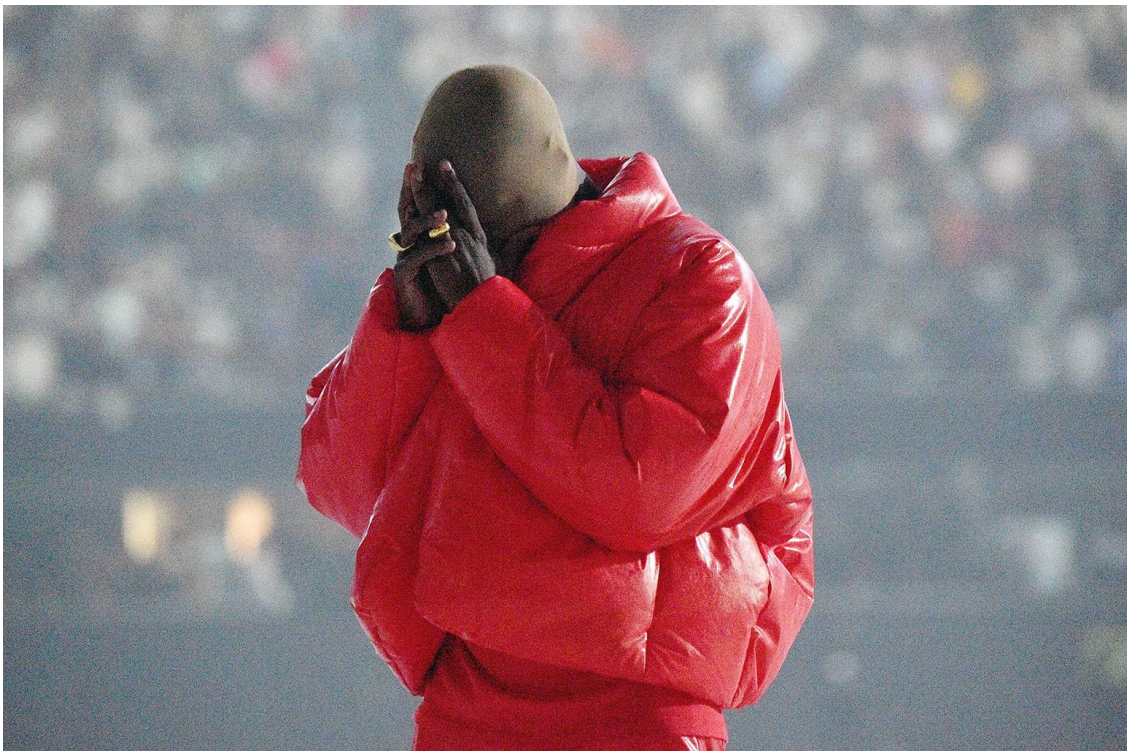


Mac Miller - Poppy

commARCH Hip-Hop News - September 4, 2021

This past week has probably been the busiest as far as hip hop news goes in quite some time. Not only did Kanye West finally release his album *Donda* - on a Sunday morning of all times, but not even five days later, Drake released his long awaited sixth studio album, *Certified Lover Boy*.

Following the third listening party that didn't result in the release of *Donda*, I was all but convinced that it just was not going to be released. Yet I woke up last Sunday morning to the news that the 27 track project had unexpectedly dropped just a couple of hours prior. Featuring an entirely black album cover, which I think suits the topics at hand quite well, I still wish one of the other covers that was in the running had made the cut. It took me a bit to process that it was finally out, but once I had splashed some water in my face and made sure I wasn't dreaming, it was time to give it a listen. And while, at times, the 108 minute run time of the project seemed too lengthy, it ended up being my favorite album from Kanye since 2016's *The Life of Pablo*. Boasting features from seemingly every big name in the game right now, it flowed together near seamlessly and became a clear picture of how he has dealt with grief in the nearly fourteen years since his mother's passing. In an interesting turn, four tracks off of the album ("Jail," "Ok Ok," "Junya," and "Jesus Lord") all got part twos that were tacked on at the album's conclusion. These second acts presented new features, for example, DaBaby instead of Jay-Z on "Jail Pt. 2." It was an odd choice to do this on the original cut of the album rather than just waiting to release a deluxe edition, but Kanye is going to do what he wants. As far as I'm concerned though, the actual album ends following the last part one track, "No Child Left Behind."



📺 Kanye West - Donda ALBUM REVIEW

I must say, I am so happy that this album rollout from hell, or heaven, however you want to look at it, is over. I absolutely loved Kanye's creativity and performance art throughout each of the three events, but at a certain point it just starts to get old. Having these genius works of art on streaming services makes it all worth it and it will be in my rotation, almost in its entirety, for years to come.

Something that truly made my jaw drop was finding out that in the only 4.5 days that *Donda* had been out before album sales were tallied for the week, it had sold 327,000 units, the largest first week sales in hip hop in 2021. The bad news, however, is that number is just about guaranteed to be broken in less than a week by one of Kanye's least favorite people at the moment, Aubrey Drake Graham, mononymously known by his middle name.

Drake's *Certified Lover Boy* had its own all-star list of features to the surprise of absolutely nobody, the likes of which were Lil Baby, Lil Durk, Giveon, Jay-Z, Travis Scott, Future, Young Thug, Yebba, 21 Savage, Project Pat, Tems, Ty Dolla \$ign, Lil Wayne, Rick Ross, and Kid Cudi. That's a lot of big names. The project set the record for most streamed record in one day in Spotify history, in just over twelve hours. That should give you a good idea of just how big Drake is.



I was surprised but excited to see Kid Cudi's name on the list of features, considering roughly five years ago the two of them had been trading some pretty nasty shots on Twitter. It's great to see two of my favorite artists on good terms once again.

It is Drake's third straight album with 20+ songs, joining 2016's *Views* and 2018's *Scorpion*. It seems that he has no problem saturating his projects with filler songs as long as he gets the precious streams. I can't say I blame him though, and most of the songs are still getting added to my favorites playlist. It is his first album, at least in my eyes, that employs some truly terrible cover art. A commissioned work from English artist Damien Hirst, the album cover is a white square with twelve emojis, all of pregnant women. It's just impressively bad and I don't think I'll be warming up to that aspect of this work anytime soon.

My favorite content to be spawned from this era of Drake thus far is easily the music video for "Way 2 Sexy," directed by one of my favorites Dave Meyers and featuring verses from Future and Young Thug, along with a cameo appearance by Los Angeles Clippers star player Kawhi Leonard.

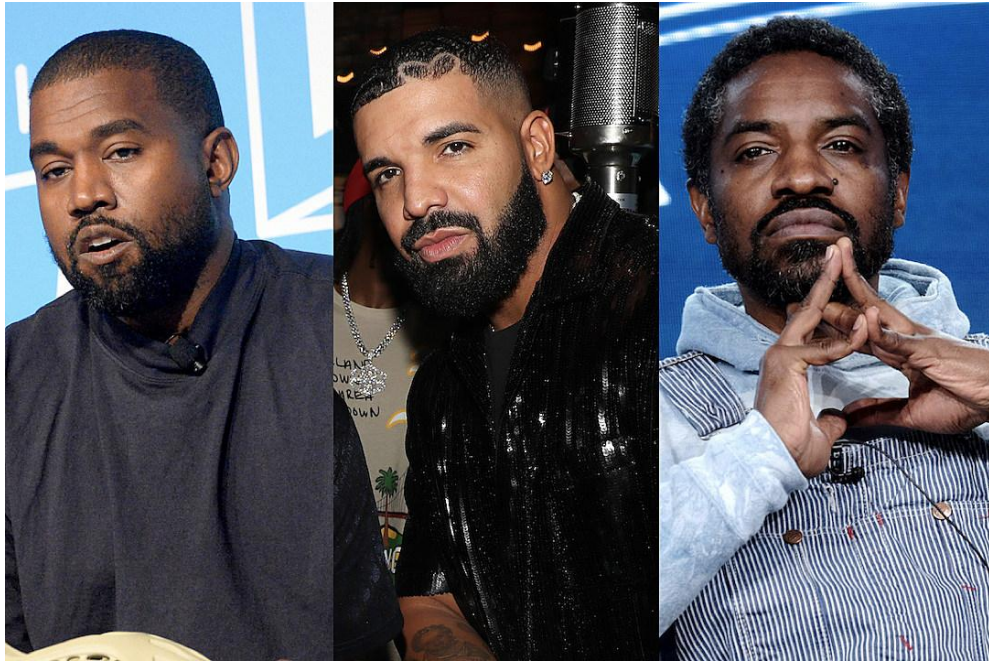


▶ Drake ft. Future and Young Thug - Way 2 Sexy (Official Video)

If I had to pick between *Donda* and *Certified Lover Boy*, Kanye takes the cake and it really isn't close. The way I see it, it is just a much better body of work that had less people working on it which makes it all the more impressive.

And just when it seemed like the feud between the two stars had started to die down, Drake went ahead this past Saturday and leaked a loose track from *Donda* that didn't make the cut to make an appearance on the project. "Life of the Party," featuring a rare appearance from Andre 3000 of Outkast fame, was played on Drake's radio show Fry Yiy Fridays. It featured some very obvious disses at Drake, and Kanye is bound to be quite unhappy about this entire sequence of events. I'm sure there will be more news from this development in the coming week. Something worth noting, before I move on, is that Andre 3000, who seems to like staying out of the spotlight, released a statement following the leak which basically said that he didn't want any

trouble with either side. He recorded his verse not knowing that it would be a diss track and that he had been inspired by Kanye's honoring of his mother, as he had lost his own mother relatively recently as well. "It's unfortunate that it was released in this way and two artists that I love are going back and forth. I wanted to be on *Certified Lover Boy* too. I just want to work with people that inspire me."



Anyway, moving onto news not having to do with Kanye or Drake, we were gifted this week the first new music from New York City's Bobby Shmurda since he was released from prison earlier this year on February 23rd after having been imprisoned for over six years. I have to say, Bobby did not disappoint with "No Time For Sleep (Freestyle)." It's six minutes packed with some absolute bars delivered with the high energy that listeners loved when he burst onto the scene in 2014.



JPEGMafia also released a new track, "TRUST!" which I will admit is one of my least favorites from Peggy in the last couple of years, but that is by no way me saying it isn't good. I don't think I have ever listened to a song from him that I would call bad. His music just isn't for everyone and he would probably be one of the first to admit that.



In news that I'm not sure anyone was expecting, The Weeknd released an alternate video for his 2015 hit "Can't Feel My Face." Apparently, the video that was released this week was the original, but was not released due to a shift in creative direction. When you play the two side by side, their differences are quite obvious.

▶ The Weeknd - Can't Feel My Face (Alternate Video)

Marketing genius Lil Nas X released the tracklist for his debut album *Montero*, with features from Megan Thee Stallion, Jack Harlow, Doja Cat, Miley Cyrus, and the legendary Elton John. He also began a new campaign for the album where he has had quite a convincing pregnancy belly placed on him. Baby Montero's due date is Friday, September 17th.

This week in 2016 music, Travis Scott's sophomore album *Birds in the Trap Sing McKnight* was released on September 2nd of that fine year. Featuring perhaps his most well known song "goosebumps," it showcased La Flame just as he was really beginning to become more of a household name, preparing the world for 2018's *ASTROWORLD*.

For the song of the week, I'm going to take you back to a time when all was right between Kanye West and Drake, along with many other things in the world. 2009's *Forever* by Drake, with features from Kanye, Lil Wayne, and Eminem had four of the biggest names in hip hop

collaborating and it did not disappoint in the least. It was one song on the soundtrack for my middle school years and is still regularly in my rotation nearly twelve years later.



▶ Drake, Kanye West, Lil Wayne, Eminem - Forever (Explicit Version) (Official Music Video)

commARCH Hip-Hop News - September 11, 2021

A rather uncommon not-so-busy week in hip hop, these past seven days have still had its highlights. The main attraction of the news was Baby Keem announcing and releasing his debut album, *The Melodic Blue*, this past Friday. Since hearing the singles from the album, “durag activity with Travis Scott and “family ties,” with Keem’s real life older cousin Kendrick Lamar, I was very much looking forward to what else the 20 year old had cooked up in the studio. Overall, I suppose I was a bit underwhelmed by his lyrical repertoire on many of the songs, though it was nearly made up for by other aspects of the album, especially the beautiful production. In a year of many fantastic projects having been released, I would call it a collection of some of the best beats on a release since January, aside from maybe Tyler, the Creator’s *Call Me If You Get Lost* and Kanye West’s *Donda*.



 Baby Keem - issues (Official Video)

Drake’s *Certified Lover Boy*, across all genres, became the album with the best selling first week this calendar year, with 604,000 units sold. This comes as really no surprise, seeing as he is currently one of the biggest superstars on the planet. I do have to say, however, I am very much looking forward to the day where an artist not named Drake or Kanye West is able to put up numbers like that for first week sales.

As the country acknowledged a very somber anniversary this past weekend with the 20th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, there was also the realization that it was

twenty years since a large and notable crop of records were released. Until July 10, 2015, albums in the United States had been traditionally released on Tuesdays rather than the way the entire world operates today with Friday releases. Tuesday, September 11th was seen as a super Tuesday of sorts as huge names like Bob Dylan, Mariah Carey, Nickelback, and They Might Be Giants, among others put out new releases. The biggest release of all would have to be Jay-Z and his release of *The Blueprint*, which was eventually selected by the Library of Congress for preservation in the National Recording Registry for its significance.



▶ Jay-Z - Izzo (H.O.V.A)

This past week also represented another sad anniversary, this one more exclusively regarding hip-hop and music fans alike. Mac Miller, my favorite artist of all time, passed away three years ago on September 7, 2018, leaving behind many questions about his music and what-ifs about his career. Just over a month prior he had released his final album in his lifetime, *Swimming*, an absolute masterpiece in many's eyes which seemed to place Mac in a very good mindset, as he had seemed to clean up his act and become sober, having turned a new page. Listening to his music is still hard today, though I still do it each and every day. His first and last posthumous album, *Circles*, meant as a companion album to *Swimming* was released in January 2020 to widespread praise, with Mac having finished the majority of the album prior to his passing, and Jon Brion completing the bits that were left. A third annual celebration of his life was held at

Pittsburgh's Blue Slide Park, the namesake for his debut album, with thousands of fans from across the country attending for a day of Mac. He's missed beyond words.



Mac Miller - Good News

For my song of the week, I've chosen "Invincible" by Aminé. The man has the voice of an angel on this track and every time I spin it I get chills. For whatever reason, it has been on repeat this week and is easily my favorite song off of the *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse* soundtrack.



Invincible

commARCH Hip-Hop News - September 18, 2021

Lil Nas X released his long awaited debut album *MONTERO* this past Friday, and I certainly feel like it lived up to the hype. Since bursting onto the scene with “Old Town Road” in 2019, Lil Nas has shown that he is an absolute genius when it comes to marketing his product. Since announcing the album on March 26th, he has been keeping tabs on just about every social media app with a large audience, making sure that everyone knew when his music was being released. The culmination of it all was a video uploaded to YouTube on Thursday night which showcased all of the music videos he has created thus far. This then turned into a faux talk show hosted by one version of himself speaking to another version. It then ended with the premiere of his newest music video for “THATS WHAT I WANT,” a song that I think deserves to be his next number one hit. It is extremely well done for what it is and I would encourage all to give it a watch and the album a listen.



▶ Lil Nas X - THATS WHAT I WANT (Official Video)

Some other huge news from this week in hip hop was the announcement from Mac Miller's estate that his most critically acclaimed project, his 2014 mixtape *Faces*, will be released on all streaming platforms on October 15th after having its samples cleared, along with a bonus track entitled “Yeah”. The announcement was made on the estate's official Instagram account, @92tilinfinity, as well as with the release of one of the songs, Colors and Shapes, accompanied by a music video. Also made available were the first official physical copies of the project, available on his website. This tape explores some very dark themes, most notably Mac's substance abuse problem and mental illness hurdles that he had gone through. Mac tweeted in 2017, “I was not on planet earth when I made Faces. Nowhere close.” As one might imagine, the 24 tracks are even more difficult to listen to now that he has passed away. The beautiful thing is

that the art that he put out there will survive forever, helping millions, and hopefully bringing in new ears who had not been aware of its existence because of its absence from streaming.



Mac Miller - Colors and Shapes

This past Wednesday, Injury Reserve released their long awaited album *By the Time I Get to Phoenix*, the duo's first project since the death of Stepa J. Groggs, their third member, in June 2020. The eleven track album is extremely raw and hard to listen to at parts, but all I can really say about it is that it's one of the best albums I have heard this year given its context. That's just my opinion, but I implore everyone reading this to give it a spin.

Jacksonville rapper SpoteMGottem survived a drive-by in Miami during the early morning hours of this past Friday. The car he was traveling in was shot at 22 times, with the artist being struck five times. He and another passenger were most recently listed in stable condition, expected to make full recoveries. Quite a bit has been going on in the 19 year old's life over the past year, from releasing his viral hit "Beat Box," which would go on to be accompanied by eight remixes, to being arrested by U.S. Marshals in July regarding a weapons incident from June.



▶ SPOTEMGOTTEM Feat. Pooh Shiesty "Beatbox 2" (Official Video)

For this week in a song from 2016 that has been stuck in my head, I've been singing "Congratulations" from Mac Miller's album *The Divine Feminine* to myself for the better part of a week. The opening track from his album dedicated to love, released five years ago this week, tells the story of a first love, someone who was there with him before the fame, how he has many regrets regarding this time but can only reflect. It's truly one of the more beautiful songs I've ever heard and is an incredible opening to a wonderful album.

For my track of the week, I chose "La La Land" by Bryce Vine, featuring YG. Bryce Vine is one of those artists whose voice just flows so well on any kind of nostalgic production, and this song is no exception. Unbelievably catchy, it makes me long for a time that never was, if that makes any sense. I wonder if there is a word for that feeling. Anyway, give the song a listen.



▶ Bryce Vine - La La Land ft. YG [Official Music Video]

commARCH Hip-Hop News - September 25, 2021

This was a week in hip hop with a little bit of everything, so let's jump right into it, starting with the news not related to new music. On Saturday, Netflix posted to their YouTube channel a teaser trailer to a brand new three part docu-series about the career of Kanye West, set to be released sometime in 2022. Entitled *JEEN-YUHS*, the trailer displayed a 25 year old Kanye in 2002 rapping to the camera, along with hip hop legend Mos Def. There is also a website set up for the series that teases several other clips, pulling fans like myself in even further. It's safe to say that I, along with millions of others are ready to dive in.



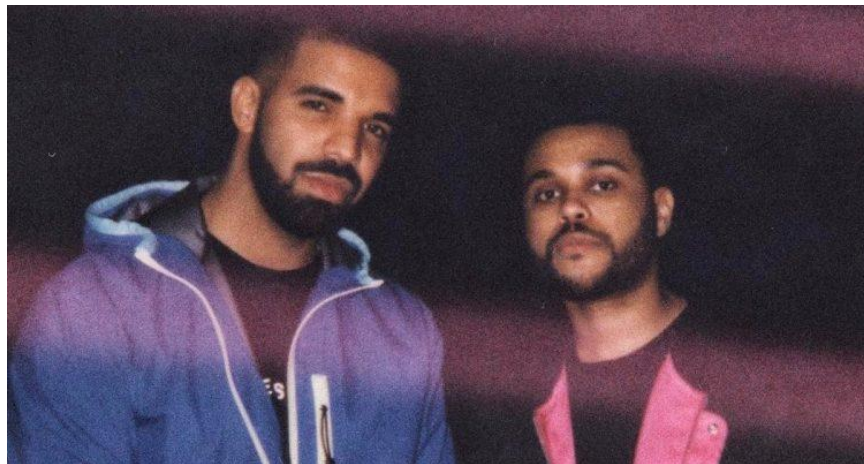
 JEEN-YUHS | First Look Clip | Netflix

21 Savage turned himself in and spent an entire twelve minutes in jail this week for a warrant related to his case with immigration agency ICE. This comes after the absurd 2019 news that absolutely no one was expecting in which the world learned that the Atlanta rapper was actually born in London, England and lived there for the first seven years of his life. He ended up staying in the United States for thirteen years past the expiration of his Visa before the news was brought to light. The charges for this most recent arrest stem from his possession of drugs and firearms during his original ICE arrest, charges which his lawyer vehemently denies.



21 Savage x Metro Boomin - Runnin (Official Music Video)

I remember being able to take a class all about The Beatles during my time at Arizona State, but Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada took the game to a new level with its introduction of a class about hometown artists Drake and The Weeknd. The course is taught by writer and hip hop expert Dalton Higgins, who has already authored a biography about Drake. Says Higgins, “It’s time to get our Canadian rap and R&B icons recognized and canonized academically or otherwise.”



Drake - Crew Love (feat. The Weeknd) HQ

Speaking of Drake, on streaming services, he updated three of the songs off of his most recent project, *Certified Lover Boy*. Various mix changes appeared on “Knife Talk”, “IMY2”, and “You Only Live Twice”. These edits included fading outros, changes on bass, along with an entirely new line from Kid Cudi in his verse. Subtle changes, but just enough for the biggest Drake fans to notice.

Two of the more notable singles released this week were “Too Easy”, brought to you by Gunna and Future and “Your Heart” from Joyner Lucas and J. Cole. In my humble opinion, the latter is so, so much better. “Too Easy” just sounds like a generic Gunna/Future track, the production is nothing spectacular and it will be forgotten by nearly everyone within a month. But hey, that’s just my opinion.



YouTube Joyner Lucas & J. Cole - Your Heart (Official Video)

There were three albums released this past Friday that really caught my attention. They were *Hitler Wears Hermes 8: Sincerely, Adolf (Side B)* by Westside Gunn, *Sincerely, Kentrell* from NBA Youngboy, and G-Eazy’s *These Things Happen Too*.

Westside Gunn’s work is a sequel of sorts to his album from earlier this year. It is definitely worth a listen, there were some tracks I really liked, especially “The Fly who couldn’t Fly straight”, which features Tyler, The Creator.



YouTube Westside Gunn - The Fly who couldn't Fly straight (Audio)

NBA Youngboy comes through with a solid project with the same consistent sound that he has displayed throughout the entirety of his career thus far. While he is still imprisoned on federal charges, his strong fanbase will make sure that his third studio album sells as well as it can.



📺 YoungBoy Never Broke Again - Sincerely [Official Audio]

As for G-Eazy's long awaited sequel to his 2014 album which introduced him to so many listeners, I think that it is one of the top projects that he has ever put out. It displays a return to form that fans could have only dreamed of after sort of leaving the sound that made him famous behind and experimenting on 2019's *Scary Nights* and 2020's *Everything's Strange Here*, which really is not a bad thing by any means. However, it did not attract anywhere close to the amount of listeners he had become used to. Out of ten, I would give the album, which features Lil Wayne, YG, Christoph Andersson, Goody Grace, E-40, DaBoii, ShooterGang Kony, Demi Lovato, Marc E. Bassy, Devon Baldwin, Ty Dolla \$ign, Kossisko, Matthew Shultz, and Anthony Hamilton a solid seven.



📺 G-Eazy - Breakdown (Official Video) ft. Demi Lovato

For this week's throwback to 2016, "Glory" by Hodgy has been playing in my head quite a bit lately. It's a very raw and emotional track from a cathartic album by Hodgy, a founding member of the hip hop super collective Odd Future. Unfortunately, he has not put out much solo music aside from 2016's *Fireplace: TheNotTheOtherSide*.



 Hodgy - Glory (Video)

My most listened to track this week was "Tequila Shots," the first full length track from Kid Cudi's most recent album *Man On The Moon III: The Chosen*. It gives the record a start that just makes you want to groove. For me, it is one of the top three songs from the final installment of the legendary trilogy.



 Kid Cudi - Tequila Shots (Official Visualizer)

commARCH Hip-Hop News - October 2, 2021

Another busy week in hip hop, let's jump right in.

The biggest news of the week was the announcement of this season's Super Bowl halftime performers, and boy is this one to be excited about for hip hop fans. The Weeknd being the headliner last season was a good step in the right direction to finally have a fully hip hop show, but we finally got it this year. Kendrick Lamar, Eminem, Dr. Dre, Mary J. Blige, and Snoop Dogg will be the performers, with the potential for guest spots as well. These performers make sense considering the game takes place in Los Angeles, and all of these artists except for Eminem and Blige hail from the city of angels. This is especially exciting because it most likely means we will be getting new albums from Kendrick and Eminem before then, as it would be a shock if they didn't capitalize on this enhanced spotlight. Counting down the days to February 13, 2022.

New albums that released this week included *Expensive Pain* from Philadelphia's own, Meek Mill, which features some very interesting cover art, and the collaborative project *Trust Fund Babies* from Lil Wayne and Rich The Kid. From what I have heard both albums are slightly above average, so I'm excited to give them a listen as soon as I can find the time, and you should too.

One track that was released this week that had me very excited was "Come On Baby" from producer duo Cookin' Soul which features the late Mac Miller. When I first heard it, the Mac verse sounded like it was made very early on in his career, which doesn't mean that it was bad, just dated. My suspicions were confirmed when I read that the bars were spit ten years ago in 2011, right as his career was really taking off. It's a great song, and any new releases from a posthumous artist almost always are great to hear.

New singles that were released this week included "Poke it Out" from Wale featuring J. Cole, and "Fafo" from rapper and comedian Zack Fox. The Wale/Cole track is quite good, and I haven't heard "Fafo" yet, but Zack Fox is always putting out bangers that will make you laugh.

There were a few announcements from artists regarding upcoming albums as well. Don Toliver says that his album *Life of a Don* is due out on October 8th, and legendary producer The Alchemist will be releasing his record *This Thing of Ours 2* this coming Friday as well. Ghostface Killah, best known as the leading man for The Wu Tang Clan, posted on Reddit's hiphopheads forum this week, saying that his next project, *Supreme Clientele 2*, will be releasing this coming February and will be executive produced by legends Kanye West and Mike Dean.

Certified piece of garbage and disgraced R&B superstar R. Kelly was convicted this week of his charges of racketeering and sex trafficking. The predator who went after underage and vulnerable girls throughout the entirety of career finally had his behavior catch up with him following years of legal battles. The 54 year old is expected to be sentenced to anywhere from ten years to life in prison and is still facing charges in other states as well. In short, he'll be spending the rest of his miserable life behind bars.

This past Wednesday, Eminem celebrated the grand opening of his restaurant in downtown Detroit, Mom's Spaghetti, named after a lyric in his song "Lose Yourself", by attending and handing out food to fans through the drive-thru window. He began to dabble in the restaurant business by opening several pop up shops of the same name in the years since 2017. While attending Firefly Music Festival in 2018 where Eminem was one of the headliners, I was lucky enough to be able to grab a bite to eat at one of these pop ups, and boy was it good. If you ever find yourself in Detroit, make sure you stop by and get some Mom's Spaghetti.

For this week's throwback to 2016, I found myself listening to "worlds away" by Lil Peep quite a bit, my favorite song off of his mixtape *Hellboy*. Peep has several songs like this one that create a sense of longing and nostalgia. He's one of the only artists I've had the privilege of listening to that is able to pull this off. It truly is a shame that he passed away so young, he had so many great tracks to make and so much life left to live.

The song of the week for this week is "Money Trees" by Kendrick Lamar featuring Jay Rock. My all time favorite Kendrick song, it has so many different layers to it that all sound incredible, showcasing skills at the top of their game. Not many can pull off the mastery of one of these sounds, let alone multiple. What makes Kendrick even more amazing is that every one of his albums has been an absolute classic, which is a big reason why everyone is so pumped up to listen to his coming project, his first fresh one since *DAMN.* in 2017.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - October 9, 2021

You all know the deal, let's get into this week's hip hop news.

We had a couple of album release date announcements made this week, which, personally, is my favorite kind of announcement. Silk Sonic, the superstar duo consisting of Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak finally announced the date that their long awaited joint project *An Evening With Silk Sonic* will be released, November 12, 2021. We have known about this project since early March when they released the first single from the album "Leave the Door Open", which was an absolutely massive hit and peaked at number one on the Billboard charts. The album's second single, "Skate" was released at the end of July along with a music video. There had been much speculation as to when the album would be released as there had been many saying that we would not be hearing it until 2022, so this November release date was very much welcome. All I know for sure is that this is going to be a beautiful project from two of the people with the happiest voices in music.

Chicago rapper Mick Jenkins announced that his third studio album *Elephant in The Room* will be released on October 29th. This will be his first non-single release since his EP *The Circus* came out in January 2020. Alongside this announcement was the release of the leading single "Contacts". Honestly, I enjoyed it quite thoroughly, with its production being my personal highlight. My only real listening experience with Mick Jenkins up until this point was with his 2014 mixtape *The Water (S)* which was also a very fun listen. Whenever I'm thirsty, I think of his lyric from that project, "Drink more water, or you might die." Go and give "Contacts" a listen and be on the lookout for *Elephant in The Room* on October 29th.

There were also a couple of albums that were released on Friday that I think are worth checking out. The highest profile release of the week was definitely *Life of a DON* from Don Toliver, one of the artists who is a part of Travis Scott's label Cactus Jack. I'll admit, when I gave it a listen, it was more used as background music during a workout more than anything, but the production was fantastic and kept me listening. Features include Travis Scott (on two songs), Kali Uchis, Baby Keem, HVN, and SoFaygo.

The other release that I gave a good bit of attention to was *eat ya veggies* from viral rapper bbno\$, best known for his track "Lalala" which became insanely popular on TikTok. I've been listening to his music for some time now, having been introduced to his sounds through his frequent collaborations with Yung Gravy, who I have been following for around five years at this point. And I have to admit, he really does have some genuine talent. On this project, there weren't any songs that came up that I felt the need to skip, and I ended up adding around 75% of them to my main playlist. The highlights for me were his collaborations with Rich Brian ("edamame") and Night Lovell ("2 time zones"). Along with those two, other guest appearances

include Rebecca Black of “Friday” fame, and Yung Gravy, along with three production credits for another frequent collaborator lentra.

We were also blessed with another album from frequent hip hop guest star and possessor of an angelic voice, James Blake. The twelve track album, *Friends That Break Your Heart*, his first since 2019’s *Assume Form* gave me similar chills I enjoyed whilst listening to the latter two years ago, but I would rank slightly lower in his discography. Blake was able to secure guest appearances from SZA, JID, SwaVay, and Monica Martin. The man is so very talented and ambitious to create new sounds for the world to enjoy that you just have to step back and admire his work whenever giving it a listen. I also wanted to remark on the cover art, which I think is some of the best of any that music has seen this calendar year.

A remix of a previously released tune that I wanted to give a shoutout to this week is “Breathe Deeper” by Australian psychedelic indie rocker Kevin Parker, most well known by the name Tame Impala. Many people don’t realize that Tame Impala is actually solely Kevin Parker making all of the music, only consisting of multiple people while playing shows. This remix now features Lil Yachty, owner of one of the most unique voices in hip hop. One of the most unexpected crossovers of the year, I really very much enjoyed what I heard. I have seen many opinions from Tame Impala loyalists on Reddit and Twitter that Kevin Parker is letting his “true” fans down by creating remixes like this, which is a point of view that I have a very hard time wrapping my head around. Imagine being so musically closed minded that you get upset when your favorite artist tries to branch out a bit and experiment with different sounds. The more unique music that is out there in this world, the better. But, hey, that’s just my perspective.

A hip hop duo that I finally listened to this past week for the first time, was Run The Jewels, which consists of rapper and producer El-P and rapper Killer Mike. Safe to say, they did not disappoint. I first put on their most popular track, “Legend Has It”, off of their third self-titled project, *Run The Jewels 3*, and boy did that serve as a fantastic introduction to their sound. They have four of these self-titled albums, and while I have not listened to them all at this point, I have never really heard that any of them aren’t enjoyable. I love the fact that there will never be a time where I run out of new music to listen to.

In exciting news for those of us who are big fans of live music, the Red Hot Chili Peppers announced their upcoming 2022 world tour, which will feature several big name hip hop acts as openers during select shows. These acts include A\$AP Rocky, Anderson .Paak and The Free Nationals, and the greatest bass guitar player in the world, Thundercat. Other acts include HAIM, Beck, The Strokes, King Princess, and St. Vincent.

I was introduced by a friend this week to the *Dissect* podcast from Spotify, which takes a deep dive into the discography of a new artist each season. They just premiered their ninth season last

week, which will be dealing with the extensive catalogue of the late Mac Miller. The first episode, entitled *Swimming In Circles*, which was just under forty minutes long, dealt with Mac's last two albums (*Swimming* and *Circles*) and the end of his life. I will be listening every week to their new episodes, and I would encourage you all to do so as well.

In sadder news of rappers going through some troubling times, Kodak Black, who has had frequent run ins with the law and spent plenty of time in prison, posted some tweets late last week that made it appear he was suicidal. "So Lonely Depressed Sad & F***ed Up ... Nobody Love Me Nobody Cares ... I'm Everywhere @ Once ... Friends Playin In My Head ... Girls Playin Wit My Heart , Wish I Can Go Back To The Start I'll Never Be Famous" read the first tweet, followed closely by "Sitting In My Room Crying Feel Like Killing Myself". Obviously, fans and critics alike were all concerned with his safety, but Kodak soon put out a statement apologizing for worrying people and clarified that he was not suicidal. I would type out the statement, but it is jam packed with expletives, so you'll just have to take my word for it.

Memphis rapper Pooh Shiesty was also in the news this week due to his facing a potential life sentence for robbery, aggravated assault and battery, and criminal theft regarding an incident in October 2020. He was also arrested in June in connection to a shooting at a strip club. While many have been speculating that the "Back In Blood" emcee won't receive life, most are saying a sentence of 10+ years should be expected. It's always so incredibly disappointing when artists with plenty of potential end up throwing their lives and careers away like this.

For this week's throwback to my favorite year in music, 2016, I've chosen another sentimental track, "Same Drugs" by Chicago's own Chance The Rapper, off of his third mixtape and most successful project, *Coloring Book*. I was blessed with the opportunity to see Chance perform during this era in his career, and it is still one of the most beautiful shows I have attended. From front to back, *Coloring Book* doesn't have any skips and still gets weekly spins from myself and millions of others.

This week's song of the week goes to one of my favorite tracks of 2021, "Bad Boy" from the late Juice WRLD, featuring Young Thug. The production from Pi'erre Bourne is simply impeccable and the bars from Juice and Thugger fit the vibe so well. The music video that accompanies the track is also one of my favorites of all time, directed by Lyrical Lemonade's Cole Bennett, and tragically the last one that Juice was a part of.

One last thing before I go, a shameless plug - if you or anyone else is looking for new music, my Favorites playlist, which I have been maintaining since January 2014 when I was 15, consists of over 6,000 songs at this point. It is full of tracks from thousands of artists from just about every genre you can think of. Listen below, and see you next week!

commARCH Hip-Hop News - October 16, 2021

This was a week in hip hop with not too many happenings, but what did go on was big news.

For starters, *Faces*, perhaps the most impressive collection of songs that Mac Miller put out during his lifetime was finally released on streaming services after seven and a half years, where many more casual fans had the privilege of hearing it for the very first time. With its incredibly dark lyrics, sounds, and topics, it is very difficult to listen to knowing not only is Mac no longer alive, but the manner in which he died as well. Nonetheless, it still stands as an incredible body of work. A few of my favorite tracks are “Wedding”, “Diablo”, “San Francisco”, and “Grand Finale”, but the entire album is of a quality that matches those four as well.

A bonus track was also released called “Yeah”, and boy was it a doozy. Whenever I hear a new track from Mac nowadays, I get chills knowing that it could very well be the last time. If this one is the last, it, like most of the others, would be a great send off.

His estate has essentially created the blueprint of how the work of artists who face untimely deaths should be handled. Not only have they not milked his name and likeness for all that it was worth, but they have made sure the world understands the work that went into making this music. Alongside a visualizer for each of the tracks off of *Faces*, a short film was released on his official YouTube channel that chronicles the making of the project.

The big release of the week was Young Thug’s long awaited second studio album, *Punk*. Featuring guest appearances from Strick, J. Cole, T-Shyne, Gunna, Future, BSlime, Juice WRLD, Post Malone, ASAP Rocky, Lil Double 0, Drake, Travis Scott, Doja Cat, Nate Ruess, Jeff Bhasker, and Mac Miller, a good chunk of people, including myself were very exciting to hear this body of work. If I’m being honest, I’ve never really been the biggest fan of Thugger’s solo work, but he almost always secures quality features. It was definitely an above average project, but only about half of the features lived up to the hype in my eyes. Still, *Punk* is nonetheless worth a listen.

The only other release that I paid much attention to was Zack Fox’s *shut the f*** up talking to me*. Zack Fox is mainly a comedian, which is very much reflected in his music, which he doesn’t take seriously, a refreshing sign in a world where everyone is trying to be a big time personality/musician. What is impressive is that Zack genuinely has bars and a good flow, along with getting beats from several established producers, including Kenny Beats and The Alchemist. Give it a listen if you’re not looking to take anything too seriously today.

This was unfortunately a pretty difficult week in terms of loss within the hip hop community. D. Hill, the producer most notably behind Future’s part in his massive hit with Drake “Life Is

Good”, was found dead this past Thursday, with no cause of death yet being revealed. Also passing away on the same day was singer Emani 22, who most notably had some guest appearances on Trippie Redd’s 2018 project, *A Love Letter To You 3*. Her tragic passing is currently attributed to a “tragic accident.”

Fetty Wap, New Jersey native and king of 2015 announced that he will be releasing a new project this coming Friday, October 22nd. Fetty suffered one of the most notable fall-offs in hip hop in recent memory, but has still had several notable guest appearances since storming onto the scene. He possesses such a unique voice that I genuinely could see him mounting a comeback and owning 2022.

This week in flashback to 2016, I present “Panda” by Desiigner. I remember the end of my senior year of high school hearing this song from the Brooklyn rapper for the first time and being certain it was Future, though I have since learned that Desiigner has his own very unique style of pep and ad-libs. First being previewed on Kanye West’s 2016 masterpiece *The Life Of Pablo*, Desiigner’s eccentric personality drew audiences in, and while he has not had another mega hit since this one, he has snowballed a respectable career in the industry out of this track.

J. Cole’s “She Knows”, off of his 2013 album *Born Sinner* is this week’s track of the week. Perhaps my favorite J. Cole track ever, it has such a distinct sound and memorable vibe. It’s one of those songs that I really cannot comprehend someone not enjoying, it just has such a perfect sound.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - October 24, 2021

As we enter the best time of year (business wise) to release new music, the world is getting to enjoy the fruits of artist's labor at an expanded level. The music industry is in full motion, and that is great news for people like you and I.

It was announced yesterday that A\$AP Rocky's debut mixtape, *Live. Love. ASAP*, would be getting an official release this Friday, October 29th, two days short of the tenth anniversary of its initial release. This is great news for fans of the Harlem rapper, who fans have not heard much from this year, apart from songs that he appears on as a featured artist. His last large crop of new music came three years ago in 2018 when, in May he released his third studio album, *Testing*. That November, he released arguably his top song, "Sundress". Including that beauty of a song, Rocky has released several other singles for our enjoyment that are not linked to upcoming projects. He supposedly has an album set to be released this calendar year, entitled *All Smiles*, but it remains to be seen if that is true.

Live. Love. ASAP over the years has become known as a classic, and to an extent set a precedent for similarly styled albums released over the past decade. Definitely tap in and give this body of work a listen on Friday.

This past Friday, October 22nd, JPEGMafia released his fourth album, *LP!*. It certainly had the sound that I have grown accustomed to hearing from Peggy over the course of my time listening to him. While it didn't blow my mind, I still enjoyed most of the songs on the tracklist and would encourage you all to give it, along with the rest of his discography a listen.

Also being released this past Friday was Houston rapper Maxo Kream's third album *Weight of the World*. Honestly, even after just my initial listen to the project, I would say that this record is one of my ten favorites of the year. While there were a couple of songs that stuck out to me, including "BIG PERSONA" with Tyler, The Creator and "LOCAL JOKER", what impressed me most was the consistency of the album. There were genuinely no tracks that I skipped while listening to it. Hop on the hype train now - I would not be shocked if Maxo Kream is the next big thing.

Continuing the busy Friday of releases, New Jersey's very own Fetty Wap released his latest project *The Butterfly Effect*, and I have to say, I really think that he's one radio hit away from once again being on top of the world like he was six years ago in 2015. As I've said before, the man has such a unique voice that nowadays is so rare to come across in music. That along with his very recognizable image has always been a great recipe for success. Go give Fetty some love and stream *The Butterfly Effect*.

Maryland rapper Wale also put out a project on Friday, entitled *Folarin II*, with features that include J. Cole, Rick Ross, Chris Brown, Jamie Foxx, and Ant Clemens, among others. The hip hop veteran is well known and respected throughout the industry, and while I have not yet listened to the project, I will in the near future, with very optimistic expectations.

Mick Jenkins continued the rollout for his upcoming album *Elephant in the Room* with the release of the second single from the project, “Scottie Pippen”. Another solid single, I’m very much looking forward to hearing the album in its entirety when it is released on Friday. It seems that he very rarely lets his fans down as far as music quality goes.

The best single that came out this week, by far, was “What A Life” from Big Sean, featuring production from Hit-Boy. The flow on this beat is impeccable and fits perfectly with Big Sean’s style. I must have played it five or six times on repeat after my first listen, it really is that good. One of the top singles of the year in my honest opinion, so go give it a listen!

Jack Harlow, this past week, released the music video to Luv Is Dro, a song from his most recent album, December 2020’s *Thats What They All Say*. The song, which features fellow Louisville natives Bryson Tiller and the late Static Major, serves as a kind of ode to their home city. Mr. Harlow always puts out great music videos and this one was truly no exception, it might very well be my favorite. Watch Louisville’s anthem below.

Swedish House Mafia, a supergroup of three DJs hailing from, you guessed it, Sweden, released the third single from their upcoming debut studio album *Paradise Again*, “Moth To A Flame” which features one of the hottest names in music, The Weeknd. While SHM has been a big name for some years, until now, they had only released compilation albums, in 2010 and 2012 respectively. It’s a good track, there isn’t really anything that I heard that makes it stick out very much. That being said, I still think it is worth a listen.

Speaking of Sweden, there was also some very sad and significant news out of the world of Swedish hip hop, with one of the country’s most notable artists being murdered in an execution-style killing. The nineteen year old artist known as Einar died this past Thursday, roughly a week before he was due to testify in court against fellow rapper Yasin, along with the Stockholm crime gang Vårbynätverket. His death was the last chapter in a troubled last couple of years, a saga which included him being kidnapped, held at gunpoint, and robbed in a plot that had been planned by Yasin, who was later sentenced to 10 months in prison. Following this kidnapping and going on until his death, Einar was using a protected identity and was consistently receiving death threats.

In some refreshingly uplifting news, a community made up of Cryptocurrency investors purchased the long elusive one-of-a-kind Wu Tang Clan album *Once Upon a Time in Shaolin* for

\$4 million. Originally purchased in July, the identity of the buyer was not known until this past week. Having infamously belonged to widely hated and disgraced hedge fund manager Martin Shkreli, the album was seized by the United States government after Shkreli had to forfeit more than \$7 million in assets following his security fraud conviction. RZA, one of the key members of Wu Tang specified during its original sale in 2015 that the album could not be publicly released until 2103. Looks like we all have a good reason to make it past age 100.

This week's flashback to 2016 is possibly my favorite song from that beautiful year, "Broccoli" by DRAM, featuring Lil Yachty. There is no track and music video combo that makes me grin like an idiot when I hear and see it. If you listen to one song featured in this article, let it be this one. It's bound to brighten your day, even if it's so very slight.

This week's song of the week is the track that was the soundtrack to the fall semester of my sophomore year of college in 2018, "Mo Bamba" by Sheck Wes. Named after the Orlando Magic big man who Sheck Wes grew up with in New York City, the song became one of the biggest songs of that year and pulled Sheck Wes out of obscurity and made him a relatively household name. The music video is also criminally underrated, always making me laugh when I watch.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - October 31, 2021

There was some unexpected and quite frankly disappointing news in the hip hop world this week, so let's just real quick get that out of the way.

Fetty Wap, who released his album *The Butterfly Effect* last week, which I called his best work in years, was arrested by the FBI at Citi Field in New York City over the weekend. This news, which seemingly came out of nowhere, was the culmination of a roughly two year long investigation by the bureau in which Fetty was revealed to be a main player in the distribution of large quantities of heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, and crack throughout Long Island and his native New Jersey.

He had been set to perform at Rolling Loud NYC on the first day of the festival but according to reports was taken into custody not long after arriving at the venue. The charges that he is facing are extremely serious and carry a minimum sentence of ten years in prison if convicted and can potentially go all the way up to a life sentence. Some truly disappointing news from someone who seemingly had the world in his hands five years ago.

Mick Jenkins released his long awaited album *Elephant in the Room* on Friday, which I gave a listen to immediately. I feel like I may have set my expectations too high, because while I thoroughly enjoyed the record, some songs were just a bit bland for my taste. Still - give it a listen when you have time.

Big Sean pleasantly surprised myself and many others by dropping an EP with producer Hitboy after having released an absolute banger of a single, and the project - *What You Expect* - did not disappoint, it was exactly what I expected.

Speaking of Big Sean, he announced shortly after dropping the project that he was leaving Kanye West's label G.O.O.D. Music, which he had been signed to since being discovered by Mr. West in 2007. The move came as a bit of a shock, but the label has been winding down for years. There are currently only five solo acts signed on who have released projects since being a part of it - Kanye, Pusha T, 070 Shake, Valee, and Sheck Wes.

This past Friday was one of the best release days of 2021 thus far, further being cemented by the streaming release of A\$AP Rocky's breakthrough 2011 mixtape *LIVE.LOVE.A\$AP*. While three songs from the tape did not make it to streaming because of sampling restrictions, fans were treated to a brand new bonus track, "Sandman", which has quickly become a fan favorite. Do yourself a favor this week and stream this lovely piece of art, you'll be better off for it.

A joint track from Jay-Z and Kid Cudi was released on Friday as part of the soundtrack of the upcoming film *The Harder They Fall*, entitled “Guns Go Bang”. It didn’t seem as organic as it could have been, it seemed very just pieced together and commercial. Honestly, this is to be expected when artists reach a certain level of popularity, which these two obviously have. Through my ears, it still sounded great - these two rarely miss.

A trailer for a documentary about the life of Kid Cudi, entitled *A Man Named Scott* (a play on the title of his 2008 debut mixtape *A Kid Named Cudi*) was released by Amazon Prime, with the release of the full documentary slated for this Friday, November 5th. It’s safe to say that I will be tuning in, as Kid Cudi is tied for my favorite artist of all time. I would encourage you all to do the same.

Hip hop legend turned actor Ice Cube declined a \$9 million movie role for Sony’s “Oh Hell No” due to his unwillingness to become vaccinated. It must be nice being that wealthy, as I genuinely cannot fathom turning down that kind of money for a reason as silly as that. But hey, his body is his choice, I suppose.

This week, my favorite song from the golden year of 2016 was Lil Yachty’s breakout solo hit “Minnesota”. I remember hearing it for the first time and it was just so cheerful and fun to listen to, bringing a genuine smile to my face. The man just has that effect.

My song of the week is “Wonderful” by founding Odd Future member Casey Veggies, featuring the man with the heavenly voice, Ty Dolla \$ign. I still get chills after having listened to it hundreds of times over the years, it is such a wonderfully composed tune.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - November 7, 2021

Well, I think you all unfortunately know what is going to be the main focus of the blog this week is going to be. An unfathomable tragedy took place over the weekend on day 1 of the Astroworld Festival in Houston, Texas, presented by one of the biggest names in hip hop and music in general, Travis Scott.

Eight people, with ages ranging from 14 to 27, were killed during Travis Scott's set at the third installment of the festival that he started in 2018. When a timer that had been counting down from thirty minutes until the beginning of his set grew closer to zero, many of the crowd of 50,000 pushed forward in an attempt to be closer to the stage during his set. This resulted in many being crushed and pushed together, causing difficulty breathing and panic amongst the spectators. Watching through some interviews with some of those in the audience that were fortunate enough to escape the madness, a main sentiment seems to be that if you tripped up or passed out and ended up on the ground, you were in serious trouble, essentially becoming a part of the ground. Eleven people were initially in cardiac arrest, with emergency responders bringing three of them back. Over 300 people were injured, with 23 initially being hospitalized and 13 remaining there receiving care as of this writing. Obviously, the second day of the festival was just about immediately cancelled.

It should also be noted that it is being investigated as to whether or not there was someone in the crowd injecting victims with a mystery substance, as one security guard has reported being stuck in the neck by a needle during all of the mayhem.

Now, there is going to be a lot to unpack regarding this tragic news not only now, but over the foreseeable future as more details come out and questions begin to be answered. Right now, the two entities that appear to be facing the most scrutiny for what went down are Travis Scott himself and Live Nation, the company that organizes and manages many of the aspects of the festival itself. Travis has faced scrutiny in past years over his concerts and his behavior during them, including being arrested twice in 2015 and 2018. If you look up videos of his shows, you will quickly see why this is. Live Nation has also been hit with several OSHA violations over the years. It should be expected that the lawsuits against the both of them will begin to pile up in the coming months.

Speaking as a longtime Travis Scott fan, I really think he deserves all the legal headaches and damage to his career that is coming his way. Eight young people, including two children, are gone from this world forever, and the two statements that he has put out, one on Twitter and another a video on his Instagram story, seem like they were written by his lawyers and/or management. He is going to have quite a bit of genuine apologizing and actual action to do if he ever wants his image to recover, but that is seeming rather unlikely at this point in time.

I will be keeping you all updated from week to week as this massive story, probably the biggest in hip hop of 2021, continues to evolve, so stay tuned.

At midnight on Friday, the same day as the disaster, Travis Scott actually released two singles as well, entitled “ESCAPE PLAN” and “MAFIA”. I’m not going to go into much detail on them because my view of Travis is a bit warped at the moment, but I will say that when I initially listened to them before all of this went down, I enjoyed both quite a bit.

Also, in what I promise will be the last you hear of Travis Scott in this week’s post, XXL magazine reports that investor documents from Sony reveal that new projects from Scott, A\$AP Rocky, 21 Savage, and more are due out within the next six months. However, I would be very surprised if the release date for Travis stays where it was before the disaster. Everything really just got flipped upside down for him. I am, however, stoked for a new A\$AP Rocky album. There really has not been a project from him that I have not enjoyed.

Aminé, who released my favorite album of 2020 (*Limbo*), released a new project on Friday with very little notice. Entitled *TWOPOINTFIVE*, it consists of twelve tracks which for the most part are all around two minutes long. While I did not like it as much as I did *Limbo*, there were seven tracks from the project that went straight to my favorites playlist. Listen to my favorite of those below and absolutely listen to the entire project when you have thirty minutes to spare.

In fascinating hip hop news, the United States Congress declared November to be National Hip Hop History Month, so congratulations! You are currently living in the first ever month of this being celebrated.

What is currently my favorite YouTube channel, Channel 5 with Andrew Callaghan, which conducts interviews with people who are taking part in fascinating or controversial events across the country, uploaded a fifteen minute video this past week which featured interviews with attendees of the Utah Rap Festival in Salt Lake City. I was happy to see some interviews in the video with artists that I listen to, including Yung Gravy, bbno\$, and ZillaKami. This video gave me some of the most genuine laughs I have had in a while and in its last portion features what may be a superstar in the making. Absolutely give it a watch.

Ye, the hip hop superstar who recently had his name legally changed from Kanye West, gave one of his craziest and most controversial interviews in some time this past week on the *Drink Champs* podcast. He discussed some wide ranging topics, from his relationship with the late

NBA superstar Kobe Bryant to his continuing feud with Drake to religion to politics. I'm not going to spoil any of it for you, as it really is a treat to watch with your own eyes.

Two more notable singles that were released over the weekend were "Smokin Out The Window" by Silk Sonic, the superduo consisting of Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak and "One Right Now" from Post Malone and The Weeknd. The latter is due for some ridiculous commercial success considering the names that are attached. It also really has the sound of a radio hit, having a very safe beat that not many will question, being very mediocre and sounding like plenty of tunes before it. The Silk Sonic track is the fourth to be released from their upcoming nine track album *An Evening with Silk Sonic*, which is due out this coming Friday, November 12th. It is safe to say that unless some sort of surprise release comes out, Silk Sonic will be my first spin on Friday.

My favorite 2016 song from this past week was "Rose Golden" by Kid Cudi featuring WILLOW. This song brings back some very fond memories of winter 2016 when *Passion, Pain & Demon Slayin'* was first released, which in my opinion is by far the most underrated album from Cudi's discography. I see myself finally purchasing a vinyl copy of it in the very near future to celebrate the fifth anniversary of its release.

This week's song of the week is "Young Forever" by Jay-Z featuring Mr. Hudson, off of his 2009 project *The Blueprint 3*. Following hearing of the tragic events at Astroworld, I found myself listening to this track more than any other, with thoughts of the victims streaking through my mind.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - November 14, 2021

Once again, this week will start out with the sad news, as to not dwell too much on something we unfortunately cannot go back in time and change.

Two more attendees of November 5th's deadly Astroworld Festival passed away over the last week, bringing the total number of fatalities to ten and making the concert the deadliest hip hop event in history. Bharti Shahani, a 22 year old senior at Texas A&M University died in the hospital this past Wednesday, five days after sustaining her injuries. Perhaps most tragically, 9 year old Ezra Blount died of his injuries just a few hours ago as of this being written. Having been attending the festival with his father, Ezra fell into the pile of people when his father, whose shoulders he had been sitting on, passed out from the pressure of the thousands surrounding him. Ezra sustained traumatic injuries to several of his organs as well as swelling to his brain. With a child this young being so senselessly lost, I really do not see any path where Travis Scott finds his way back to the success he had prior to this year's festival.

Other victims included fourteen year old John Hilgert, sixteen year old Brianna Rodriguez, twenty year old Jacob Jurinek, Franco Patino and Axel Acosta, both 21, 23 year olds Rudy Peña and Madison Dubiski, and Danish Baig, 27. Through all of this horrible news stemming from Astroworld, try to keep the names and memory of the victims at the front of your mind.

In an effort to execute some sort of further damage control, Travis Scott announced that he would be paying for all funeral expenses of those who passed at the show, which is a good start to things I suppose. He also partnered with online therapy company BetterHelp to provide survivors with some free counseling if needed. I must admit that this move is strange as a partnership of any kind in this situation where anyone is making money off of a tragedy just seems wrong, even if the intentions are good. In my bit of light research, I have also found that BetterHelp does not have the best reputation for doing exactly what it advertises in its name. In my experience, virtual mental health sessions just are not nearly as effective as seeing someone in person and being able to look them in the eyes and tell them what exactly is going on.

As a result of everything, Travis also made the obvious decision to drop out of the lineup for the Day N Vegas, which took place this past weekend in, you guessed it, Las Vegas. The organizers didn't seem to have much trouble filling the vacancy with another artist with just as much star power, as they quickly secured a set from Post Malone.

Silk Sonic, the superduo consisting of Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak, finally released their collaborative album this past Friday that has been teased since early March. The two jolly hitmakers put out *An Evening With Silk Sonic* to what seem to be fantastic reviews from critics and the public alike thus far. While not my absolute favorite record from a year that has consisted

of some incredible tunes, there is no doubt that the nine track project is still very, very good. It is very easy to understand why people adore these two. Of the five songs that had not already been released as singles in the months leading up to November 12, 2021, I would say that my favorite is “After Last Night” which features the talents of renowned bassist Thundercat as well as the host of the album, legendary funk talent Bootsy Collins.

Juice WRLD’s second posthumous album, *Fighting Demons*, was announced this past week, with a release date slated for December 10th, two days after the second anniversary of Juice’s death and eight days after what would have been his 23rd birthday. His estate also released the lead single from the record, a track eerily called “Already Dead”. Listening to it, one really can’t justify the notion that Juice was planning on growing old. He was well aware that his lifestyle was going to catch up and take his life through one way or another, which makes the circumstances and the fact that he is just gone forever that much more difficult to deal with. Thank goodness his voice will live on forever.

Freddie Gibbs also announced that he would be dropping an album before year’s end. In a tweet on Wednesday, he shared the star studded list of producers who would have credits on the project, and it made me even more excited for Freddie’s end of year rhymes. “Madlib, Alchemist, Boi 1da, Pharrell, Jake One, DJ Paul, Justice League, Working On Dying, Seven Thomas, Tay Keith, Kaytranada, Bizness Boi... I got the best album of the year.”

Merlyn Wood, one of my favorite members of the best boyband since One Direction, BROCKHAMPTON, released his first solo song since 2017 on Friday, “S.Y.K.” The man has such a wonderfully unique voice and I implore you to listen to all three of his solo tracks that are available on streaming services, as well as pretty much all of BROCKHAMPTON’s discography.

As I was wrapping this post up, I found out that Kanye finally released the deluxe edition of his most recent album, *DONDA*. This edition features five new songs that have yet to see streaming but have already made the rounds online. One of these songs is “Life of the Party”, featuring André 3000, which I think is the best guest verse on any song in 2021, which is saying quite a bit. His words are really so beautiful and flow so well. The other new tracks are “Remote Control pt. 2”, “Never Abandon Your Family”, “Up From The Ashes”, and “Keep My Spirit Alive pt. 2”. “Come to Life” now also features backing vocals from Tyler, The Creator.

My throwback to 2016 this week is not an official track, but man do I wish it was. Every year, XXL Magazine compiles a list of up and coming hip hop artists and calls them the freshman list. 2016’s class is pretty much recognized as the best the magazine has ever had, with nearly every name on the list having had a fantastic last five years. Among the promotions for the freshman issue is a freestyle and cypher from each of the artists. Below, Denzel Curry, Lil Uzi Vert, Lil Yachty, 21 Savage, and Kodak Black have a blast in their cypher, a moment which really

kickstarted all of their careers. Half a decade later and millions of listeners continue to come back to this video simply because it was the best. It is worth mentioning that the five other artists from the class who aren't in this particular cypher were Anderson .Paak, Desiigner, Lil Dicky, Dave East, and G Herbo; really no one has been a bust.

My song of the week is one that when I remember it exists every few years, I play it on repeat until I hate it and can't listen anymore, leading to my waiting a few more years. "A Star Is Born" by Jay Z features a young J. Cole who really broke out into the mainstream with his extraordinary guest appearance here. To this day, I still think it has some of his best bars.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - November 21, 2021

Perhaps the biggest name in Memphis hip hop was gunned down this past week while buying cookies for his mother. Young Dolph, the 36 year old self proclaimed King of Memphis, was at Makeda's Cookies in his native city when two suspects pulled up outside of the store and opened fire from the outside. Dolph, who survived a separate attempt on his life in Los Angeles in 2017, leaves behind his partner and two children. While listening to his music after hearing of his passing, "While U Here" came on, and boy, is it now very depressingly haunting.

Travis Scott continues to face more and more criticism and consequences for the ten deaths and hundreds of injuries stemming from his Astroworld Festival disaster earlier this month. Nearly two billion dollars in lawsuits have been filed against Scott and his codefendants. I really do not think that his image will ever fully recover.

Kanye West and Drake made a surprising announcement on social media when they showed themselves together with J Prince, who reportedly helped the two of them squash the beef between them that has been brewing for years at this point. The selling point of the beef squash seems to have been the two joining forces for a benefit concert in December to bring attention to the case of Larry Hoover, a gang leader from Chicago who is currently serving six life sentences behind bars, who they hope to somehow free. But hey, whatever it takes for them to be on good terms again.

Earl Sweatshirt dropped a surprise new track this past Friday, entitled "2010". It features a groovy beat that is very different from what fans are used to hearing Mr. Sweatshirt rhyme over. He absolutely impresses all throughout the track and is supposedly releasing a project in the relatively near future, so stay tuned.

Freddie Gibbs also released a new song on Friday, "Black Illuminati", which features a guest appearance from Jadakiss. For the most part, it is a very typical Freddie track, which isn't bad by any means, though I always love to hear artists continue to evolve. The music video, one of my favorites of November, is below for your enjoyment.

Isaiah Rashad released a deluxe edition of his most recent project, *The House Is Burning*. This version includes three bonus tracks, along with a remix to "RIP Young". With guest appearances from Project Pat, Juicy J, Young Nudy, Kal Banx, Deante' Hitchcock, and UMI, this is not one you want to miss.

Another project that came out on Friday was *Winter Flower*, from one of my favorite producers, Clams Casino. Though only sixteen minutes long, it cracks my top three new releases of the

month. In my opinion, he makes some of the best music to relax to, out of any musician in the world.

Other albums that were released on Friday were *Snoop Dogg Presents Algorithm* from, you guessed it, Snoop Dogg, and *They Got Amnesia* from French Montana. Honestly, it has been a while since I have enjoyed a new Snoop album, and I have never liked French Montana very much, but I also have not listened to either album, so you be the judge.

Also, if you are looking for some hip hop holiday tunes, Bryson Tiller just released *A Different Christmas*, which puts a nostalgic and sweet spin on the holidays. This is a collection of some very quality tunes that I say is worth listening to.

For this week's favorite song from 2016, I chose "Frankie Sinatra" by The Avalanches, an Australian electronic music group. The release of this song was a return to new music for them, having not released anything for sixteen years prior. It was the perfect track for these circumstances, featuring two legends, Danny Brown and the late MF DOOM.

My song of the week is "Put It On" by another incredibly skilled artist who died far too young, Big L. It is his most popular track, and deservedly so. Though he was killed nearly 23 years ago in February 1999, the words of the young emcee live on to this day.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - November 28, 2021

We start this week off with more sad news in the world of hip hop and its surrounding culture. Virgil Abloh, the acclaimed designer for brands like Louis Vuitton and Off-White, died on Sunday, November 28th. The news came as a shock to just about everyone, as he had apparently been privately battling an extremely rare and aggressive form of cancer called cardiac angiosarcoma since 2019.

There is so much to be said about Virgil's work in fashion, music, and countless other ventures. He was an especially close friend and collaborator of Mr. Kanye West. He had a large part in the design of the cover art of many of Ye's iconic projects including *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, *Watch The Throne*, *Good Music Cruel Summer*, and *Yeezus*. He also served as the Creative Director of DONDA, Kanye's creative content company. It is also worth mentioning that Virgil received his Master's Degree in Architecture from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 2006. Simply put, he was a man of many talents. Following his death, there were numerous tributes posted to social media by many huge names in hip hop and its culture. Virgil Abloh leaves behind his wife and two young children who I'm sure will be well looked after by his friends and family.

Virgil had so much influence on the culture of fashion and music over the last fifteen years or so that it really is difficult to overstate how much of an impact he had on so many people all across the globe. I would really encourage you all to read about Virgil's life and projects that he had put out and experimented with throughout the years so that you can fully appreciate and understand the talent that was lost on Sunday.

Moving onto some brighter news, the iconic animated band Gorillaz are said to have a film in production at Netflix that expands the narrative of their universe, which was created in 1998 by musician Damon Albarn and artist Jamie Hewlett. In total, there are six non-virtual members of the group and four virtual, bringing together an extremely unique concept that is hard to duplicate. Not much information has been released regarding the project, but just knowing that it will someday soon come to Netflix is enough satisfaction for me.

This week marked the first time that I have heard some good news surrounding Florida rapper Kodak Black in quite some time. His charitable foundation partnered with a variety of South Florida businesses to give away over 1,500 turkeys to families in need for Thanksgiving. My fingers are crossed for Kodak to continue this streak of being in the news for positive reasons over the next several months.

The nominations for the upcoming Grammy Awards were released this past week as well, but in the hip hop world, not many paid these nominations much, if any attention. Since 2014's show,

when Macklemore's *The Heist* won Best Rap Album over Kendrick Lamar's *good kids, m.A.A.d. city*, Drake's *Nothing Was the Same*, Kanye's *Yeezus*, and Jay-Z's *Magna Carta... Holy Grail*, people have realized that this awards show will almost always select the most mainstream-friendly music to win.

This year's nominees weren't much different, with the nominees for Best Rap Album being projects from Kanye West, Tyler, The Creator, Drake, J. Cole, and Nas. These were all safe choices. At this point, the Grammys aren't even trying to hide that the entire show is one big popularity contest. I hope Kanye or Tyler wins, but I won't be watching. Before I get off of this topic, it is worth noting that Jay-Z passed Quincy Jones for the most nominations at the Grammys with his nomination for Best Rap Song.

This week, my favorite song from 2016 was "Congratulations" by Mac Miller, off of his project *The Divine Feminine*. The opening track from the album, it really sets the tone and paints an emotional portrait of a relationship that Mac has realized is never going to work no matter how badly the both of them want it to.

My song of the week is "&burn" by Billie Eilish, featuring a verse from Vince Staples, the closing track from her 2017 debut EP *Don't Smile at Me*, released when she was only fifteen years old. Since first hearing it four years ago, this track has continued to grow on me as I continue to listen to it. I hope you all enjoy it as much as I do.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - December 5, 2021

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Spotify put out their annual Spotify Wrapped, where they give users an in-depth look into their listening statistics and patterns. My top five artists, in order, were Mac Miller, Kanye West, Kid Cudi, They Might Be Giants, and G-Eazy. Many users enjoy making their reports public by sharing them on social media, whether it be Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, or even something else. The population seems to be relatively split on whether they enjoy seeing what everyone else listens to or if the two day trend is annoying. Personally? I've never seen how it could be annoying - seeing what acquaintances are listening to get them through each day is so very cool in my opinion. Anybody who doesn't enjoy the trend must have some pretty basic music taste. But hey, that's just my two cents.

Not only did this wonderful December tradition continue, but there was also a very nice crop of singles being released over the past week, though not many full length projects.

I'll start with what projects we were blessed with. A three track surprise collaboration partially posthumous EP was released from the unlikely duo of the late Lil Peep and producer Harry Fraud, whose producer tag is one of my all time favorites. Entitled *HIGH FASHION*, with tracks "Choose", "Living Room", and "Old Me" debuting to audiences, it was emotional to hear Peep's voice in new music. And honestly, none of the three sound like they were thrown together in the least. Either they were all done at his passing or his estate took the process slow and worked alongside Mr. Harry Fraud.

Chicago rapper, artist, and activist Noname announced that she had sidelined her music career for the better part of the last four years so that she could focus on things she felt were more important in the present day. Noname's activism and empathy have no doubt been extremely important to her in recent years.

Singles released included "MERCEDES" from the talented Brent Faiyaz, "Sinister" from Cordae and Lil Wayne, 070 Shake's "Lose My Cool" featuring NLE Choppa, and "Wandered To LA", a posthumous release from Juice WRLD featuring Justin Bieber, and the second single from his second posthumous album *Fighting Demons*, due out this coming Friday.

Philadelphia's Tierra Whack also released a three track EP over the weekend, which I have not yet listened to, but I have always enjoyed her tunes, so I'm not expecting much different from *Rap?*. Go give it a listen.

commARCH Hip-Hop News - December 12, 2021

Travis Scott is once again in the news this week for actions related to the tragedy at his Astroworld Festival on November 5th. In an interview released on Thursday, he chatted with The Breakfast Club's Charlamagne Tha God going over what went down that night from his perspective and where they go from here. In my eyes, and I'm sure many others share this perspective, it was way too soon to be doing an in depth interview like this, the tragedy happened barely one month ago. It also was not the greatest idea having someone like Charlamagne conduct things, while he is known as someone who constantly pokes and prods interviewees to get controversial responses.

Travis essentially denied all responsibility, which was to be expected, and really did not provide many answers that people were not already aware of. He seemed uncharacteristically nervous throughout the interview, knowing that his career is on the line. The nerves especially presented themselves in Travis' repetition of his words throughout the fifty minute ordeal, saying "you know" 271 times. Like I have said before, I do not see his career ever coming back to where it was before November 2021.

He was also dropped from headlining Coachella in April, even after supposedly offering to perform his set for free. It is clear that he has become far too much of a liability to festivals, whose entire reputation can be made or broken by safety issues like those that happened at Astroworld.

Finally, his line of hard seltzer, Cacti, was discontinued, not because it did not taste good at all (which is true), but purely because of who it is associated with. This incident will forever taint his career and cost him millions upon millions of dollars for the rest of his life.

Another Houston artist was in the news this week, though in a much more positive light. Megan Thee Stallion graduated from college over the weekend, joining a growing list of hip hop artists who have received degrees. With a Bachelor's Degree in Health Administration from Texas Southern University, Megan walked the stage to massive cheers from friends, family, and fans alike.

Some other positive news that came from this week is the announcement straight from Kid Cudi that he plans on releasing two new albums in 2022. One had already been expected to be released along with his upcoming Netflix show *Entergalactic*, with the album being called the same. However, he said during his performance at Rolling Loud California that he wants to release a project before then. There is lots to be excited about these days as a Kid Cudi fan.

Juice WRLD's second posthumous album, *Fighting Demons*, was released on Friday, two days after the second anniversary of his sudden death, and eight days after what would have been his 23rd birthday. To be completely honest, after my first listen, I had some rather neutral feelings regarding the product that Juice's estate put together. Obviously, it just felt like a bunch of songs thrown together rather than having some sort of concept, so that was disappointing but expected. There were not any tracks that stuck out to me as going to do extremely well on the charts, unlike his last album, *Legends Never Die*, which had "Wishing Well". Nevertheless, I would recommend giving it a listen, as this could be the last collection of songs we get from Jarad Higgins.

Kanye West and Drake officially squashed their years long beef on December 9th when they put on a benefit concert and campaigned side by side for the release of Larry Hoover, one of the most bloodthirsty gangsters to walk the streets of Chicago. The fact that two of the biggest names in music are trying their darndest to get a murderer who is serving six life sentences in one of the highest level security prisons in the world back out onto the streets just confuses me to no end. There has been some speculation that Kanye had been trying so hard to secure Hoover's release in an effort to salvage his crumbling marriage to Kim Kardashian, who has long worked on getting some prisoners around the country exonerated. Either way, it was just nice to see Kanye and Drake side by side once again, looking very happy.

In other Aubrey Graham news, a longtime outspoken critic of the Grammy Awards, Drake withdrew his name from consideration for the 2022 awards, for which he had been nominated in two rap categories. This is a rather unprecedented move, making it clear to the show that they need to get it together or many other popular artists will begin following the example of one of the biggest names in music today.

This week, Cordae decided to capitalize on the hype that has surrounded his most recent track, "Sinister", which features Lil Wayne, by announcing that his sophomore album will be released on January 14th, 2022, about a month from now. *From a Birds Eye View* seems to be headed in the right direction for Cordae. While doing well for himself as far as 2019's *The Lost Boy* goes and dating Naomi Osaka, the Maryland wordsmith has faced criticism from many, including myself, that his music is rather bland and doesn't take risks. I hope he proves all of the naysayers wrong, music improving is fantastic news for artists and fans alike.

Also announced for release on January 14th is Earl Sweatshirt's fourth studio album and first since 2018's *Some Rap Songs*. Entitled *Sick!*, it will be Mr. Sweatshirt's first non-single release since his 2019 EP *Feet of Clay*. Earl is one of those rappers who is constantly switching up his style and sound, experimenting with his versatility, which is something that I can always appreciate.

Along with the announcement of the ten song album was the release of its second single, “Tabula Rasa” which features Armand Hammer, along with the track’s music video. I definitely do not like it as much as I did “2010”, the lead single, but it is still so far ahead of the music most artists have been putting out lately. It’s quite rare that Earl puts out any material with very little substance, so be on the lookout for *Sick!* and listen to his discography in preparation.

Other artists that released projects on Friday included Rick Ross, Pi’erre Bourne, A Boogie wit da Hoodie, and Russ. I have not yet listened to any of them, but I’m not often disappointed by this crop of rappers, so be ready for quality tunes if you plan on providing a listen.

If you are looking for new music that is going to be out sooner rather than later, look no further than Chief Keef’s newest project, *4NEM*, which is due out this Friday, December 17th.

Compton rapper Slim 400 was shot and killed late Wednesday in Inglewood, California. Another talented name gone far too soon, at just 33 years old. He had previously been shot nine times in 2019 but survived. His death is currently being investigated as being gang-related.

Rod Wave worried his fanbase this week with the release of a new song, “Nirvana”, in which he emotionally raps about his trauma and thoughts of suicide, which was followed by his deleting social media accounts. Obviously, many thought that he was planning to soon take his own life, but he soon cleared things up and said that he never meant for his words to be perceived like that, and that it was actually for suicide prevention more than anything.

I saw a YouTube video this week that was one of the most entertaining pieces of media I think I have ever seen. Andrew Callaghan of Channel 5 News, formerly All Gas No Brakes interviews budding recording artist and street legend Crip Mac, who in the past had been interviewed by Adam22 of the popular podcast No Jumper. The man is one of the funniest characters, intentional or not, that I think has ever existed.

Going from one Mac to another, I want to bring your attention to a video that I saw for the first time this week that really is a must watch. It shows the entirety of Mac Miller’s final performance on August 4th, 2018, just 34 days before his tragic death. Watching it now while knowing his fate is so chilling and very sad; but it is so important to continue to appreciate the talent that he had.

My favorite music video this week was Rae Sremmurd’s “Powerglide”, which features Juicy J. I remember hearing this track for the first time when my friend put it on the morning following a night out, and hearing it made me feel invincible. Just when I thought it couldn’t get any better, I watched the music video. You should do the same.

Just over five years ago, on December 9th, 2016, Post Malone's debut studio album *Stoney* was released. While not initially super well received by critics, it has since aged like fine wine, with multiple hits coming from it, including "Congratulations", "I Fall Apart", "White Iverson", "Too Young", "Feeling Whitney", and my personal favorite "Go Flex".

This week's top song was Jack Harlow's "Dark Knight", where a clean shaven, nineteen year old Harlow absolutely goes in on what would turn out to be his first hit; it's been in my head all week.

I want to introduce this week a playlist of the 100 songs that have been getting me through the last three months, to be updated weekly. Presenting commARCH's 100 in Rotation.