

Listen: Nas: Magic 3 Album Stream



Nas' *Magic 3* is the last in a trilogy and was released on his 50th birthday (September 14th). *Magic 2* came out earlier this summer; this is the second year he has two new albums. In 2021, *King's Disease II* and the first *Magic* album came out. *M3* is his 17th album, making his discography even more distinct beyond his palpable rhymes due to its unusual length. He confronts his next decade by opening the album with the undauntable energy of "Fever," which embraces his new status as an official OG. Nas reminisces on his past life as most people do around their birthdays but he has plenty of joie de vivre for the future. The charmed life of a rap prodigy who was named a future rap king as an '80s teen now rapping about life at half a century is fascinating. Rap music still suffers

from ageism and only a few Gen X male rappers are still making interesting music. *Magic 3* shares the rare air that Nas breathes with Hit-Boy's soul-steeped beats that are chopped up dramatically enough to mimic the movement of a film score. Some of the most striking moments are when he remembers being 19 years old with a child on the way in "Sitting In My Thoughts." There is no longing to return to his youth, and he reflects on how the responsibility of fatherhood drove him in the pursuit of success. Nas' grown-man rap is new territory for the genre because music company executives, some rappers, and many fans never expected anything outside of youth culture.

However, all of the songs are not about the sober parts of getting older because Nas still enjoys the spoils of being a rap superstar on the romantically fickle "Blue Bentley." "Japanese Soul Bar" is a direct admission that it is probably time for his first biopic as he wonders who could portray him. Lil Wayne is the only guest on *Magic 3*, and he drops 24 giddy verses in his unmistakable nasally flow on "Never Die." Nas is clear that reaching his fifth decade will be approached with the same coolness as his previous ones and he also says that he heard the '50s are when you get "really rich in all ways."

The sum of seven consuming albums in the past four years has set a new paradigm for rap as it gets older. It feels symbolic that as Nas has turned 50 so has the genre and he still has something to say. He recently challenged his Gen X peers to follow him by creating music from the heart instead of following trends. LL Cool J, Q-Tip, KRS-One, Mount Westmore, and Shabazz Palaces already agree with him but it remains to be seen who else will add to rap's 50-plus legacy.

