



REVIEW: ‘Midnights’ at Mizzou, Taylor Swift’s new album provides relatable lyrics for college students

The singer–songwriter’s 10th studio album boasts a fresh sound as she explores the realm of sleepless nights.

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Sleepless nights, tiring relationships and self-worth struggles are themes Taylor Swift explores in her latest album. For college students, “Midnights” provides 13 tracks that discuss some of the struggles they face on a daily basis.

American singer and songwriter Taylor Swift released her 10th studio album on Oct. 21. The 13-track album was announced on Aug. 28 during Swift’s acceptance speech at the 2022 MTV Video Music Awards.

“Midnights” portrays the complexities and thoughts that contributed to 13 pivotal sleepless nights throughout Swift’s life. From sadder, more dramatic songs hinting at darker undertones of someone’s death to playful, more upbeat tracks following tropes of falling in love, Swift’s newest collection of songs unpacks a plethora of reasons that might keep someone up at night.

“This is a collection of music written in the middle of the night, a journey through terrors and sweet dreams,” Swift said on social media platforms when announcing “Midnights.” “The floors we pace and the demons we face. For all of us who have tossed and turned and decided to keep the lanterns lit and go searching — hoping that just maybe, when the clock strikes twelve ... we’ll meet ourselves.”

While none of Swift’s albums boast the exact same genres, rhythms or production styles, the overall sound of “Midnights” barely resembles any of her previous work. Her lyrics and production style boast a new, edgier sound that has both delighted and disappointed fans.

“Midnights” tackles deeper lyrics and themes by juxtaposing the album’s pop tendencies with frequent synthetic styles. Singer, songwriter and producer Jack

Antonoff remains one of the key reasons “Midnights” strays from Swift’s traditional sound. Although the pair has collaborated on numerous albums before, “Midnights” is Swift’s first album where Antonoff was the only main collaborator. This album’s synthesized sounds and techno tendencies resembles other music Antonoff has produced and released.

“My first perception of the album was that it was not the sound I was expecting,” freshman Olivia Walsh said. “To say this album grew on me would be an understatement. At first, there were a few songs I really enjoyed. Now, I love almost every song.”

Genres and production style aside, part of what makes listening to any type of music fun and compelling is relating to different songs and lyrics. After releasing her first album at age 17 and continuing to release music to her current age of 32, the severity of Swift’s lyrics intensified as she grew older and inevitably matured. “Midnights” constitutes one of Swift’s more serious, contemplative albums.

Despite upbeat melodies and catchy choruses, the album’s overall sound remains mysterious to match Swift’s thought-provoking lyrics. Swift and Antonoff achieve this by strategically placing drum and synth sounds throughout the album.

From staying out late to failed relationships and battling with mental health, the content and themes in this album strike a chord with younger, college-aged listeners.

“I 100% think being a college student has affected my opinion of this album,” Walsh said. “Although she’s more than 10 years older, this reflection of midnights throughout

her life is applicable to me right now. I think if I were in a younger stage of life still I might not appreciate it as much as I do now.”

Of the 13 tracks, “Anti-Hero” stands out as a particularly relatable song for college students. The song follows tropes discussing mental health, self worth and anxiety issues. From more complex lyrics portraying these issues to simpler metaphors comparing people to sexy babies, the song epitomizes the ups and downs that come with mental health journeys.

“I really relate to ‘Anti-Hero’ because it reminds me of mental health struggles I’ve faced, and Taylor perfectly describes the way I’ve felt during those times in my life,” freshman Ella Berg said.

Swift depicts the feelings of never being enough and always questioning one’s worth in this song by comparing herself to an anti-hero. College students constantly comparing themselves to others around them can find comfort in this chorus and song as a whole as they grapple with their mental health journeys.

“I think there are themes in ‘Anti-Hero’ of self loathing that I and many others can connect with,” Walsh said.

Since “Midnights” release, it has become 2022’s best-selling album. Additionally, on Nov. 1 Swift announced that she will tour next year for the first time since 2018. Swifties hoping to hear their favorite tracks from “Midnights” live can purchase tickets starting November 15 for Swift’s July 8 performance in Kansas City at GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium.

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Mizzou Ballroom Dance Club unites wide range of dancers

The newly revived club hosts dance lessons and participates in collegiate competitions

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In a conference room on the second floor of Memorial Union North, students and Columbia community members gather to dance. The Ballroom Dance Club offers the opportunity for brand new ballroom dancers and seasoned shimmers alike to come together and practice. Tunes ranging from Frank Sinatra’s “Come Fly with Me” to Alec Benjamin’s “Shadow of Mine” radiate from a speaker at the front of the room while pairs rotate around the room, practicing their steps.

Both Monday and Wednesday lessons will now be open to anyone starting in late November, regardless of member status or financial contribution to the club. The lessons are split into one hour of beginner skills and one hour of intermediate skills, with Mondays focusing on American Smooth dancing and Wednesdays focusing on American Rhythm dancing. Club members who intend on participating in ballroom competitions also attend practices on Saturday for extra dance time.

There is a wide range of ages and experience levels, but no one is excluded. Some beginners are paired with more seasoned dancers, guiding them through the basics.

“Most of the people that are in ballroom, they’d never danced before,” sophomore and club president Kira Bennett said.

Treasurer Amelia Schneider had no ballroom dancing experience before joining the board.

“I was like, ‘My grandma does ballroom dancing,’” Schneider said. “I should do that and she’ll be proud of me.”

Additionally, Schneider wanted to help Bennett revive the club, which dissolved during the pandemic. Bennett became the president as a freshman and rebuilt it.

“I refer to it as ‘founding’ because when I was given the president position, there was no past leadership, there was no surviving documents,” Bennett said. “I was basically handed the title and told, ‘Figure it out.’”

Bennett oversees an executive board, which pays two instructors. Jason Shearin, one instructor, founded the Ballroom Academy of Columbia. The second, Larinda McRaven, has ballroom danced for 32 years. She teaches dance classes in Jefferson City but comes to MU on Monday nights.

“She’s amazing,” Bennett said. “She’s internationally recognized. We are so extremely lucky to have her.”

In addition to the instructor-led lessons, the club hosts social nights on Saturdays, as well as balls. The club hosted a Valentine’s Day Ball in February 2022 and will host a Halloween Costume Ball on Saturday, Oct. 29. Outside of MU, the Ballroom Dance Club competes nationally. The team traveled to Purdue University on Saturday for a ballroom dancing competition. Members danced in the newcomer category, for dancers with less than a year of experience, Bennett said.

“You have anywhere from two couples to 20 on the same floor, and you just have judges walking around the floor,” Bennett said. “They only look at you for five seconds before they decide if they want you to go onto the next heat. It’s a little intense.”

“We had a couple make it to the quarterfinals three different times, which might not seem like much to a non-ballroom person, but for a first competition is very impressive,” Schneider said. “We learned a lot about how competitions go and where we need to improve, and can’t wait to attend our next competition in March where we will definitely make a bigger impact.”

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