

Bieber returns with “Changes,” album disappoints delivering shallow tracks

By Ellis Farese

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Justin Bieber began as a teen-pop sensation and has lived his whole life in the limelight, with his debut album *My World 2.0* launching him into stardom back in 2010. A decade later, and Bieber has managed to remain relevant—of course with a few obstacles along the way. Although Bieber has managed to miss out on the washed-out childhood-star adulthood that many young entertainers face, he has had his fair share of trouble with the law, including a DUI charge, vandalism charges and his infamous peeing in a restaurant’s mop bucket. It’s been five years since Bieber’s last studio album, ‘*Purpose*,’ and during this time, it has appeared he has finally turned over a new leaf once and for all—opening up about his regrets and current struggles, vocalizing the importance of his faith and marrying Hailey Baldwin. With this new album many were anticipating a new era of Bieber, excited to see what an adult album would look like from him. Being a life-long Bieber fan I really, really wanted to like this album. Unfortunately, it is just not very good.

Bieber announced that he would

be releasing his fifth studio album in December 2019, solidifying his remarks made at the 2019 Coachella Music Festival suggesting a new album is coming. Later on the *Ellen Degeneres Show*, Bieber confirmed his album “*Changes*” release date to be on Feb. 14. Also in December, Bieber released a trailer for his 10-episode YouTube Originals documentary “*Seasons*,” which debuted Jan. 27. With a new album and documentary coming at the same time, both revolving around changes in Bieber’s life, Bieber is suggesting he is about to become more vulnerable than ever before. On Jan. 3, the first single was released, “*Yummy*.” I was hoping for maturity in Bieber’s lyrics and sound, but instead “*Yummy*” delivered almost next to nothing, giving a catchy beat paired with a chorus reminiscent of a 13-year-old boy’s notes to his crush. If the goal was to appeal to the over-saturated, almost comical “*Tik-Tok*” market then the song may be able to be deemed a success, but I was hoping for more from Bieber. I tried to stay optimistic for the album to come, but my expectations were lowered after hearing “*Yummy*.”

“*Changes*” relies mainly on a soft, electronic sound and acoustic ballads, paired with Bieber’s short, airy lyrics,

overall delivering a very anti-climatic album. Most of the tracks are not memorable and they begin to fade together, all echoing the same pillowy electronic sound. I recognize Bieber’s attempt to produce a more honest and authentic album, and I give him credit for sticking with subdued, mellow beats challenging common mainstream pop, and his past approach which often correlated with pop trends. Bieber’s Christian faith and his love for his wife Hailey are by far the most prevalent themes throughout the album, while he still includes superficial, expected pop subjects. Opening the album with “*All Around Me*,” one of the many love songs to Hailey, Bieber expresses his need for Hailey that now seems crucial to his survival. Empty lyrics are not able to capture the emotions Bieber is attempting to deliver in “*All Around Me*,” such as “*Room for you in my coupe, let me open up the door.*” In “*Running Over*” (ft. Lil Dicky) Bieber sings elementary lyrics over a catchy, repetitive beat, “*Then you made me laugh with personality / When you said goodbye that was a tragedy.*” Multiple features including Post Malone, Clever, Kehlani, Lil Dicky, Quavo and Travis Scott attribute very little to the tracks, resembling the lyrical blank-

ness throughout the album. At the end of the track “*Changes*,” Bieber speaks in a soft voice, “*Uh, people change, circumstances change / But God always remains the same,*” incorporating his religious beliefs that have become increasingly stronger in the public eye, although not doing it in the most effective way, seeming to have just stuck this phrase in at the end of the song. One of the more successful tracks would be “*E.T.A.*” which delivers a solid chorus over guitar riffs, combining the electronic sound with R&B inspirations. It makes for an easy, enjoyable listen. “*That’s What Love Is*” features only acoustic guitar, which I prefer over Bieber’s electronic, EDM sound. Bieber sings short and sweet phrases, showing the potential of this track, but the lyrics still lack substance, “*Hey, it’s a blessing that you’re in my life / Make me look even better / When we shine, we shine together.*”

Bieber’s over exposure to fame at a very young age has resulted in him enduring hardships most do not understand, and I am glad he has found new passions to fuel his work. Sadly, “*Changes*” was mediocre—and I say that generously—as I was left very unimpressed. In the future, I hope for more compelling work from Bieber.

Valentine's Day Playlist

If I Ain't Got You- Alicia Keys

All Your'n- Tyler Childers

At Last- Etta James

Show Me Love- Alicia Keys, Miguel

Thinking Out Loud- Ed Sheeran

I Will Always Love You- Whitney Houston

Your Song- Elton John

Love on the Brain- Rihanna

Who You Love- John Mayer, Katy Perry

Beyond- Leon Brdiges

Make You Feel My Love- Adele