

Twenty-Two From 2022

It's 2023 already and 2022 seemed to go by in a flash. Take a look back at some of the best albums of 2022.



Beyoncé- Renaissance

Beyoncé's *Renaissance* did the unexpected by putting house music back into the American mainstream. The singer's late gay uncle Johnny was the main inspiration and the album cover's reference to Bianca Jagger's famous horse ride at New York City's Paradise Garage set the tone. The foundation of house music was represented with veterans like Honey Dijon and Green Velvet but the current Afrobeats sound was also present. The album received nine Grammy nominations but longtime fans

really want to know if it will win Album of the Year.



Lizzo- Special

Lizzo's feel-good mix of disco, R&B, funk and hip-hop was bright and sounded like a yearlong summer. *Cuz I Love You* was such a big deal that some people wondered if her fourth album would be just as good. *Special* was inspired by self-care, sisterhood and relationships. The album was led-by single "About Damn Time" that had Nile Rodgers & Chic written all over it. Lizzo's proud acknowledgement of '70s and '80s dance music was heard throughout the album that killed any worries about her ability to have another impactful album.



Steve Lacy-Gemini Rights

Lacy's *Gemini Rights* is the moment he became mainstream official thanks to his TikTok hit "Bad Habit." But his obvious Prince influence and wicked abilities produced a whole album of singable ditties for the ages. The pliable falsetto, swift guitar, pure lyrics and Rick James-inspired look got Lacy ready for stardom. The brilliance he demonstrated on his 2017 demo grew and hit a critical mass and now there are many more eyes and ears curious about his next output.



Jazmine Sullivan-Heaux Tales, Mo'Tales: The Deluxe

Jazmine Sullivan's *Heaux Tales* was updated with 10 more songs added to the original album. The conceptual EP about Black women's relationships and sexual autonomy resonated with fans and snared a Grammy for Best R&B album in 2022. The deluxe edition gave more women a chance to tell their tale and Sullivan's fiery but raspy tone expanded space to emote. Ari Lennox, anderson.paak and H.E.R. are on the original and Issa Rae is a guest on the newer version.



Danger Mouse & Black Thought-Cheat Codes

Danger Mouse and Black Thought's *Cheat Codes* collaboration sounded like the equivalent of a rap LSD trip. Black Thought's words flowed over funky blues riffs, Western film themes, '60s rock and lazy jazz licks. Guests included Joey Bada\$\$, Run The Jewels, ASAP Rocky, Raekwon and Michael Kiwanuka. A posthumous contribution from MF D00M on "Belize" was a surprise made eerie by Danger Mouse's choice of somber horns in the background.



Ari Lennox- age/sex/location

Ari Lennox surprised fans by releasing two projects in 2022; the *Away Message* EP and the sublime *age/sex/location* album. Her honey-dipped tone soared with songs about relationship phases she co-wrote with a team that included Jermaine Dupri, Bryan Michael-Cox and Rico Wade. She paired well with guests Lucky Daye, Summer Walker and Chloe Bailey. Lennox's sincerity, conviction and heady vocals produced a new classic.



Nas-King's Disease III

Nas's *King's Disease III* was the third in the series exclusively produced by longtime collaborator Hit-Boy. The legend's tireless narration hit another height with Hit-Boy's larger-than-life beats enlivened with the blood of New York's boom-bap tradition. Nas's sturdy lyrics and prolific output has truly challenged the old notion that rap is a young man's game. *KD3* revealed that Nas is nowhere finished with his rhymebook and hip-hop is better because of it.



Alex Isley and Jack Dine-Marigold

Alex Isley's second project with producer Jack Dine had a foggy texture akin to a celestial space. Isley's voice lifted softly to the heavens with company from Bas and Robert Glasper. She conveyed the many changes love can bring with wonder and care. The second-generation Isley (Ernie's daughter) and Dine created a soulfully calm island out of their artistry inspired by the brightly-colored flower.



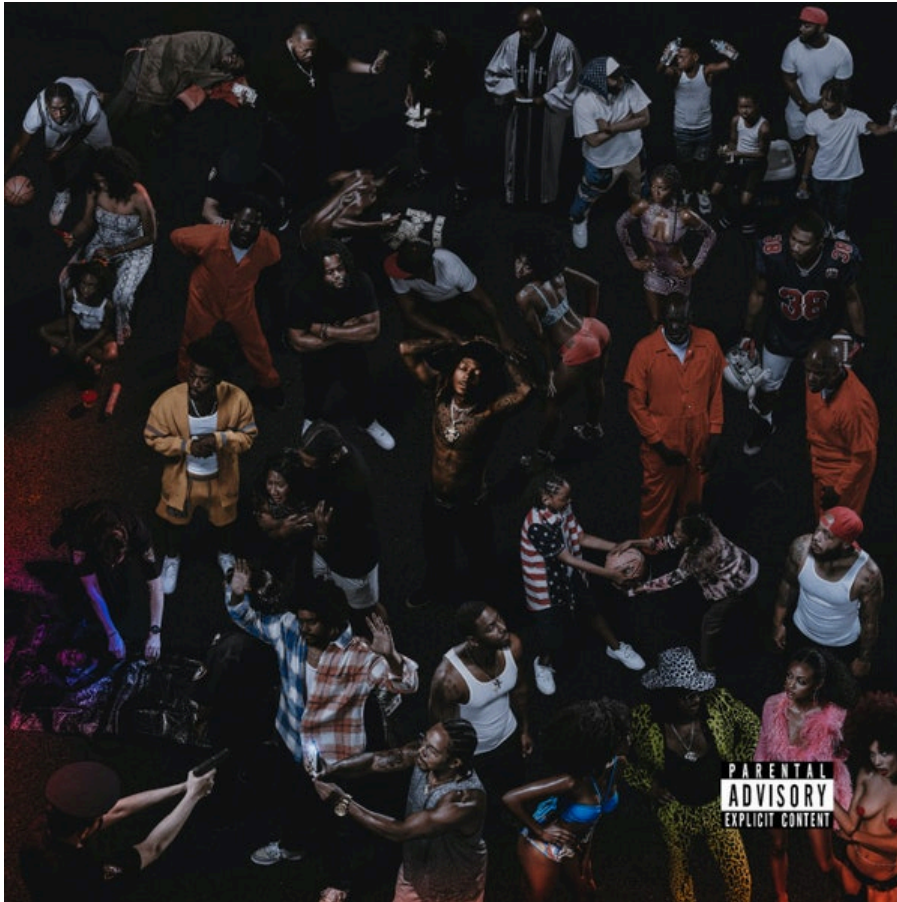
Syd-Broken Hearts Club

Syd's sophomore album arrived five years after her *Fin* debut. The Internet's frontwoman dedicated *Broken Hearts Club* to the life of one relationship in comparison to *Fin*'s multiple themes. She introduced the love affair with her drum and bass-driven Lucky Daye collaboration "CYBAH." BHC unapologetically represented for gay Black girls as Syd explained in a press conference. She also revealed that The Internet's fifth album would be their last.



Ravyn Lenae-Hypnos

Rayvn Lenae's infectious R&B made *Hypnos* a blissful debut album. She wrote two of the year's best singles with the cushy hydraulic bop "Venom" and the enchanting "Skin Tight" the latter of which had Steve Lacy's contribution. Lenae's creative direction was led by '90s soul, house music and Afrobeat with a crew that included Mereba, Fousheé and Smino. The Chicago native's artistry proved to be amongst the most compelling within the ranks of Gen Z.



JID-The Forever Story

JID's *The Forever Story* was anticipated because it was almost four years since *DiCaprio 2* was released in 2018. The album was actually the sequel to JID's 2017 debut *The Never Story*. The dizzying "Surround Sound" featuring 21 Savage and Baby Tate was the first single and it drew attention to the Atlanta native's third studio album. The underrated emcee tenaciously rapped about his mic skills as well as relationships with Ari Lennox, Yasiin Bey, Ravyn Lenae, Lil Wayne and Johnta Austin on deck.



Lucky Daye-Candydrip

Lucky Daye's *Candydrip* destroyed any potential sophomore slump accusations by delivering a collection of tireless songs to the 2020's R&B canon. The title track charmed with its background of lightning guitar riffs, snare drums and Daye's declaration of love in a romantic triangle that is sometimes auto-tuned. "Over" which cleverly incorporated a sample of Musiq's "Half Crazy" went viral and is one of the six Grammy nominations Daye is up for at the 2023 ceremony.



Kendrick Lamar-Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers

Kendrick Lamar's *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* confessional scope revealed a very personal album. Lamar's fifth effort was welcomed after the release of the Pulitzer-prize-winning *DAMN* in 2017 and his subsequent five-year hiatus. The double album addressed the media, racism, trans people and so much more. Ghostface Killah, Summer Walker and Kodak Black are a few of the guest artists on MM&TBS. Lamar's newest output is another testament to how his quirky delivery and creative direction is one of the main agents stopping rap from congealing into a state of stasis.



Hil St. Soul-Back In Love

Hilary Mwelwa's *Back In Love* celebrated the most popular emotion timelessly with a classic album. Her career-long nod

to R&B's glory moments in the '70s, '80s, and '90s with no regard to trends still works for her rich pipes. An updated cover of the Ohio Players' "Heaven Must Be Like This" and her "Blessed" duet with Noel Gourdin were just two of the album's starry moments. Hil St. Soul was gone for a while but proved she still has something to say some two decades after her *Soul Organic* debut.



Mahogany Jones-Better

Mahogany Jones's bubbling confidence and hardcore flow was in full form on *Better*. She shared an avant-garde visual for the double meaning "Cheque" and she inspired others to greatness with "You Got This." When she rhymes, "Relentless, eating hunger for breakfast, counting all the odds against me as all

my blessings” on “Gifted” you understand the true gist of *Better*; survival and ascension. Jones’ 2022 album is another brick in her foundation as an underground rap queen.



Flo Milli- You Still Here, Ho?

Flo Milli’s debut album was a fun and bouncy expedition showcasing the rapper’s unique verbal style. The expectations for her album were high after the success of her 2020 *Ho, Why Is You Here?* mixtape. She represented with the same spitfire attack and witty braggadocio posing as the star from a reality show. “Conceited” was a revamp of Remy Ma’s song and became the hot single from the album.



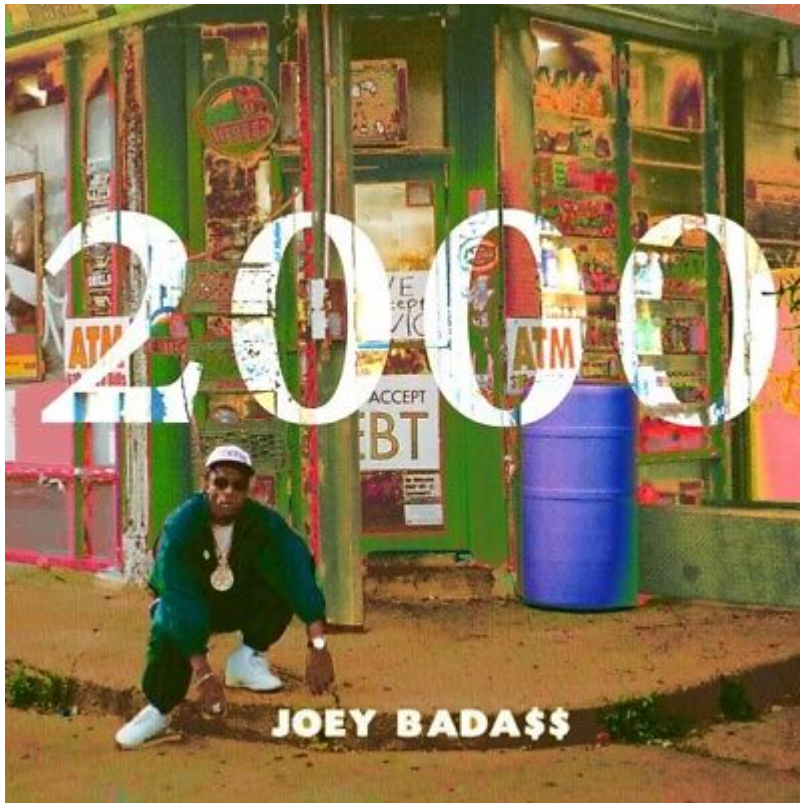
Mary J. Blige-Good Morning Gorgeous

Mary J. Blige's *Good Morning Gorgeous* took new steps on a creative front but stayed true to her hip-hop soul blueprint. "Rent Money" with Dave East, who portrayed her "All I Need" partner Method Man in Hulu's Wu-Tang biopic, joined her for the jazzy Sade vibes of "Rent Money." She was completely in 2022 duetting with anderson.paak on "Here With Me" and surprised fans by bringing Fivio Foreign in to record "On Top." The legend is still a queen and she reminded her huge woman fanbase they are too with the album title.



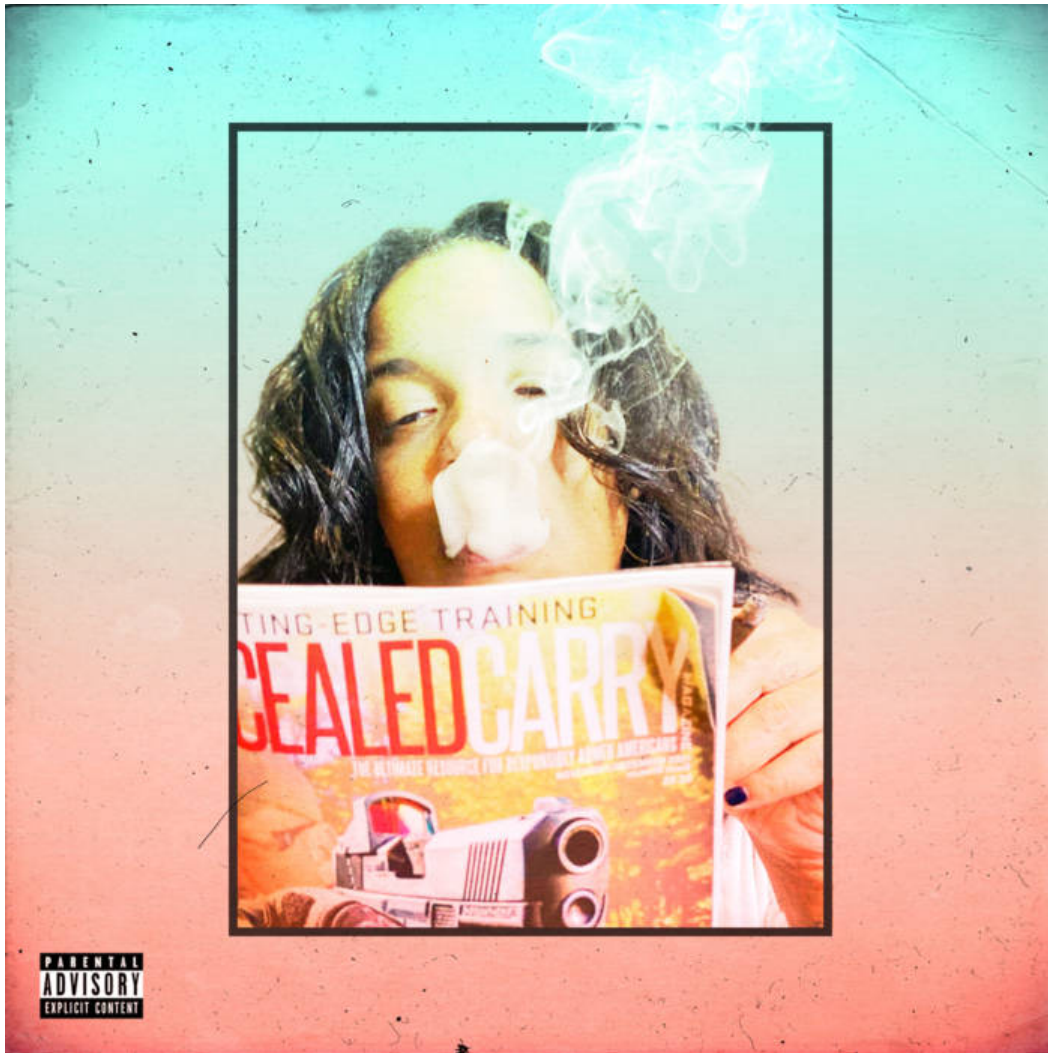
Jack White-Fear Of The Dawn

Jack White's fourth album *Fear Of The Dawn* rocked hard after a four-year absence. A cacophony of savage guitar, splashy drums, and White's pleading vocals dominated the sound of *Fear Of The Dawn*. The angry "Taking Me Back" stirred up the racket with manic synthesizers and racing drums which made for a bewitching comeback single. Q-Tip was a featured guest on the Cab Calloway cover "Hi-De-Ho" made even more conspicuous by samples of Calloway. White also released the folk-oriented *Entering Heaven Alive* later in the year.



Joey Bada\$\$-2000

Joey Bada\$\$'s *2000* is the sequel to his 1999 mixtape released 10 years earlier. *2000* carried an R&B influence with a sampled Stephanie Mills and beats more amenable to dancing and love pursuits instead of battle scenarios. Lyrically, he talked about love, loss, his music, fatherhood and what it feels like to be a budding celebrity. The album was a worthwhile full return since *All-Amerikkkhan Bada\$\$* from 2017 and *The Light Pack* EP released in 2020. His convincing work as the character Unique in the *Power* franchise has not tainted his rap inspiration at all.



Psalm One-Bigg Perm

The Chicago maverick keeps building her legacy and *Bigg Perm* added to her already impressive discography. Custom Made exclusively produced the album inspired by the late pioneering Black woman hair entrepreneur Madam C. J. Walker. The album title's hairstyle reference was used by Psalm One as a metaphor for life. She opened up about her personal growth but didn't lose her flair for comedy. The video for "Cristalle Jr." shows that she is still having fun making music.



Fantastic Negrito-White Jesus Black Problems

Fantastic Negrito's sixth solo album tackled questions of humanity and ancestry. The Oakland native sang about religion operating like a cult and the illegal interracial relationship between his seventh-generation grandmother and grandfather. The sound of revved-up rock guitars, organs and Negrito's impassioned vocals dominated the sound of his roots music palette. The fantastic ride he started with *The Last Days Of Oakland* is still brewing and reaffirming his status as the most interesting soul-touched folk singer alive.



Honey Dijon-Black Girl Magic

Honey Dijon's *Black Girl Magic* house music party stayed true to her Chicago upbringing with unwavering energy. Her hometown clubbing days with DJ Ron Hardy at the Music Box came through with nonstop rhythmic zeal. Veteran Mike Dunn, Channel Tres and Josh Caffé were a few of the featured guests. Dijon's purist sound never got boring and showed why classic house is timeless and never fails to lure bodies en masse to the dancefloor.



Bonus Pick:

Moonchild-Starfruit

The Los Angeles trio got even better with *Starfruit* which was launched with the excellent “Tell Him” featuring Lalah Hathaway. Amber Narvan’s calming vocals, toasty basslines and jazzy horns set a blissful mood. Their fifth album fulfilled their wish to work with Hathaway, Rapsody, Alex Isley, Tank & The Bangas, Mumu Fresh, Chantae Cann and Josh Johnson. The songs were all about relationships with the new addition of synthesizers creating funk motifs within the sweetness. The only thing better was seeing them perform songs from the album live on their sold-out tour.

Honey Dijon Releases Black Girl Magic



Honey Dijon's name has been buzzing since she appeared on Beyoncé's *Renaissance* album but the dance music veteran is more than 20 years deep in the world of house music. Her pedigreed status starts with her beginning as an avid clubgoer in her native Chicago where house music gets its beginnings. She later became an underground DJ and started working as a producer in 2000. *Black Girl Magic* is her sophomore album. The ride which is eight-minutes shy of an hour shows Dijon's house heritage and her ability to stretch out with disco and New Jack Swing. She has company with guest appearances from Chicago house producer Mike Dunn and Detroit vocalist Rimarkable, like Ramona Renee. She started writing the album in 2019 with thoughts about her early days as a new house music fan. Her days at the Music Box listening to legendary DJ Ron Hardy is remembered on "Downtown." She also pays homage to Grace Jones with "La Femme Fantastique. The death of George Floyd and the subsequent rise of Black Lives Matter became an unexpected influence on *Black Girl Magic*. Dijon, who is a transwoman, felt it was important to advocate for love and for people to support their own beliefs and those things inspired

the songs “Love Is,” “Love Is A State Of Mind” and “Stand.”

Dijon told Forbes in regards to the title of the album, “Liberation for Black women is liberation for all women. Liberation for Black people is liberation for all people. Liberation for trans people is liberation for all people. When one of us is free, all of us are free, so what all of these movements are about is fighting for our humanity.”