

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.

Media Questions Of The Week



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Will more of Nas's rap peers take him up on the challenge to create new music focused on the art of rhyming instead of following trends?

Music executives tell Billboard that they are worried and depressed as the industry struggles to find big artist breakthroughs, noting Olivia Rodrigo and Ice Spice as the last recently successful ones.

"Nobody knows how to break music right now... Each person I talk to in the... pic.twitter.com/keFA5T3X8l

– Pop Base (@PopBase) [August 9, 2023](#)

Why are music executives perplexed about how to break the next big artist?

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.



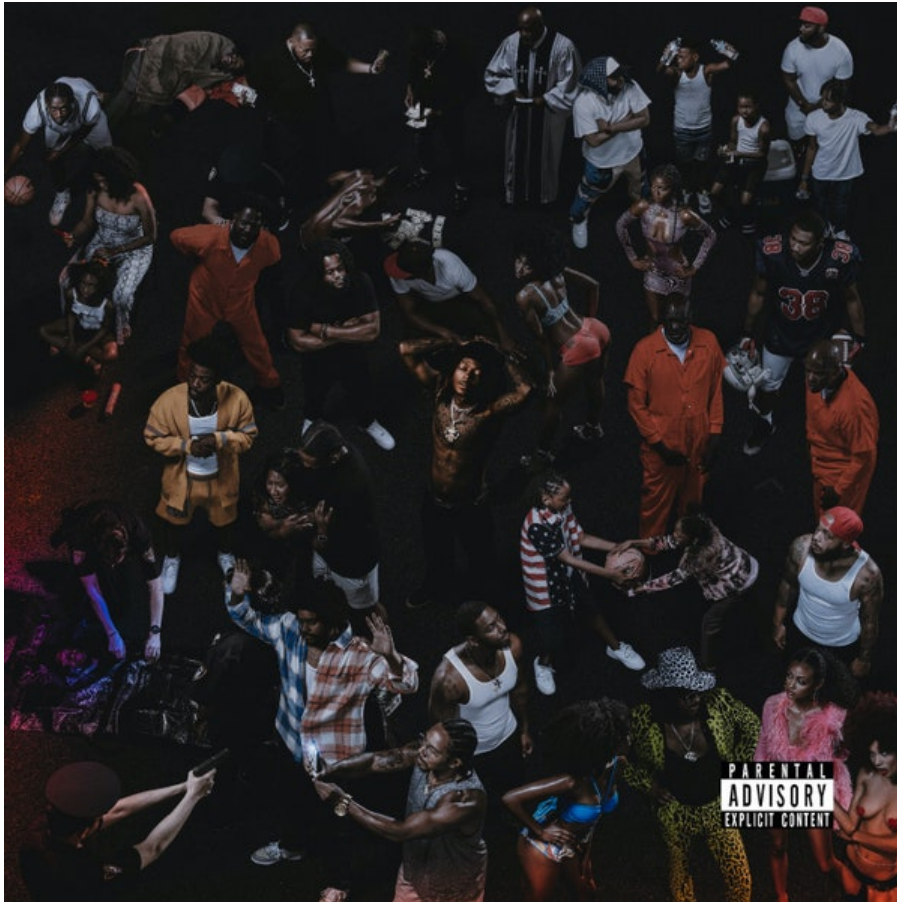
Syd-Broken Hearts Club

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.



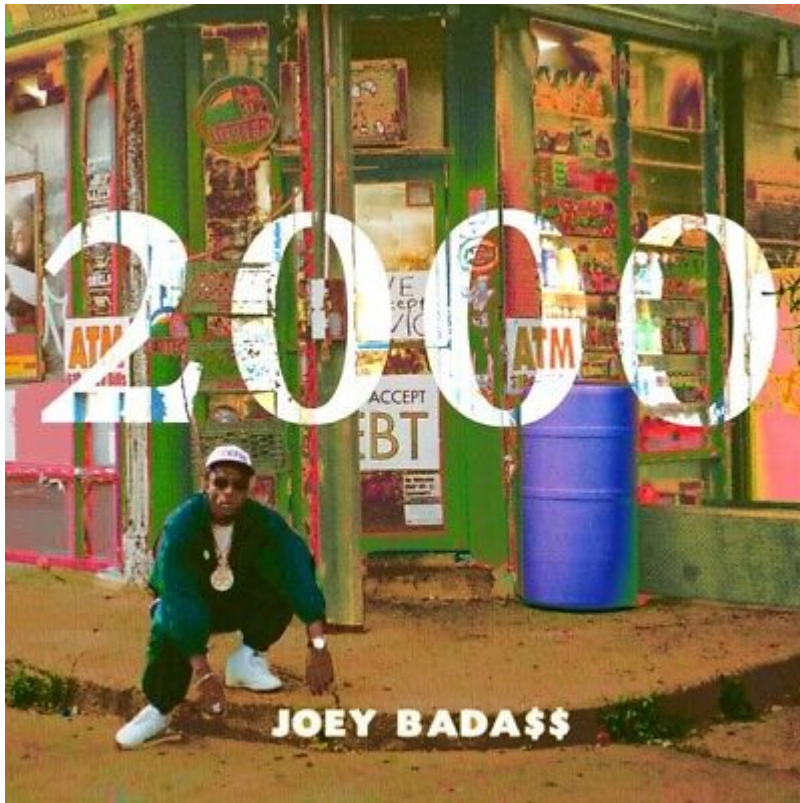
Mary J. Blige-Good Morning Gorgeous

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.



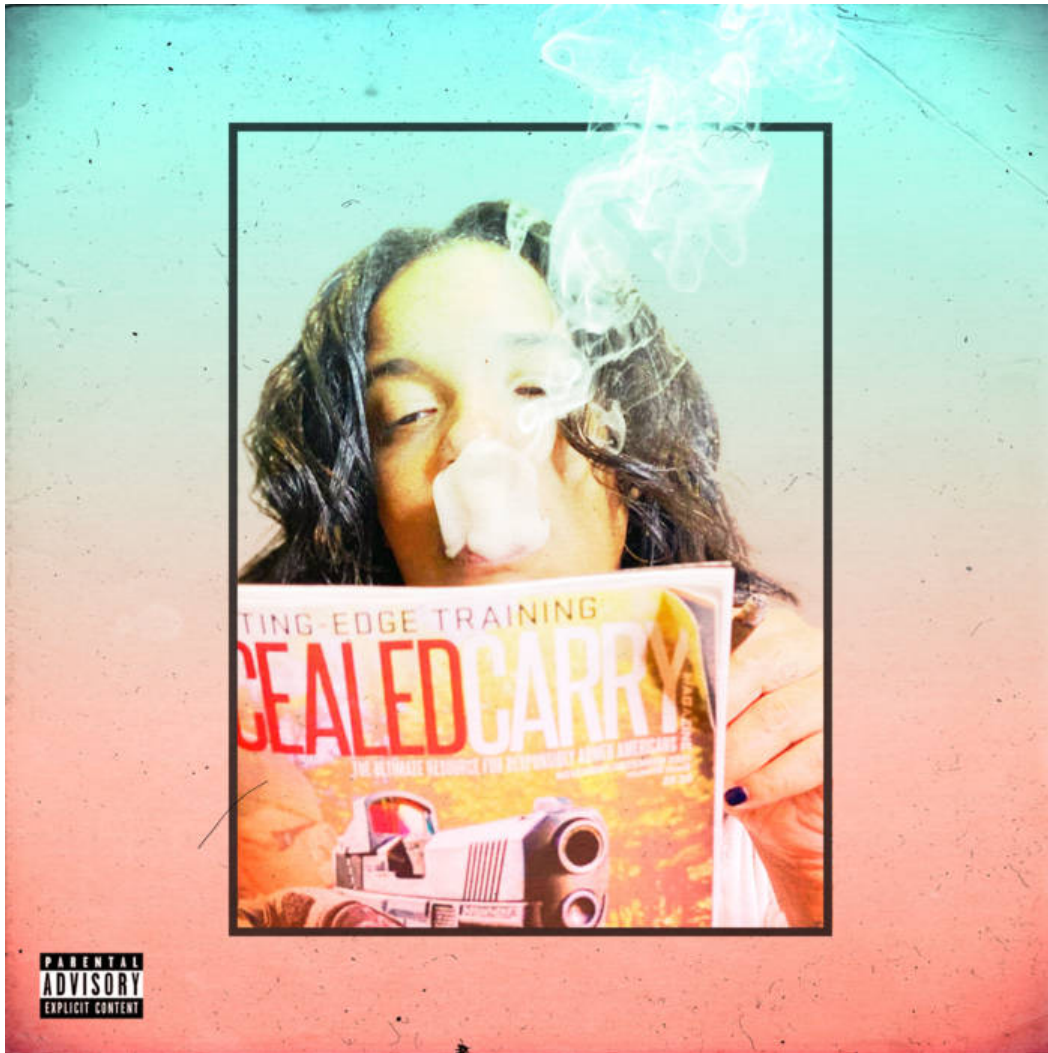
Jack White-Fear Of The Dawn

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.

Nas: King's Disease III

Nas continues his King's Disease series with producer Hit-Boy by dropping the third installment. They released the first one in 2020, and then in 2021, they came back with *King's Disease II* and *Magic*. Nas won the Grammy for Best Rap Album for *King's Disease*. Nas is having a rebirth that started with KD revealing a prolificness not found amongst most of his peers and rappers in general. Hit-Boy's sonic chemistry with Nas turns his poetry into vivid audio street vignettes. Nas shared a clip of them in the studio earlier this week and he just completed the NY State Of Mind Tour with the Wu-Tang Clan and Busta Rhymes. *King's Disease III* is available via Mass Appeal Records.