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# Jay Electronica's Act II: The Patents of Nobility (The Turn)



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Jay Electronica's [Act II: The Patents of Nobility \(The Turn\)](#) is finally here in its entirety, after a leak led to its official release as it should have been back in 2012, and this kaleidoscopic sonic collage is beautiful and deeply poignant.





Jay Electronica in his “Fruit of Islam”regalia

In the opening track entitled ‘Real Magic’, the New Orleans MC proposes an optimist notion of appreciating self and life as a first step in overcoming the innumerable difficulties in life — “Sometimes that’s what you need to see yourself/ Break through and free yourself/Accept your own and be yourself/ It’s magic/ The story of life is not tragic/It’s a luxury”. The song interpolates a speech by the late 40th President of the United States of America, Ronald Wilson Reagan citing the late former Prime Minister of colonial power, the United Kingdom — Winston Churchill, which ironically decentralises capitalism and its subsequent hyper-consumerist and materialist culture. He rightfully posits that “the destiny of man is not measured by material computations”, but rather, that we are more than goods-consuming entities, as we are we are spirits, not animals, with a rendezvous with destiny. Ronald Reagan becomes the mouthpiece to articulate the main theme of the album — existentialism.

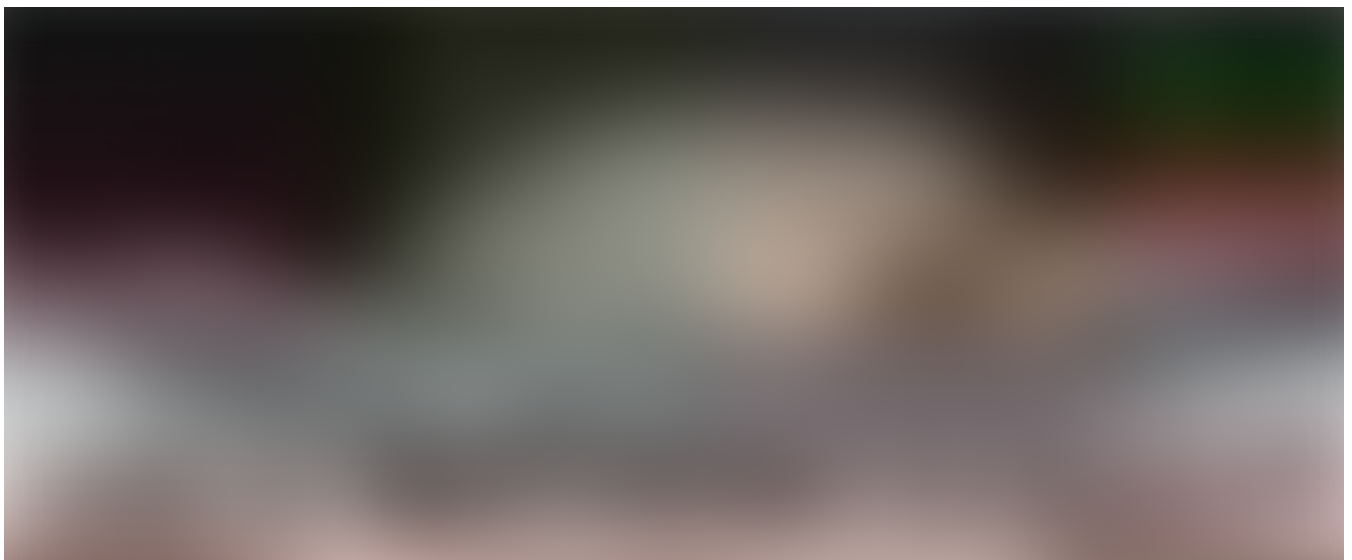
We will preserve for our children this  
 The last best hope of man on earth  
 Or we will sentence them to take the last step into a  
 thousand years of darkness





Official album artwork for **Act II: The Patents of Nobility (The Turn)**

“This is the turn, they ain’t ready for prestige yet/ The flow is too collegiate, the show is too prestigious”, raps Electronica reflectively, reminding us with the outmost conviction that his best career years are ahead of him still, even at the ripe age of 44. The first part of the magic trick — The Pledge, came in 2007 in the form of the classic mixtape, “Act I: Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge)” which exhibited Jay rapping effortlessly over looped and drumless beats with ‘no hook[s]just new shit’. Four songs repurposed from the score of Michel Gondry and Charlie Kaufman’s 2004 film “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”. His producer Just Blaze and his then partner and mother of his daughter Mars, Erykah Badu were singing his praises and reaffirming Electronica’s mythical and mystical existence in the collective consciousness of members of the hip-hop community throughout the tape, inducting the Voodoo Man into the halls of folklore and fame, and maybe fortune too.





**Act I: Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge)** artwork <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3wqRk9R0e0>

Indeed, the magician that is Jay managed to show us how the ordinary something can be made extraordinary and magical on Act I —with Jon Brion’s composition for a movie soundtrack, an utterly normal fixture of the cinematic world of popular entertainment culture, at the face of it and even under inspection, is really just yet another musical accompaniment means to a spectacular motion picture end. Mostly unaltered, normal, the sonic became more than that, ushering a new-age of alternative production on the main stage of the hip-hop/rap music game. The unordinary approach to a musical career was guided by Jay’s thesis, that his pursuit of commercial success is but a secondary pursuit, his first mission and most important, is to unite people beyond the things that divide us all, by class, race, religion, creed, colour, sexual orientation and ability. He raps matter-of-factly:

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*“I could care less about a plaque and Bid-enz  
 And gettin’ punked on TV by my friends  
 Don’t get a ni\*\*a wrong  
 I get tempted by the rewards that all come along with making ni\*\*a songs  
 But what does it mean if I’m a Muslim and you a Jew  
 And because of that alone we don’t get along  
 And when you talk like this, and try to walk like this  
 The radio stations’ll never put a ni\*\*a on”*

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**Act I: Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge)** artwork <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3wqRk9R0e0>

The ordinary something, the established minimalist sound and mystical raps, is made to do something incredibly extraordinary in Act II as he meditates on the obsession with techno-science innovations, which has led to the unfortunate neglect of spiritual alignment and appreciation of nature—

“This is a genuine miracle, I woke up today, so I got up to pray/But my BBM was pinging/ when my Android started singing/Then, I missed all of the glory for technological luxuries/And just like that I forgot all of the trees/ And the flowers and the

breeze/ carryin' seeds across the seas/ Extra honey  
 in my tea but pay no to homage to the bee/ whatever  
 happened to us? /And will we ever let the magic  
 come and tap into us?

As Jay Elect questions what has become of humanity in the post-modern era generally, he specifically interrogates the hypocrisy of those who claim to followers of religious texts such as the Abrahamic formations but fail to be empathetic humans in their actions, not being living examples of believers. Bigelow defines this as “where modern man finds himself, not on the highway of upward Progress toward a radiant Utopia but on the brink of a catastrophic precipice” and Jay extends this to the realm of religion/spirituality. Thus, he advocates for the detachment of self from material possessions and consequently cease defining self identity and value of through them.

We preach apocalypse written by John the  
 Revelator/  
 But won't even speak to a stranger ridin' on the  
 elevator/  
 Or step to the side when we standin' still on the  
 escalator  
 The planet earth is a hospital, we on the respirator/  
 I don't regret the haters

Electronica Allah details his lived experiences of mental ill-health, acknowledging episodes of feelings of depression; reflecting realistically on those so-called “sour” moments in his life as being as necessary as any feeling in the spectrum of emotions we go through as humans. The rapper born Timothy Elpadaro Thedford, profoundly notes that even at life's lowest moment, bad could be worse, such as being dead, and one being alive offers an opportunity to propel up to a happier and healthier place in life.

Depression makes me sour, but it's still a feelin'  
 My human heart and all my senses say, “It's still

appealin”

I could be dead and gone, a brass band

The second line, I could be headin' home

And passersby may shed a tear after she read the  
stone

“New Illuminati” follows, continuing the work of introducing this body of work, but it is unfortunately without the Kanye West feature that was slated when the original album tracklist was published by Jay Electronica in 2011. The New Orleans MC claims he and his comrades are the new illuminati. Its context is very much time specific, back in the early 2010s when superstars such as Roc Nation boss Jay-Z were accused of being part of a secret and satanic cult called The Illuminati and associated with Freemasons. The stand-out line from this jam over a banging beat is a homage to both to Jehova and Jay Hova: **“One of the shortest passages in the King James version/ Of the bible we all know is, “Jesus Wept”/So like the Lord say, “I’ma make the song cry”**. The song although short, ending as soon as it has started building momentum, is littered with unnecessary sound bites interpolated that go on a tangent. Thematically, the song thus serves as a rebuttal to those ill-advised rumours of the New World Order that are plausibly true but definitely not headed by any Black person or people. Conceptually, Kanye West and his then G.O.O.D Music Team on the “Cruel Summer” (2012) similarly put the allegations to rest on the criminally underrated song, ‘The Morning’ that featured CyHi the Prynce rapping quite frankly about the unfounded and utterly ridiculous rumours:

*I hope the people is listening*

*I could never sell my soul, I gave it back to God at my christening*

*It’s tickling when I hear what haters be whispering*

*What makes you think an Illuminati would ever let some ni\*\*as in?*

The album’s title track, ‘Patents of Nobility’, is completely different from the one that leaked online about seven years ago. In fact, it is a mere interlude, a sound bite referencing the 1990 American action crime film , “Dick Tracy”. Unlike that movie, this song is not emotionally impoverished, but rather has spectacle with a story. The version on the album is not as dynamic in its production and layered in its lyricism as the original one below, and of course without the entertaining interpolation of the late

great heavyweight boxer, global humanitarian and activist Muhammad Ali defending his views on separate racial development in a passionate and spirited stream of consciousness on British talk show host Michael Parkinson's BBC programme.

#### Original 'Patents of the Nobility'

The Erykah Badu dedication, an heartfelt apology to the mother of his child Mars — 'Life on Mars' details the beginning of the end of love, as the relationship is becoming strained, with Jay not expressing his love through actions that Erykah recognises as symbolic of love and failing to communicate effectively: **"I said "I love you baby," "Well you don't act like it/Squeeze my feet, kiss my neck, rub my back like it".** Electronica owns up to his shortfalls as a lover and explains that his nurturing nature is non-expressive but he does feel and has the best intentions for his loved ones — **"I hope you understand me/Even though, I'm cold like New York, my heart is warm like Miami/I'm just trying to build a kingdom for my people and my family."** The record answers metaphorically the astronomical question of, can there be life on Mars — and herein Mars is personified by Jay, a lover who is seemingly emotionally unavailable but wants love, can love exist in that scenario where communicate, the equivalent of "oxygen", is scarce.



Serge Gainsbourg, the late French singer and songwriter is given a new lease on life, Lazarus like, on 'Bonnie & Clyde' with Brigitte Bardot tag-teaming the sampled hook from Serge's song of the same name, which serves as the narrator for the story that serves as the skeleton for the song urges us to listen to the story: **"You read the story of Jesse James/How he lived, how he died/ You liked it, huh, you want some more/ Well, listen to the story of Bonnie and Clyde/ So there you go, Clyde has a girlfriend/She is beautiful and her name is Bonnie. Together they're the Barrow gang/Their names, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow"**. Jay utilizes the story as the backdrop to his tumultuous relationship with the hip-hop culture and the rap music industry that once labeled him a cult-like saviour, but that praise can turn sour quickly, *as it takes a nation of millions to advertise ya*

*But only one Benedict to sabotage ya.* The Bullits produced 'Dinner at Tiffany's' featuring vocals from Charlotte Gainsbourg closes the opening section of the album, the title of the record is named after Tiffany & Co. is an American luxury jewelry and specialty retailer headquartered in New York City. The song encourages the abandonment of material possessions for love and other virtues — The first letter of each line reveals the message "Dinner at Tiffanys" for the verses and "Hold Love" for the chorus, the most important of virtues.





“Shiny Suit Theory” featuring Jay-Z and The Dream makes its second official release appearance here, having featured on his debut album “A Written Testimony” earlier this year as well. It is noteworthy that it is a better fit here, conceptually and thematically. The concept of successful black male artists going to therapy, especially in 2011 when it was first released, is progressive. Thematically, the confrontation head-on of structural inequality and stereotypes, both racially and social-classism charged, of the unlikely prosperity of a rapper and former drug dealer from the Marcy Projects, in Brooklyn, New York City to universal acclaim, and to a similar but lesser extent, the come-up of a New Orleans homeless producer to being signed to Roc Nation and having the world hang on every lyric he utters and the mournful soundscapes he develops to accompany his poetic words.



What follows is probably the best and strongest middle section of any album in the past decade, the sequencing of ‘Memories & Merlot’, ‘Better in Tune (with the Infinite)’ featuring LaTonya Givens, ‘Letter to Falon’, ‘Road to Perdition’ and ‘Welcome to

Knightsbridge'. 'Memories and Merlot' details the nature of recollection, memory and re-memory. The dichotomous effect of regret of the past and simultaneous nostalgia of a better time past, the one liner from the end of verse 2 captures the sentiment well — "Vivid flashbacks will leave you real sad or overjoyed." Without the memory of actions done yesterday, the lived experience cannot make us wiser to make better choices today and tomorrow. In essence, even the most hurtful things that have happened to us, either by choice or circumstance, can lead us to a bright future, because "where there's no vision, the people perish/ So these are the memories [we should] keep and cherish." The Ryuichi Sakamoto produced 'Better in Tune (with the Infinite)' that originally surfaced in March of 2014, is something like no other, a majestic mastery of a magician weaving his power through sounds. Jay Electronica juxtaposes a world full of hatred and the wickedness of man kind to the inherent sacredness of the human soul and the universe. The one verse from him in the song is one of the brightest moments of this album as he delivers pure poetry that hits the soul the take six years later as it did back in 2014:

The synagogues of Satan might accuse or jail me

Strip, crown, nail me, brimstone hail me

They might defeat the flesh but they could never  
ever kill me

They might can feel the music but could never ever  
feel me

To the lawyers, to the sheriffs, to the judges

To the debt holders and the law makers

F\*\*k you, sue me, bill me

That name on that birth certificate, that ain't the real  
me

The lies can't conceal me

The sun rise and the moon tides and the sky's gon'  
reveal me

My brain pours water out my tear ducts to heal me

My Lord's too beneficent  
The message grab a hold to every ear it get  
whispered in  
The waters in the bayous of New Orleans still  
glistenin'  
The universe is listenin', be careful what you say in it  
My grandma told me every bed a nigga make, he lay  
in it  
The church you go to pray in it, the work is on the  
outside  
Staring out the windows is for love songs and house  
flies



'Letter to Falon' is a sonic ode to his sister Falon. Jay wrote this song on the same day after hearing his sister had a stillborn birth as a form of emotional release and catharsis. The title of doubles as a literary reference and parrallel to the character of Fallon in "The Prestige" film, who has twin, Borden, who writes a letter to him before he is hanged. The song could be understood as a bit prophetic, considering he dropped 2 albums in 2020 as he raps, **"And 20/20 hindsight is so euphoric/Keep shining,**

**nobody could stop your progress/Because unknown forces move some known objects/That's magic!"**. The Jay-Z assisted 'Road to Perdition', produced by the Los-Angeles hip hop/soul record producer Dj Khalil, is the most commercially sounding sounding sound that has thumping bassline and hard-hitting drums. The lyrics could easily inspire one to drown all their sorrows and woes to while being in the club, a hybrid song that can exist in many a setting. It masters both sides of the saber, righteousness with lyricism and a flow that is atomic, Qur'an-ic poetry and ratchetness with the accessible beat that channels the energy of 1.21 jiggawatts and the swag of 10 trillion kilowatts. 'Welcome to Knightsbridge' is Jay the peak of his production and MC powers, with sharp, quotable lyricism coupled with an effortless flow over a haunting, minimalistic beat that is held by an echoing electric guitar with simple but effective drums.



No momentum is lost in the closing section of the album, with the unfinished 'Rough Love' where he delves into the subject of objectification of women, not only in hip-hop music, but in literature and literary culture in general, where women subjects are reduced to mere objects of which actions are done to, without any agency and autonomy, spoken for by 'authors', an uneven power dynamic. 'Nights of the Roundtable' is the product of an existential pondering about the nature of life and cultural artifacts such as music; its many genres and similarly, the many kinds of emotions that are expressed differently but different people. The fact that it took near a

decade for the world to hear this album in its entirety, is testament to the fact that life can only be understood in retrospect but has to be experienced through a linear fashion through time.

It took a lifetime to learn how to live  
Another lifetime to learn how to give  
It took 34 trips around the hot sun to land me here  
That's why every ear that hears understand me clear  
I'm not a rapper, I'm like an angel on the mountaintop  
The healing power of God is felt in every fountain  
drop

'Run & Hide' featuring The Bullits is yet another gem that has lived with us for some time as a single, first released in 2011 with an official music video (a rarity for Jay Electronica) and it has aged so well. It is yet another peak for the album, and probably its highest point. The beautiful vocals from The Bullits over Elparado Flowers' production and a stellar 16 bars which steal the show, wash over the listener with a deep sense of spiritual nourishment. It serves as a great conclusion to the theme of existentialism, as the best way to approach the absurdity of life lies simply in "be[ing] yourself/ And accept[ing] your own[self] / Or [you will spend the rest of your life] run[ning] and hid[ing]". '10,000 Lotus Petals' is the final track, an outro cut with gorgeous strings and a shamisen playing which is befitting of this masterpiece of art.







The third and the hardest part of Jay Electronica's magical act is seemingly yet to come, "Act III: The Last Will & Testament of Timothy Elparado Thedford (The Prestige)", although his debut album that was released earlier this year entitled "A Written Testimony" could have been that album in a non-linear sequential manner of output in terms of temporality.

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