

EDITORIAL

This week's cover coincided with my umpteenth rewatch of the iconic Fleabag monologue. It may seem silly, but there was a time when I did think hair is everything. Hair loss is something that I've struggled with for most of my adult life, so now my brain is wired to think about how any lighting will enhance my balding spots. For years, the way my hair sits on my head dictated how the rest of my day will commence. The cover story also reminded me how my hair obsession has always been intrinsic. As a child, it drove me insane to the point where I wrapped a bedsheet around my freshly bald head and ordered everyone to call me Rapunzel. As I write this, I'm struggling with yet another questionable haircut that haunts me in my sleep. A few years ago, I would've refrained from social interactions to hide the chop. However, maturity has taught me there is more to life than bad hair days. I have learned to let go and finally appreciate the cool breeze caressing my bald spots.

-- Fatima Jahan Ena, Sub-editor, SHOUT



TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

Strangers

Halsey ft. Lauren Jauregui

B

Latch

Disclosure ft. Sam Smith

Sofia

Claire

Heather

Conan Gray

Sign of the Times

Harry Styles

Chocolate

The 1975

Kasoor

Prateek Kuhad

THAT'S WHAT I WANT

Lil Nas X

Email us at shoutds@gmail.com
with feedback, comments, and reader
submissions within 500 words.

PLAYWATCH

MUSIC



Beyoncé's Renaissance is a cosmic and groovy summer album

TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM

Unless you've been living under a rock, you probably know that Beyoncé has released her seventh studio album *Renaissance*. After a six-year hiatus from the genre-bending and career-defining album *Lemonade*, Beyoncé pushes the boundaries of what an album can be with her latest project.

Let's take a quick detour into a history lesson for context. The European Renaissance was a period of unparalleled creativity that birthed some of Western history's greatest artists, scientists, thinkers, and writers. This period came after hundreds of years of artistic stagnation, known as the dark ages.

I may be exaggerating a bit, but the last six years since *Lemonade*'s debut have been tumultuous to say the very least. Starting with the MAGA takeover of the United States, to Covid-19, the BLM movement, and ending with a global recession, boiling inflation, and war in Ukraine. It wouldn't be too far-fetched to say we were also in need of enlightenment.

Enlightenment is indeed what *Renaissance* gives us – an electrifying and eclectic mix of disco, soul, house, and hip-hop. Throughout the 16-track and 102-minute runtime, we embark on a sonic journey traversing from summer fields to the edge of the universe. The album is a cataclysmic ode to themes of liberty, freedom, and justice that are as relevant as ever in the current political landscape.

Disco and house revival isn't a new concept. Azealia Banks released *Broke With Expensive Taste* ten years ago, and Drake came out with *Honestly, Never-*

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a mere couple of months ago. However, *Renaissance* shines through its unparalleled lyrical content and production quality. The album uses transitions between tracks to morph into a singular body of work. Much like *Lemonade*, bridges are extensively utilised to adjoin completely different beats into a single song. While not as political and socially aware as *Lemonade* was, this album is far more replayable.

Many of the tracks on *Renaissance* can be considered career highlights for Beyoncé, a remarkable feat for someone in their 20th year in the industry. Tracks such as "Virgo's Groove" and "Alien Superstar" have rightly gone viral, and other cuts such as "Cozy," "Energy," and "Summer Renaissance" prove how multifaceted an artist Beyoncé is. Although I hold a grudge against sampling in music, the samples and interpolations in this album are too perfectly executed to complain about.

In true Beyoncé fashion, this album is a cohesive masterpiece filled with juxtapositions, successfully being so many things at once. *Renaissance* is both razor-sharp and urbanely polished, serene and earth-shatteringly loud, and most importantly, simultaneously empowering and humbling. *Renaissance* is the perfect soundtrack for this literally and figuratively burning summer. Finally, is *Renaissance* the magnum opus of Beyoncé's career? Only time can tell.

Turns out Taaseen Mohammed Islam can write semi-decently at the expense of being able to do basic math. Send him pointers at taaseen.2001@gmail.com