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# The Universal Fruits of "A Written Testimony" by Jay Electronica



NuBlaccSoUI Apr 10 · 20 min read ★

Jay Electronica's "A Written Testimony" album review by [nublaccsoul](#)

"They say it was gon' never happen/ But I survived Neverland like the Jacksons [...] I still got my glitter gloves/ I still got my glitter socks," raps a reflective Jay Electronica about triumphing over his naysayers and critics as he reappears for the final act of his magic trick — the prestige, whilst revealing his postures on controversial issues such as Michael Jackson's alleged paedophilia cases.

In the Jewish faith, the number forty (40) symbolises a term of trial, a period of probation and a temporal reality defined by chastisement. Similarly, in the related Abrahamic religion of Christianity, the son of God and the Messiah Jesus Christ fasted for "forty days and forty nights" as narrated in synoptic gospels (Matthew, Chapter 4, Verse 2; Mark, Chapter 1, Verse 13 and Luke, Chapter 4, Verse 2) with the King of Kings having being tempted in every way by the so-called "Prince of the world", as we imperfect humans are too, except without the Lamb of God falling into sins. Firstly, the Good Sheperd was tempted by the Fallen Angel to turn a stone into bread to fill his hunger. Secondly, the Antichrist dares the Redeemer to jump from the highest point and to rely on the Angels to save Him. Finally, the Saviour of man is dared by Satan to worship him and denounce God in return for all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus triumphed over these alluring adversaries by renouncing the three-headed dragon that is temptation; the World and all its material goods, the Flesh and all its lustful desires and the devil with all his empty promises. Finally, forty days is also the time span between the resurrection of Jesus to the ascension of Jesus (Acts, Chapter 1, Verse 3).

The forty days is not necessarily meant to be understood literally, but more of a symbol of a lengthy period of time of relentless hardships that truly test one's faith in one's God.



Jay Electronica in prayer

**O**n the 7th of February at 7:00am, Jay Electronica published a series of tweets to excite the global culture of Hip-Hop, starting with the two best words fans want to hear from their favourite artists, "Album done." This was almost immediately followed by what we can only speculate as being a lyric excerpt from the then forthcoming album: "...my debut album featuring Hov man this is highway robbery", which frankly, is highway robbery, a Hov' feature is a cheat code. The two Jays have collaborated previously on a few records, the most notable ones being the "Shiny Suit Theory" single featuring rapper-singer-producer, The Dream & French actress-singer, Charlotte Gainsbourg; a remix of Soulja Boy's infectious "We Made It" anthem and a pseudo feature (read: a sample, all of Jay Z's parts in this song are all sampled from his first two lines in his collaboration with Nas, the song entitled "Success") on "A Road to Perdition". According to the New Orleans native of Magnolia Projects descent, the LP was recorded "over 40 days and 40 nights, starting from Dec 26". The release date was slated for 40 days time from the 7th, which was supposed to be Wednesday the 18th of March. The Roc Nation label signee concluded his quintuple of tweets with simply "A Written Testimony", with what would be the title of the album. The wait would be reduced by a few days as the wordsmith unleashed his

official introduction to the mainstream on March 13th, finally ending the near 13-year-long speculation that his debut would never come to fruition, as he reappears with a magnetic energy and poignant poetic rhymes that have high replay value.



Jay Electronica & Jay-Z

A testimony of course is the experiential, practical, and lived side of the proclamation of the Gospel. It is sharing where one's life and God's action is intersecting one's innate sinful nature. Having risen to fame after his 2007 MySpace release, Act I: Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge), a song which is a combination of four songs that has Jay Electricity rapping over looped parts of the Jon Brion composed score of the 2004 classic film "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" starring Jim Carrey and Kate

Winslet. This mystical rap EP, covering themes from Islam and other religions to UFOs, atoms, voodoo and related mythic thematic areas, was met with critical acclaim.

Jay Elect's career following director Christopher Nolan's "The Prestige" film structure of three acts for a magical act — "Every great magic trick consists of three parts or acts. The first part is called "The Pledge". The magician shows you something ordinary: a deck of cards, a bird or a man. He shows you this object. Perhaps he asks you to inspect it to see if it is indeed real, unaltered, normal. But of course... it probably isn't. The second act is called "The Turn". The magician takes the ordinary something and makes it do something extraordinary. Now you're looking for the secret... but you won't find it, because of course you're not really looking. You don't really want to know. You want to be fooled. But you wouldn't clap yet. Because making something disappear isn't enough; you have to bring it back. That's why every magic trick has a third act, the hardest part, the part we call "The Prestige"." — Christopher Priest, The Prestige. Watch the trailer for the film below.



The trailer for Christopher Nolan's 2006 psychological thriller, "The Prestige" which Jay Electronica loves.

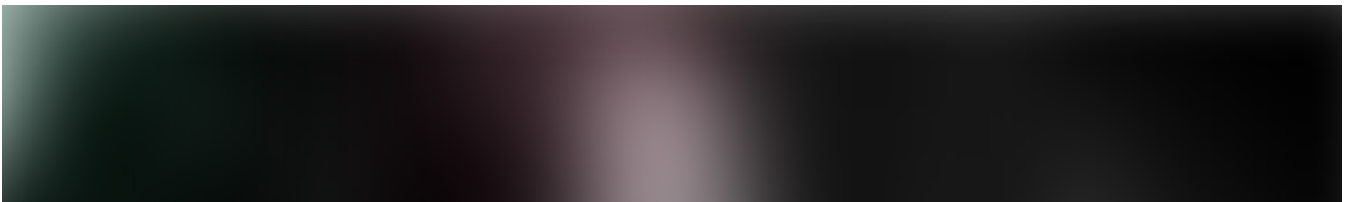
Timothy Elpadaro Thedford's 40 days have stretched over a decade-plus that his faithful I, his battle with the world and its many vices such as drugs (weed and alcohol), gambling and physical altercations started with Jay Electrolosis being a man of nowhere, rapping on his timeless, Just Blaze produced 'Exhibit C' song: "I ain't believe it then; n\*\*ga, I was homeless (Uh huh)/ Fightin', shootin' dice, smokin' weed on the corners/ Trying to find the meaning of life in a Corona." On Chance The Rapper's 'How Great' gospel-heavy single from his 2016 *The Coloring Book* album, Jay details his tumultuous tackles within the spiritual realm, feeling like a lost soul with his faith in God tested, retold through vivid animation imagery borrowed from *The Lion King* to the story of the legendary Noah of the Book of Genesis: "I was lost in the jungle like Simba after the death of Mufasa, no hog, no meerkat/Hakuna matata by day, but I spent my night time fighting tears back/ I prayed and prayed and left messages, but never got no hear back/ Or so it seemed/ A mustard seed was all I needed to sow a dream/ I build the ark to gently, gently row my boat down Noah's stream," reflecting that he was worse off than a grieving Simba as he had no company or allies, not even Timon and Pumbaa, during his trials and tribulations while being open and vulnerable about how challenging those times were for the enigmatic MC. This kind of vulnerability is rare in the rap industry, where personal and private aspects of one's life are not spoken about or are underplayed when addressed. Jay is probably best described using the words employed in the description of fellow poet Edgar Allen Poe, in his document: "And his own story was as curious as his narrative/ The tale of his life is the tale of a writer of incredible vision/ An astute analyst and pundit/ A lyricist compassionate and callous/ A reckless hedonist and disaffected malcontent, " drawing similarity on artistic lines from his 2009 single "Exhibit A (Transformations)" single aiming for what Napoleon Hill wrote in his book *Think and Grow Rich* (1937) for "[his] journey [to] bring [him] to an understanding of the divine forces which we have all

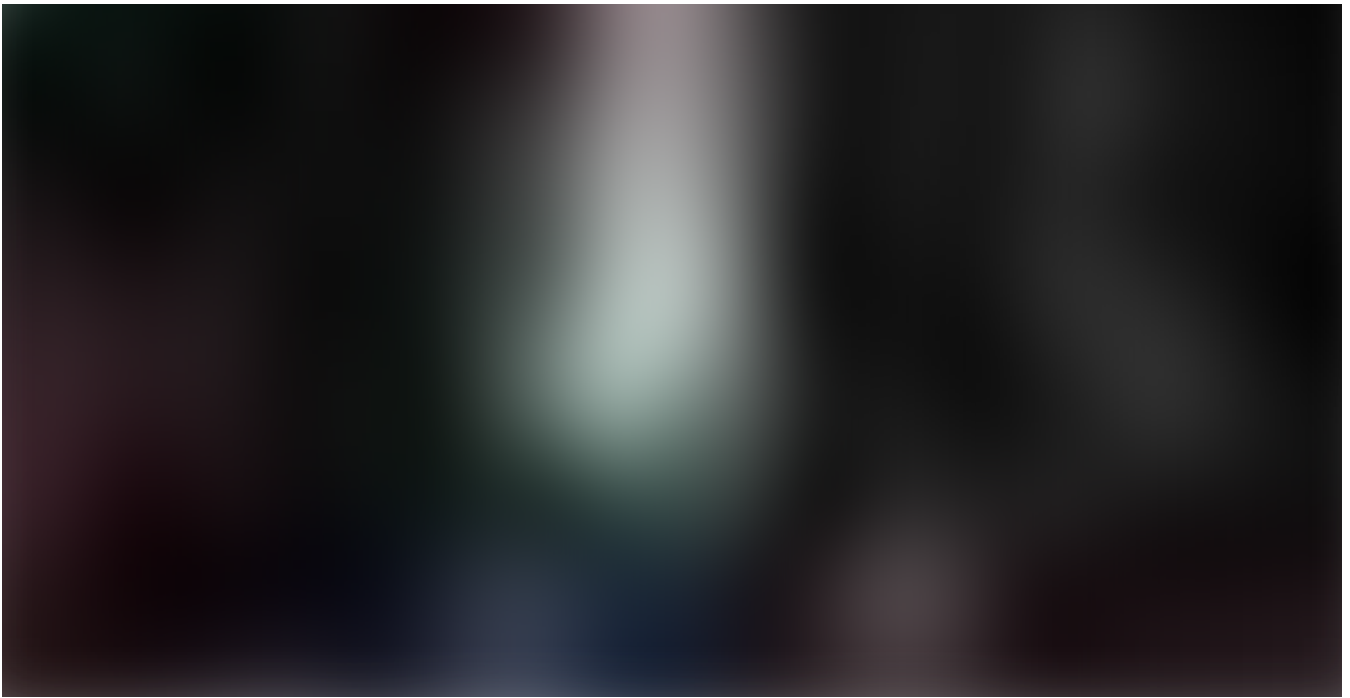
been bestowed. [A] search [in which he hopes he] can come upon a revelation which has called him to guide millions of people towards their righteous destiny." The journey is much more important than the destination for Jay.



A still of Chance The Rapper & Jay Electronica from the "How Great" music video

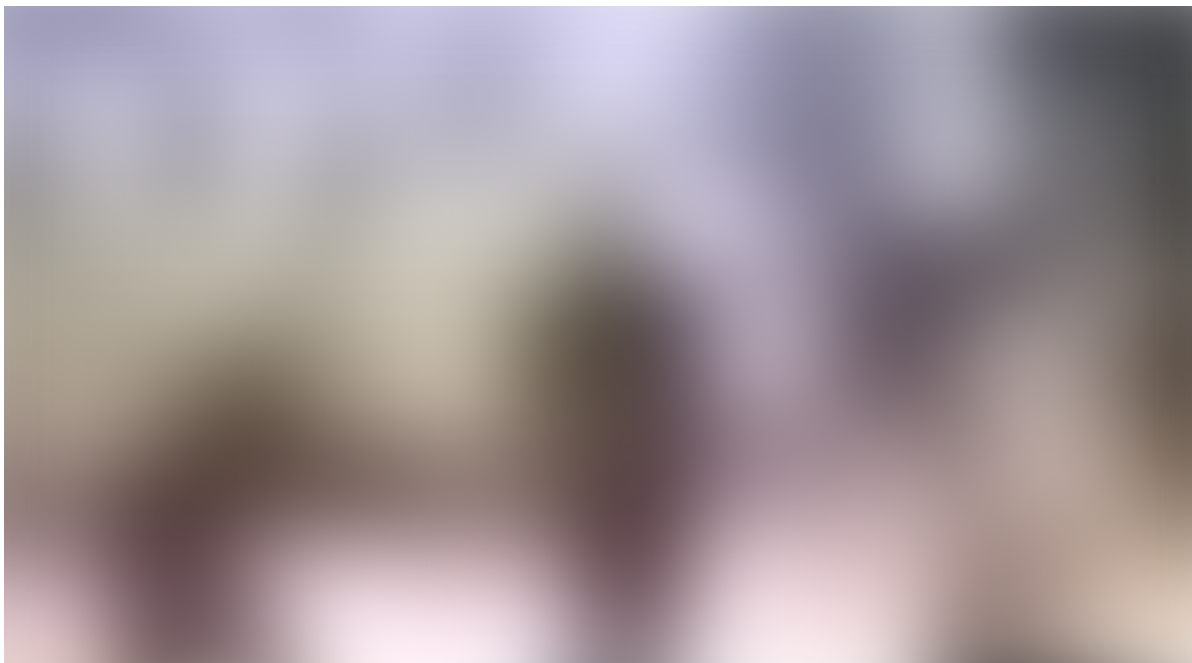
Jay Electronica unpacks his lived trauma, his conditioned flaws from those exhausting experiences and elaborate events that housed his immoral survival tactics that were necessary means to an end, but mechanisms engineered to maintain the physiological that he has now transcended in his new state of body, mind and soul. He raps reminiscintly, intertwining his religious mission against fighting the forces of darkness and sprinkles clever wordplay with mentioning the various streaming sites in multiple entendres, "Sometimes the path I took to reach my petty goals was so extreme/ I was so far down in the mud, couldn't even let my light shine/ But you was always there when I needed to phone a friend or use a lifeline/ From a lofty height we wage war on the poltergeist with the exalted Christ/ Spark the dark with the pulse of light/ Strike a corpse with a pulse of life/ I spit on the Tidal, it's tidal waves/ I spit on the Apple and kill a worm/ A fire in Cali'll swallow a valley/ For every African village burned." A fire verse that can rival the best ones ever.





The train that is running on schedule is finally here

On Talib Kweli's pro-Black anthem, "All of Us", Jay Electronica meditates on black life in America from the lack of water in Ferguson to the widespread police brutality, not before recapping his career thus far, some moments such as performing with Roc Nation label mate J Cole, Mac Miller and Kweli at the Brooklyn Hip Hop Festival in 2014, flowing: "I tarried through the turbulent month of Ramadan/Sweating all through the night just like the Holy Prophet/ Then reappeared on the stage in BK with the Ummah/Shoulder to shoulder with J. Cole and Kweli," and being chained by his mentor and friend, Hov', 2 years after inking a deal with the Roc after Puff's Bad Boy Records and Nas' Mass Appeal stable were outbidded, Mars' father recalls his big coronation, "Just before Jehovah the God crowned me the king with his goldie locket."





Jay Electronica performing with fellow MCs, Common and Vince Staples on the "Kingdom" remix

*In traditional Electronica fashion, he weaves in words from the the religious books in his raps, almost praye- like for the rest of his flawless verse: "Alhamdulillah, we've come really far, ain't it?/ The little engine who could, could power any car can't it?/ The mothers in Chiraq say the murders getting burdensome/The cries of the despised was heard flying out of Ferguson/ The last days and times, the holy Quran and Bible/We on the last page and line, the verse with all the babies dying/ Outside of the matrix, inside of the spaceship but the savior's blind/ Or so it seems, years after Noah was told he would row upstream/ The heavens bursted and the rains came/ Retaliation for the sons of the fathers who worked the chain gangs/ I hit that shmonee dance on the coffin of a crooked cop/ In a Worldstar society where all we do is look and watch/ No intervention/ Policemen beating elderly women with evil intentions on the highways and the byways/ The police state be sprayed into the backstreet to the driveways/Officer friendly is an enemy now, looking at me sideways/ Sh\*t was all bad just a week ago/ The view was just as sad just a peep ago/ The cries of the asiatic ancient-semitic peoples/That propel Jay Elec from the pedestal to the steeple."*



9 years ago, on the back of inking a Roc Nation deal with, Jay Elec Yarmulkhe, Jay Elec Hannukah, Jay Elec Ramadan dropped the Quincy Jones produced street banger, "The Ghost of Christopher Wallace", sampling a song by the same legend of which the song salutes, *I Love the Dough* by the late Notorious B.I.G. (Ft. Angela Winbush & Jay Z), opening with the catchy line, "The game ain't been the same since B.I.G died/ And Wu swarmed on New York from out that beehive". He continues rapping quotables only, with the most cited being:

**"Lyrically I'm unfuckwitable, unforgettable, one tough miracle/  
Competition's none, I leave 'em dumbstruck, critical/ That's some luck,  
pitiful, better luck next time/ We young, black, and restless, hung, black and  
reckless/ My name's on every guest list, bang on every setlist"**



Official album artwork for Jay Electronica's "A Written Testimony", the words in arabic, a pic of Beyonce's pool

The album opens with "The Overwhelming Event", an excerpt from a sermon/speech by the Honourable Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, of which Electronica is a member of, where he states that African-Americans are the true sons of Israel, the 'real' Jews, views which have painted the Minister in controversial light. In the introduction, Farrakhan posits a theory and teaching on the supposed beginning of the end of the contemporary world and analyzes the root of white supremacy. As a proud Muslim of the Nation and Fruit of Islam, Jay ends his amazing production with an Azaan', calling for the Muslims to prepare for the prayers this album encapsulates, summoning the congregation to the spiritual music. Adhan is called out by a mu'azzin from the mosque five times a day, traditionally from the minaret, summoning Muslims for obligatory (fard) prayer (salat).



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Minister Farrakhan continues with expressing his views on the intro of "Ghost of Soulja Slim", daring those skin folk that are not kin folk to tell their handlers to deal with the ready Minister. We get the first rapping from Roc Nation headhoncho Jay-Z doing what he does best, dropping jewels, such as reminding any nation that cares to listen that "No civilization is conquered from the outside until it destroys itself from within," not before some Black History bars, referencing the Jim Crow segregation laws of the 1870s to 1960s; "My ancestors took old food, made soul food/ Jim Crow's a troll too, he stole the soul music/ That's the blood that goes through me, so you assumin'/ I



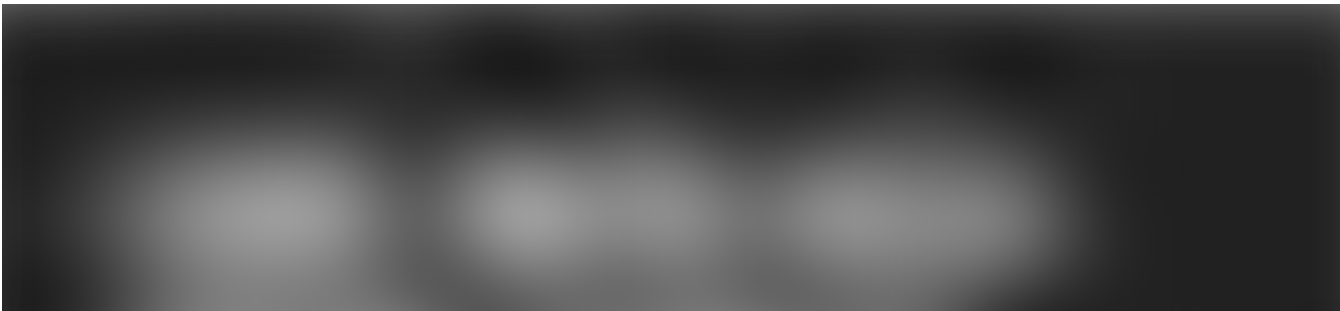
could never sell my soul, they sold they soul to me” whilst simultaneously addressing unfounded rumours that he sold out the Black community with the NFL talks. Electronica handles the minimalistic production as he does with most of the album, with a sample from the soundtrack of Jean-Pierre Melville’s film “Army of Shadows” (1969) for this song while opening his debut project with a proclamation that “If it come from [him] and Hov’, consider it Qu’ran/ If it come from any of those, consider it Haram” while being forthcoming about the roles played by the Nation of Islam and Roc Nation in saving him “from a hard place and a rock to the Roc/ Nation of Islam,” thus pledging to “put [it] on for [his] nation like [he is] King T’Challa” for the two nations, as it were. In his eternal battles with the forces of darkness, he remains steadfast in his faith despite challenges: “The synagogue of Satan want me to hang by my collar/ But all praise due to Allah, Subhanahu wa ta’ala,” arabic for “The most glorified, the most high”. The man that claims to shine like a Christmas tree addresses his prolonged absence with one bar “Jay Electricity/ The thing he need like a whole in his head is publicity”, that also serves a nod to his collaboration “To Me, To You” (2014) with Royce Da 5' 9" and Dj Premier duo PRhyme from the self-entitled album where he tackles all three forms of temptation that he has fought and is still fighting: Spiritually as he critiques white-washed institutionalized religion that is tainted by colonialism; “When I was young, I was confused, I thought God was a mystery/ but everything I knew since the time I began to grew/ Was taught to me by the wickedest men,who twist the histories/ Who pulled out the cuffs of deception and and hitched their wrist to we/Now all praises due to Allah, we seein’ crystally”, Physically with citing his flesh desires with the Rothschild affair “I came from the bottoms of Hell with Jezebels/ Sniffin’ blow with her friends in the dens of iniquity” and finally rejects the world and hyper-consumerist culture by refusing to play the game by its mechanical rules; “Where he been the past three years? It’s just a mystery/If it ain’t come from one of my peers, it ain’t a diss to me/I’m a thousand leagues under the sea, niggas can’t get to me/ The F in my middle name with the period stands for ‘Victory,’” giving us his metrics for success.





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“The Blinding” featuring Travis Scott is a banger of note, it screams radio single with its popular sound appeal, produced by a star-studded array of producers including Swizz Beats, Hit-Boy, G-Ry and AraabMUZIK crafting a dynamic, shape-shifting beat. This is the only song where JayZ out performs Electronica, with an arrogant Sir rhyme scheme that arrests your attention: “Listen, I named my son, Sir, so you gotta call my son, “Sir”/ That boy already knighted, he ain’t even out his romper/ You speakin’ on the kingdom, you better watch your tongue, sir/ I send you where you never been, you forget where I’m from, sir?/ That gossip I send bald heads,/ Lou Gossett out the gun, sir/ I’m brazy, I’m so brazen, I’m “Raisin in the Sun” sir,” but it is Electronica’s that pushes the narrative forward, addressing the elephant in the room introspectively about being “Extra, extra, it’s Mr. Headlines/ Who signed every contract and missed the deadlines/ 40 days, 40 nights, tryna live up to the hype/ It’s the road less traveled, it’s the one who missed the flights” before telling us that his sister Fallon, whom he wrote the song “Letter to Fallon” (2017) for, is the reason he even made the album after all, “Hov hit me up like, “What, you scared of heights?/ Know your sister tired of workin’, gotta do her something nice”/ I’m like, “Don’t he know I stay up for Falon late nights?”/ She need bread, she need rice, she need threads, she need ice/ Either tell it to my bank account or say it to the dice,” before wrapping up the personal verse with a tender moment about his own perception of himself as a man, rapper and as a father, “When I lay down in my bed it’s like my head in the vice/When I look inside the mirror all I see is flaws/When I look inside the mirror all I see is Mars/ In the wee hours of night, tryna squeeze out bars/Bismillah, just so y’all could pick me apart?” between Travis Scott’s melodic one line hook in a Kanye West, 808’s and Heartbreaks cadence.







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The Alchemist is on the boards for "The Neverending Story", a soulful song named after the film, *The NeverEnding Story*, which boasts one of the best Electronica verses, a layered first verse which summarises his life mission, best said in the most powerful three lines within the verse, "Though I tarry through the valley of death, my Lord give me pasture/If you want to be a master in life, you must submit to a master/I was born to lock horns with the Devil at the brink of the hereafter." Jay-Z closes well with his reflections on racialized beauty standards and a faux blue-eyed Jesus ideology, bringing it close to home by mentioning his mother-in-law and how she would react.

"Shiny Suit Theory" might be Jay Electronica's best production showcase, a grand and maximalistic beat that sounds indeed like the lush and wholesome sounds of the early 2010s which it is from, a song that is 10 years old but does not sound dated sonically or in subject matter. The chorus is catchy as well, "I pack up all my sins in every L that I blow/And let 'em go, let 'em go, let 'em go, let 'em go," but the two complimentary verses, one equally as great as the other although different but are thematically consistent. When Jay Elect opens his verse with those unreal four lines, "A land before altar boys, synagogues, and shrines, man was in his prime/Look how far I go in time just to start a rhyme/The method is sublime, you get blessed with every line/I'm in touch with every shrine from Japan to Oaxaca/The melanated carbon-dated phantom of the chakras," your spine still tingles from the sheer brilliance of it.





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“Universal Soldier” begins with a sampled piece of news audio enumerating the 3 armed forces officers most immediately responsible for the Nuclear Bomb detonation in Hiroshima, killing 140,000 in 1945. Jay Electronica represents his label and religion proudly, rapping “My trials in the fiery crucible made me hot/I glow like embers of coal, born with a touch of gold/My mathematical theology of rhymin’ a touch the soul/I spent many nights bent off Woodford/Clutchin’ the bowl, stuffin’ my nose/Some of the cons, I suffered for prose/My poetry’s livin’ like the God that I fall back on” stressing the importance of hope/faith.

“Flux Capacitor” is an experimental sonic experience, something that seems to be brought back from a time travel trip, “Back to the [present] Future” with a Rihanna sample of her 2016 song “Higher” from her magnum opus *ANTI* in the end and a bit throughout the song, with an interpolation of Big E’s 1992 track “Get The Gat,” in the chorus. The production herein is quite sloppy for most part, with the better part being the crazy flip of the Rihanna sample only at the terminal end of the song, coupled with lyrics that do not move the narration forward, perhaps it should have not made the album with its misfit sound from the rest of the album.

“Fruits of the Spirit” is the only completely Jay Elect solo song on the entire album. The song consists of one verse, lasting 1:35s produced by the legendary No I.D. What a delight it is. Only problem with it is how short it is. The last half of his verse though is most notable “ my train is on schedule/But I had to take the Underground Railroad like Harriet/Weave the whole industry, every jab I’ve parried it/My cross I carried it/My crown of thorns to cavalry from Nazareth/The orbit was too wide to calculate the azimuth/The journey was technically unexplainable, hazardous/ Rise, young gods, all paths lead to Lazarus/ The dry bones that lifted up from the valley dust/ The prayers of the slaves are the wings that carry us/ A field full of dreams is where they tried to bury us (Bury us)” Chills. Absolute chills.



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"Ezekiel's Wheel" featuring The-Dream and the penultimate song, "Ezekiel's Wheel" is a reference to the Book of Ezekiel in the Bible. Ezekiel 1:1–3:27: God approaches Ezekiel as the divine warrior, riding in his battle chariot. The chariot is drawn by four living creatures, each having four faces and four wings. Beside each "living creature" is a "wheel within a wheel", God commissions Ezekiel as a prophet and as a "watchman" in Israel: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites." (2:3)." The impeccable production from Jay continues here and ends on a high with a minamilistic but varied beat, that houses his raps perfectly that include a reference to "The Alchemist" novel by acclaimed Brazilian author Paulo Coelho that was first published in 1988, ending his first verse with some much needed answers: "Some ask me "Jay, man, why come for so many years you been exempt?"/'Cause familiarity don't breed gratitude, just contempt/ And the price of sanity is too damn high, just like the rent/Sometimes I was held down by the gravity of my pen (Pen)/Sometimes I was held down by the gravity of my sin (Sin)/ Sometimes, like Santiago, at crucial points of my novel/ My only

logical option was to transform into the wind." This 5star first verse is only done better by his second, where he masterfully balances the righteous and the ratchet: "I ain't the type to let it slide or just ignore it/Whatever you want get into, my nigga, I'm here for it/ I had a shot of D'Usse, now the Ace of Spades is pourin'/ My vision's twenty-twenty and the feelin' is euphoric/ If I'm not on my Harley then I'm on that Panigale/ I'm smellin' like a Marley, doin' ninety on the on-ramp and my destiny is callin'" celebrating triumph with Jay-Z assisting The-Dream on the hook, a ballad of a hook that is out of this world.



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The curtain closer is the hymn "A.P.I.D.T.A." (All Praise Is Due To Allah, a phrase often used by Muslims to express gratitude), produced by the group Khruangbin. The song was recorded the night Kobe Bryant and her youngest daughter Gianna transcended and it carries that grief without the heaviness, mourning a loss without being swallowed by the burdensome bereavement. It is easily the standout song from the album, a perfect match of mellow music with careful words as Jay Elect mourns his mother whom he lost at the end of 2019 and other loves ones that him and Hov will never get rings or texts from ever again. Jay-Z brings his "4:44" sensitivity on the hook and Electronica brings the best verse of 2020 thus far, a poetic stroke of pure genius: **"Eyes fiery, cry tears to my diary/ Sometimes a Xanny bar can't help you fight back the anxiety/ I go to my Lord quietly, teardrops on our faces/ Teardrops on my face, it's like teardrops become waterfalls by the time they reach my laces/ My eyelids is like levees but my tear ducts is like glaciers/ As I contemplate creation, the salt that heals my wounds pour out my eyes just like libations/ I can't stop my mind from racing, I got numbers on my phone/ Pictures on my phone/ The day my mama**

**died, I scrolled her texts all day long/ The physical returns but the connection still stay strong/ Now I understand why you used to cry sometimes we ride down Claybourne/ You just missed your — You just missed your mama/ Now I just miss my mamas/ The clothes we wear to bed at night to sleep is just pajamas/ The flesh we roam this earth in is a blessing, not a promise/ I bow with those who bow to the creator and pay homage,”** flowing into the bridge and ends the verse with a tear-enducing “Sleep well  
Lately, I haven’t been sleepin’ well/ I even hit the beach to soak my feet and skip some seashells/ Sleep well/ The lump inside my throat sometimes just towers like the Eiffel/ Sometimes I wonder do the trees get sad when they see leaves fell/ Sleep well/ The last time that I kissed you, you felt cold but you looked peaceful/ I read our message thread when I get low and need a refill.”

Everyone’s reaction during and after listening to Jay Elect’s verse on “A.P.I.D.T.A” — baby tears

A real magician tries to invent something new, and Jay Electronica’s entire career is testament to rewriting all the rules, from being the only artist to delay his major label debut for many years but manage to maintain relevance and tour with a minimal discography. His debut album could not be more timely within the current uncertainty of the world, and although no album can match a 13-year-long wait, it is a great album that has high replay value. We hope the wait for the next album is less, and maybe with

some Just Blaze production for old times' sake minus the heavy Jay-Z presence. Till then...

by nublaccsoul | new black soul #InMyHumbleOpinion

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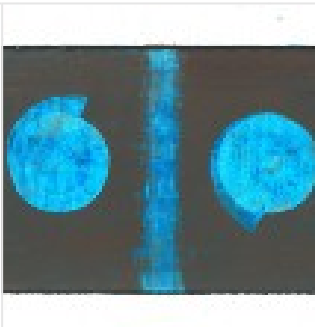
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### Faceless | a poem by nublaccsoul

This is ancestral, past-life reading; this is meditation and prayer; this is future telling, a spiritual fair...

medium.com



### Portrait | a poem by nublaccsoul

Black Woman, brewed up strong - your sun-deep skin estranged from the outside, in this summer's sunset dust settles on...

medium.com



### UNANSWERED | a poem by nublaccsoul

But we are all siblings, and so we shall share the family pain.

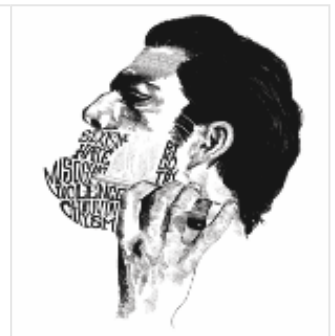
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A Written Testimony



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