

Empires Die

LIFE EVOLVES



DLAEDD

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EMPIRES DIE . . . LIFE EVOLVES IS A PROJECT THAT BOTH REFLECTS AND EXPLORES CHANGE: PERSONAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ARTISTIC CHANGE.

The project’s beginnings manifested during a night of personal terror. Awakened by violent, unexpected nerve pain gripping my entire body, I dealt with the pain as best I could. I took my mind to another place, a place familiar but new in this darkness, this pain: a place of creativity, filled with thoughts of death and art and their combustible intertwining. This experience—this night—became the inspiration behind the first song I wrote for the album and initiated the project as a whole.

The backstory is worth telling . . .

That night punctuated the end of an intense emotional week.

Creatively I had reached a place of satisfaction and accomplishment; I had released an album as part of the super group: The 3rd Eye. But that creative happiness was tempered by the death of “my white rapper soul mate,” Mac Miller, an important and influencing creative voice in my musical psyche as well as the larger musical world.

At work, I had encountered street violence first hand, breaking up a bloody machete fight in Eugene, Oregon. Walking around a street corner I saw one homeless guy attacking another with a machete. Both were bleeding. I ran up and held out my badge. (That badge gets me into the gym; other than that, it’s worthless.) With uncommon authority I yelled: “drop the machete”! Somehow that worked and I was able to remove the machete from the man wielding it. Blood was everywhere. My coworker, who had been walking with me, took the next few days off. I retreated into my music, prepping for the 3rd Eye album release show.

These incidents cracked the status quo of my reality, breaking open the dams of stagnation in my life, cutting a path of change, marking the beginning of an epic, painful, magical and ultimately transformative, two and a half year journey from which Empires Die . . . Life Evolves has emerged.

Professionally I was an outreach worker, an advocate for street youth in Eugene. It was a job where intense experiences were more the norm than the exception. I held a teenager—overdosing—nearly unconscious, frothing at the mouth, waiting for an ambulance to arrive. I was present when another teenager—drunk and triggered by circumstance—ran away from our team moments before becoming involved in an event that led to him being tried for murder; I had to testify at the trial. I witnessed police verbally and physically accosting yet another teenager, challenged their actions, futilely pleaded with them to stop; ignored, I yelled at the gathering crowd: “Film! Film the police”! For that moment of standing up for justice, I was suspended from my job without pay.

There would be more pain, more loss.

My job and the program I had helped the city develop—not unlike many positions and programs that serve the marginalized and most vulnerable of our populations—abruptly lost funding. I fought the decision, challenging top local government officials and got myself suspended. Again.

Although the program ended it had brought me together with Charlie Landeros, a kindred spirit, also committed to creating positive social change. Charlie and I launched a community garden to empower people dealing with persistent food insecurity. We began working together creatively, writing and recording a song called, “Tha Price of Righteousness.” Charlie was murdered by the police in circumstances that remain unclear and unresolved. I was devastated and, once again, in the eye of a tornado of controversy.

Financially broke and heartbroken by Charlie’s death, I accepted a job managing a camp for the unhoused. Days before I started this new, intense job, my wife of 13 years told me she wanted a divorce. I had grown up in a broken family and dreamt of creating a stable, lasting nuclear family for my two kids. It was a dream I had to let go of as the divorce process unfolded and my beautiful family was torn apart. I moved out two weeks before Covid hit.

I became so depressed and stressed, I was unable to eat or sleep. I lost 21 pounds. (My healthy weight is about 130 pounds so I didn’t have a lot of room for that kind of loss.)

I even faced the uniquely modern fiasco of a technology dependent creative: my hard drive died, causing me to lose 7-8 songs specifically created for Empires Die . . . Life Evolves.

I was mentally and physically destroyed. Artistically empty.

At rock bottom, I learned how to sit with my pain and emerge from it. I started to crawl back toward life. I began eating healthy foods and working out. I consumed lots of psychedelic mushrooms.

I started hitting the studio with as many artists as I could: artists from different walks of life, artists from different countries, cultures, races, religions, and ages, artists from different musical backgrounds. Through this process, I learned to be vulnerable, to ask friends for help, to be receptive to the change that was inevitable and ultimately, to become stronger and more resilient. I transformed, becoming a more mature, self-assured soul and a better musician.

At one point, I was given a free trip to Costa Rica to study, network, and collaborate with world-class musicians at the Solar Sound Immersion Retreat. This period was characterized by an explosive surge of creativity. While 22 songs made the final album, over 50 songs were recorded in this surreal period of life.

Of course, this period of personal transformation is set upon the backdrop of equally profound—and necessary—social and political change. Many songs on Empires Die . . . Life Evolves reflect issues we are grappling with as national and global societies: the virus, quarantine, economic uncertainty, police brutality, systemic racism, social inequality, environmental destruction—issues that define our collective experience and demand our collective engagement.

Combined, the songs that make up the album, Empires Die . . . Life Evolves, simultaneously propose and compose an exploration of transformation asking: “How does one navigate these extraordinary times of turmoil and uncertainty to survive and maybe even thrive? How does one become resilient? How does one evolve?”

Because of the enormity of the quest reflected in these questions, I sought out and brought together a diverse group united by passion and purpose, creating a community of over 50 musicians to make this album, and over 20 artists, videographers, fashion designers, producers, and promoters to contribute to this larger artistic meditation. What has emerged is both a personal and communal testament to the possibilities of change.

While rooted in hip hop, these songs are a multi-genre musical mosaic capturing a kaleidoscope of emotions telling the story of learning how to die and how to live, how to fall out of love and in love again, how to re-imagine family and family life, how to make, connect with, and remember friends, how to be in community and conflict, how to embrace revolution and evolution.

Welcome to the journey . . .

PLAEDO

Props

I would like to thank everyone who was a part of Empire’s Die... Life Evolves. I couldn’t have survived and made this album during this challenging and magical period of life without the special support of a tribe of soul fam who I’m eternally grateful for. If y’all ever need a kidney, come & get me! I’m only going to be able to do that once though, so you may have to rock, paper, scissors for it. Now, let’s get this started...

To my son Mazzy: You’re so strong, sweet and smart! I’m so proud of you and couldn’t have asked for a better son. I’d do any and everything for you; I love you so much!

To my daughter Gaelflyne: I’m proud of how wise, strong, sensitive and real you are! I love you so much & will always be there for you!

Maxwell Davis: I gotta say, your belief in me and the project made this happen. Well, that and all the great ideas and hard work you put into the project. You are the best executive producer and friend I could ask for. I am so grateful for you!

Matt Monroe: Brother, I’m so glad to have you in my life, our soulful conversations have saved my life. So grateful to start to collaborate with you again. I got mad love for you, yo!

Jessica Haeckel: you have such a special place in my life and heart -- regardless of our past and future -- I will always have love for you and hope to always be close with you.

To Zen Tempest, Kemy Joseph, Jeremy Spafford, Kody Barnett, Logan Flores: y’all are like my soul fam council. I would not be here without you! Our soulful chats are one of my biggest blessings. Seriously, I love y’all so much and am proud to have y’all in my life.

To My mother, my grandmother, Aunt Susan, Uncle David and Cousin Sydney, Skye and Sasha: I Love y’all and our small little family. To my father: RIP, I Love and Miss you so much.

Megan Swan: you helped me lay the foundation for it all, I’m forever grateful and will forever have love for you.

To Charlie Landeros and Moya: I’m so glad to have gotten to know you before you were tragically taken from this world during the recording of this album, I will forever try my best to honor your legacy. Rest in Power.

To New Reb, Shookie, DJ Kimchi, Connah Jay, The Hopeful Child, Ricky Boot, Samira Lobby, Ob The Server, Dirtball, Rachel Land, Geran Wales, Alley Valkyrie, Tzutu Khan, Cerebral Coretext, PatchesFlows, Sandy and Max, Alex Grabofsky, Jordan Romani, Olive Del Sol, Namasteez, Tree Breeson, Amy Elliott, Shanalea Forest, Rivers, Calvin Burke, Michael Green, Erik, Dani, Suzi, Oliver Redig, M5 Vibe, Jorah Lafleur, Max Miller, Dave Villalobos, Daryn White, Talyce Ketura, Brian Skinner, Savannah Rose, Hallie Roberts, Oria Gynnette, Wayne Love, Joey Helpish, James Hersisher, Fox, The Goat, Kat, Savelle, Treyton Day, RXN, Cat Frink, James Alden, Michael Mazza, The Idaho crew (Matt, Dan, Geoff, Christian and Jared) Friends if I didn’t list ya it doesn’t mean I don’t have mad love for ya, and once again every musician and artist who contributed to Empire’s Die... Life Evolves: Thank you from the bottom of my heart, I’m forever grateful for your presence in my life and beyond that amazed by the awesomeness of your existence.

To the goddesses and gods, the universe, the nameless primal source from which we all come from and return to: One Love.

Bless!



Empires Die

LIFE EVOLVES

EMPIRES DIE

1. I'MSCARED2DIE2NIGHT!

Written, produced, mixed & performed by: Plaedo
Additional vocals by: Maxwell Davis

2. WELCOME 2 THA APOCALYPSE

Produced by: Jairo Barreda
Mixed by: Jairo Barreda & Plaedo
Vocals by: Plaedo

3. REALIZING RESILIENCY

Produced by: Pluto6 & Plaedo
Vocals by: Plaedo
Turntables by: Connah Jay
Keys by: Jordan Romani
Guitar by: Namasteez
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

4. BREAK THA WALLS DOWN

Produced by: James Alden, Plaedo and Metric
Vocals by: Justice Gbada, Jessica Haeckel, Tzutu Kan, RXN & Plaedo
Mixed by: James Alden, Jessica Haeckel, Metric & Plaedo

5. ON THA ROAD (GANJA LIGHTIN')

Produced by: New Reb
Vocals by: New Reb & Plaedo
Mixed by: New Reb
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

6. IN A GENERATION/WHEN THA VIRUS CAME

Produced by: Plaedo
Guitar by: Derek Reed & Matt Monroe
Bass Guitar by: Nu-Intelligence
Theremin by: Plaedo
Vocals by: Plaedo & Mazzy
Mixed by: Plaedo
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

7. THA GREAT SHIFT

Produced by: Jessica Haeckel & Plaedo
Bass by: Max Miller
Guitar by: Casey House
Keys by: Jessica Haeckel
Vocals by: Jessica Haeckel & Plaedo
Mixed by: GART Studios & Plaedo

8. TRUE FACE @ THA CROSSROADS

Produced by: Ramayana
Turntables by: Connah Jay
Vocals by: Ramayana, Za Boi Da Fuk Gawd, Jessica Haeckel & Plaedo
Mixed by: Ramayana & Plaedo

9. SO WOKE IT HURTS

Produced by: Plaedo
Vocals by: Plaedo, Ob The Server & Def Davyne
Mixed by: Plaedo

10. 2ND ROUND GLOW UP

Produced by: Nyurus
Vocals by: Michael "Magic" Sorenson from Sol Seed, Matt Monroe & Plaedo
Mixed by: Nyurus & Plaedo

11. KEEP MOVING ON (THROWING STARFISH)

Produced by: Mazzy & Plaedo
Vocals by: Kara Strickland, D=MC2, Dirtball, & Plaedo
Mixed by: Plaedo
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

12. KID IN THA WOODZ

Produced by: New Reb
Vocals by: New Reb & Plaedo
Mixed by: New Reb, DJ Kimchi & Plaedo
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

13. THA PRICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Produced by: Plaedo
Guitar by: Charlie Landeros
Keys by: Jordan Romani
Additional Production by: Namasteez & Jordan Romani
Vocals by: Charlie Landeros, Alex Grabofsky & Plaedo
Cajon by: Dave Villalobos
Mixed by: Gart Studios & Plaedo

14. SURRENDER

Produced by: The Hopeful Child & Plaedo
Vocals by: Samira Lobby, Zen Tempest & Plaedo
Poem by: Jorah Lafleur
Mixed by: The Hopeful Child & Plaedo
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

15. THA METAMORPHOSIS

Produced by: Plaedo
Bass by: Max Miller
Hand drums by: Rich Fling
Flute, Vibraphone, organ by: Scotty Perey
Vocals by: Maxwell Davis, Ella Trash,

M5 Vibe, Kemy Joseph & Plaedo
Mixed by: Gart Studios & Plaedo
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

16. TOO MUCH LUST/YET IZ LOVE ENOUGH???

Produced by: Plaedo
Vocals by: Faliesha Dawn & Plaedo
Phone call by: Zen Tempest
Talkbox and Keys by: Jordan Romani
Guitar by: Matt Zhun
Additional production by: Jordan Romani
Mixed by: Plaedo

17. GROWING PAINS

Produced by: Pluto6
Vocals by: Samira Lobby & Plaedo
Guitar by: Drew Misik
Mixed by: Pluto6 & Plaedo
Mastered by: 503 Mastering

18. INHERITED TRAUMA

Produced at Dandyland Studios
Vocals by: Joey Helpish & Plaedo
Mixed by: Dandyland Studios & Plaedo
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics

19. KEEP LOVING, KEEP LEARNING

Produced by: Matt Monroe
Vocals by: Plaedo & Bloomurian
Mixed by: Matt Monroe & Plaedo

20. THA TRUTH OF IT ALL

Produced by: Jose Carlos Nicolas
Vocals by: Ob Tha Server, Alex Grabofsky & Plaedo
Mixed by: Jose Carlos Nicolas & Plaedo

21. #BESTLIFE

Produced by: DJ Kimchi, Jordan Romani and Plaedo
Guitars by: Namasteez
Keys by: Jordan Romani
Vocals by: Samira Lobby and Plaedo
Mixed by: DJ Kimchi, Jordan Romani and Plaedo

22. I FEEL GOOD

Produced by: Analytical Alz, Jordan Romani, Maxwell Davis and Plaedo
Talkbox and Keys by: Jordan Romani
Vocals by: Marv Ellis, Jessica Haeckel, Alex Grabofsky and Plaedo
Mixed by: Analytical Alz & Plaedo
Mastered by: 503 Mastering

23. RIZE UP

Produced by: Droog and Jordan Romani
Talkbox and Keys by: Jordan Romani

Vocals by: Michael Leslie, Savelle The Native, Maxwell Davis & Plaedo

24. ACHIEVE THA IMPOSSIBLE

Produced by: Nick Larson
Bass by: Max Miller
Vocals by: Ob The Server, Benny Cosmic, Maxwell Davis, Nick Larson & Plaedo
Mixed by: Nick Larson
Mastered by: Nick Larson

25. WAVELENGTH

Produced by: Nara
Vocals by: Cerebral Cortext, Kara Strickland, Maxwell Davis & Plaedo
Mixed by: Nara & Plaedo

26. CELEBRATE THA LIBERATION

Produced by: Ricky Nottz
Vocals by: Plaedo
Mixed by: Ricky Nottz & Plaedo
Mastered by: 503 Mastering

27. THA NAME OF THA GAME (WHUT IZ EVOLUTION?)

Produced by: Plaedo & PatchesFlows
Upright Bass by: Ethan Rainwater
Guitar by: Guy Eckelberger
Beatbox by: PatchesFlows
Turntables by: Connah Jay
Vocals by: Plaedo
Mixed by: Plaedo
Mastered by: Ecco Acoustics & 503 Mastering

28. THA WALK HOME

Produced by: Logan, Jordan Romani & Plaedo
Vocals by: Logan, Kara Strickland, Alex Grabofsky & Plaedo
Mixed by: Logan & Metric

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Album Artwork by: Digital Nomad
Album Booklet by: Cat Frink
Final Album Mastering by: Brodon Creative Media

Special Artistic Muse & Quality Control Inspector: Jessica Haeckel

Promotional manager: Treylon Day @ Day In The Life Entertainment

Executive Produced by: Maxwell Davis & Plaedo

1. I'MSCARED2DIE2NIGHT!

(This is the song that inspired the album. The first song started and the last song finished. Actually, the version on this album is the 4th version made for this album. At 21 while living in Thailand, a Buddhist Monk said that I was an incarnate of a 'Boddhisatva'. Ever since I have tried to live by that principle, to shine my light into the dark. Which has led me to have all kinds of wild experiences, for example, One time I broke up a machete fight. The night after that experience, I woke up in extreme pain, thinking I was going to die. And thus began a period of my life in which I was surrounded by death and decay. 2 close friends were murdered, one of my clients murdered someone and I had to testify in a controversial trial, my marriage ended, and I thought I was going to die. And if I was going to die, first I would need to make my monolithic masterpiece. A statement, an album epitaph. Thus began the journey of "Empire's Die...Life Evolves"...)

Mutha-Luva's Need 2 Know
My name is Plaedo
I'm always on a fight for a righteous cause
Who else but me, will fight the cops
And make it personal since my close friend was shot

Walk into a mob of proud boys with guns
Tell them all to go home
Leave my neighborhood alone
I'll take on the mayer, the gangsters and bankers

And i'm not a hater of the game
I'm simply a player who is doing my thang
And i'm doing it major
So now you can read about it in the paper
Before i set it on fire, get high of the vapors
Cuz when life gets crazy, I get crazier
And now they label me a hero
Yo everyones impressed
But what they don't know
Is that my life is a mess, I feel so stressed
And I'm ready for my death...

So walk in my shows
Live my life, see what i've seen
Be who I be, understand why
I don't wanna live but i'm scared to die

And so they remember me
For these moments that I acted heroic
With a passion to show it, but know that
When I was fighting these officers
All I was was reliving my trauma
I was fighting the monsters
Who beat up my mama
I was traumatized and ever since
It's been drama life, so i am trying
To move on with my life
I got two weeks to move again
My car won't start again
I got nowhere to go
And I don't know what to do
My wife left me, girlfriend did too!

So walk in my shows
Live my life, see what i've seen
Be who I be, understand why
I don't wanna live but i'm scared to die

And so everyday I try to maintain
With this strange pain that pervades

Every cell in my body
My fucking nerves hurt
And everyday at work
They give us bandaids
To try to save society
As my clients sit and cry to me
Most of my experience is anxiety
So i want to be dying
I am now closer to trying
I now have a plan
And the sleeping pills to fill my hand
Next on my list is to slit my wrist
And bleed out to death on this troubled floor
And I won't leave a note nope
Only this album finally finished....

2. WELCOME 2 THA APOCALYPSE

(This album was designed to be world building. I felt I needed a song to represent an intersection between society and psychology, to explore how the collapse of the empire affects our mental health. Often I hear people say these days, "I'm trying not to go Crazy". With all the turmoil and transformation these days, I also hear people reference "The Apocalypse". Thus "Welcome2TheApocalypse" was born.)

As the World Round Me Falls Apart
I'm trying not to go Crazy Crazy Crazy Yo
As the World Round Me Falls Apart
I'm trying not to go Crazy Crazy Crazy Yo

Welcome 2 Tha Apocalypse
Where monsters live in politics
they microchip the anonymous
as the eye on top the obelisk
now watches as big data
gets added to the AI
Now watch as the machine
becomes the master
as the death of capitalism
gives birth to fascism
now people livin' in tents
next to empty buildings
out of business
still were building prisons
crime is on the rise
people fight in daylight
and at night cries
slice through the silence
harmonize with sirens
in a symphony of violence
in these times of civil war
another storm is coming
it's a drought yet somehow
still it's flooding
got me wondering
if it's all too much
As the empire crumbles
My only hopes for the future
Is coming from us

Yet most I know
Have PTSD
So how are we
Goin to talk about empowerment
Before the counseling
And how are we goin to get our way out of this yo!

As the World Round Me Falls Apart
I'm trying not to go Crazy Crazy Crazy Yo
As the World Round Me Falls Apart
I'm trying not to go Crazy Crazy Crazy Yo

So Welcome 2 Tha Apocalypse
An optimist I'm positive
The death of the empire
Will make space for new ways
But You may say I am insane
Yet since a juvenile
I was raised in the wild
In the eye of the tornado
So that's where I like to play yo
Chaos is my home
Addicted to insanity
I be the coyote the crow the raccoon
I'm not leaving going extinct
Anytime soon
I'm speaking my secrets
With the moon

As the World, Round Me Falls Apart
I'm trying not to go Crazy Crazy Crazy Yo
As the World Round Me Falls Apart
I'm trying not to go Crazy Crazy Crazy Yo

So Welcome 2 Tha Apocalypse
I apologize to all the kids
Who sensitive and empathetic
Sensing the direction
This world is heading
Yet it's going to get worse
Before in turn it gets better
So try to keep ya head up
I know it is hard for us lovers
But the pain that does not break us
Will just make us tougher
And since we have suffered
We're able to help others
So I fight revolution
Create evolution
This is all I have
Since I had my soul mate
And twin flame both say
Go run to the roar
That is what I'm put here for
So if I must live with this madness
I will manifest it as a gift
Since it also is a curse
To be honest
I idolize the martyr
realize living is harder
My body's growing weaker
But my spirits growing stronger
I'm going for the conquer
As try to keep my honor
And I wonder how much longer
I can stare into the face of the monster.
I wonder how much longer I can stare
Into the face of the monster
Before it stares back!

We gotta be who we wanna be
Live how we wanna live
Love who we wanna love
Hey yo, lets get free
We gotta be
Because you never know
Just when we gonna die
And so today
We gotta live our life

Hey Yo I've been chased by cops
for selling drugs
face slammed on the sidewalk
I've lived on the other side of the globe
and gave a Ted Talk
I've been homeless got high with kings
and led angry mobs of protesters
occupied shut down every bank in town and I wasn't arrested
I've broken up a bloody machete fight my life is crazy
kind of like Tupac's I've been around the block
and I've seen some wild shit!
Like at the Apocalypse I'll be saying to all of y'all
bring on some more zombies yet on a normal day
I walk with a swag stoned in my pj's
Like y'all can't judge me
I named myself created my image
than watch my world change as I lived it
better than the one that I was given
And if I can do it you can do it
What else should we do but vibe to this music...

3. REALIZING RESILIENCY

(Basically I'm saying, I've been through a lot, and I'm still smiling, still moving forward in joy like a badass. And y'all are invited to do that too! Live your Myth Mutha Luva's! The drums and bass of this song are created by a 13 year old prodigy named Pluto6 (the youngest person on the album) who I met and taught at a digital music production summer camp. I programmed the atmospheric elements and got my good friends Namasteez to add some live jammed out blues guitar and Jordan Romani to play keys which made the song so much more dynamic! I love to mix live instrumentation with programmed beats to capture the qualities of both worlds and did that throughout the album.)

4. BREAK THE WALLS DOWN

(I wanted to say Humanity’s the Family and Fuck Racism. I am a white man, and I felt like, especially doing a hip hop song, the respectful proper thing to do was to have a multiracial, multicultural conversation and invite other MC’s to give their perspective, which I, as I white man, cannot speak for. So I invited musicians and mc’s from 5 different races to create this song with me. The beat is philosophically harmonious with the message of the song, as it’s intentionally a punk rock trap banger, both punk rock and trap you’d think would be very different, and on the surface they are, but deep down, both cultures and musical styles have more in common than most realize.)

Yo fuck racism
It’s a stupid division
When the world that we live in
Is now a global village
If we want survivalism
End this tribalism
That is a prison of division
a competition
Of power rape and pillagin’
So the best use of privilege is
To combat oppression
So let us level out our positions
Give lessons to the children
Get in where we fit in
And then change the system
Cuz this isn’t the world
That I want to live in
For real then
Cuz we can kill em all
And build a wall
But then I have to ask yall
What type of world are we building
One designed to fall
See greed be the monster
We can’t feed any longer
When together we’re stronger
So whether black white
Red yellow beige or brown
We came to get down
Like a rainbow
So oh don’t you know
Our pot of gold
Is this moment of harmony
That we hold truth be told
If you look within beneath the skin
We’re basically the same
Yet we play this game
Of differences so
Who’s really down
To change up the sound
Spread the love around
And break the walls down!

5. ON THA ROAD

(I was in Costa Rica, working on my album with world class musicians at the Solar Sound music retreat, While in Costa Rica, a video came out in the states that I was featured in by an MC named M5 Vibe. M5 Vibe is a friend of mine and happens to be black. I commented on Instagram, “How Cool Brother, I’m so glad I got to be in your video. Thank you” And a bunch of strangers and self-proclaimed Antifa (a philosophy I very much support) out of Portland, Oregon started attacking me online

for calling a black man a brother, apparently to these people as a white dude I’m not supposed to call a black man a brother. Which to this day, seems to create more division then unity to me. (Shouldn’t we start to treat each other as a family?) I was going to engage them in an online debate, but my girlfriend at the time Jessica said, “Nah, write a song about it instead.”)

These are dark times
That we are living in
It’s a broken world
And the question is
How we gonna fix it
When so many wanna talk
But nobody wanna listen
When we all think were right
And the other side is crazy
So we march like peacocks
Around street blocks like
Ka-Ka mutha fucka
No more cookie cutter
No more melting pot
While those behind the dollar sign
Design the structure
Where everybody suffers
Confused through the fake news
Used to deceive you
To some they say it’s red
And to some they say it’s blue
Then they watch us argue
Over which color is true
And whose had it worse
Like it’s us vs. them
When we should come together
In the name of the earth
With the time we have left
I remember back when
We was chanting wake up
Now woke be the anthem
The fascist are back and
Stopping the nazi’s is the noble passion
But let this tailor tell ya of the fashion y’all
Let us not become what we oppose
The same energy just wearing different clothes

Activist attacking and I dig the passion
But you gotta know the facts
If you want to make an impact yeah
You think you righteous
You just misguided
Online screaming
While I’m fighting the lions in the arena
Real talk I’m in the real world dog
Don’t be a troll
An impotent critic
While I’m changing systems in the city that we live in
When we learn to sit with our pain
The world will change
I’m trying to give y’all love
Why ya wanna give hate
Cuz it’s a sad thing
If you got the change
You’d still feel the same
Because your not ready for change
Just to feel your pain...

6. IN A GENERATION/WHEN THE VIRUS CAME

(Most of the time, songs come to me slowly. But every once in a while I get a gift from the gods. One morning I was reading Facebook and a friend wrote, “We are a generation

who wasn’t taught to cope with the end of the world”. I instantly remembered the morning of 9/11 and riding the school bus and this poem came out in one sitting. The beat was started in garageband for a music production class I was teaching to high schoolers and that high pitch squealing towards the end of the first part of the song is me playing the OG electronic instrument The Theremin. The second part of the song, “When the Virus Came” was inspired by my experiences working and managing a homeless camp during the scary early days of the covid outbreak and quarantine.)

We Are a Generation who woke up one day then noticed everything was changing
few things remaining the same, as if,
nothing is as it was, now we’re trying to adjust since that September 11th ride on the school bus
when we witnessed the towers crash in the classroom
who grew up in a war on terror amidst the normalization of fear and modern day witch hunts
sensors and metal detectors at the airport gate
military recruiters in the cafeteria the war state we are a generation
who watched classmates shipped off to Afghanistan or Iraq
with promises of college and come back from the war unsure of what they were even fighting for
with PTSD and physical injuries galore
We are a generation
who graduated from college at the dawn of the great recession and couldn’t use our degrees to get employed
We are a generation
who watched the corporations destroy the ways of the old take control and now sell society mechanical souls and we had to work for them to pay rent
Who grew up as America was awakening from the mythological american dream and nobody taught us how to cope as we swing by the end of the rope as we’ve had our hope betrayed
We are a generation
who came of age as that flag frayed and peaked through where the cameras of the surveillance state
We watched the police beat our brown brothers to death or near it for little or no reason on our cell phones
The police now look like the military and the phones now track us
The phones break quick these days so we can buy another one in between the mountain top removal and the trash mountain build up
Besides another model is coming up and you know you want to try it back from the advertisement
We are a generation
who grew up with tornado’s floods droughts fires tsunami’s hurricanes
The open meadows we played in as children are now out of business strip malls
The forests have been cut down and we’ve been given the death of democracy
rebirth of fascism
Donald Trump as president and Climate Change
We are a generation

who must make sense of this all
As the headlines often read like the end times
We are a generation
who inherited this mess
and now some us have become parents and we look at our kids and wonder, and worry what is going to happen
In the Next Generation...

Everything Changed when the virus came
And the lives were claimed
And those that survived
Were sent inside
To hide from the unseen
to wash hands clean
Because the past is infected
And the future is a question
Meanwhile the plague kept spreading
A globe at home
The stores shut down
The ghost of children now
At the playground
A town without sound
The rent went unpaid
As the old way
Began to fade
And they stopped the machines
To wash hands clean
Because the past is infected
And the future is a question
Time to play with your angels
Time to make peace with your devils
Time to worry because the time is blurry
A time to heal
And a time to kill
A time to know
Yo the status quo it has to go
So they wash hands clean
Because the past is infected
And the future is a question
Meanwhile, some of us
We Brave the outside
With masks on face
Put our lives on the frontlines
So that lives can be saved
But I would lie
If I said I wasn’t afraid
To bring the sickness home
And give it to my family
So I wash hands clean
Because the past is infected
And the future is a question...

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And give it to my family
So I wash hands clean
Because the past is infected
And the future is a question...

7. THE GREAT SHIFT

(This song is the thesis statement for the album. One of the first songs written and recorded for the album, this song really encapsulates the essence in the question of what does it mean to exist in this modern era of great transition. I remember being really proud of this song when I first finished it, it was leveling up creatively and was like a sign that the album was going to be my best yet.)

Sometimes I feel like it’s the end of the world
But don’t you know the Apocalypse is just is when the veil gets lifted
So the great shift is here that happens every few thousand years
It can even be felt in the atmosphere so it’s easy to be fueled by fear
when the old truths turn out to be lies when the meaning making structures
Fall apart and rupture when you come to understand that the kingdoms of the land
Are just castles made of sand and we’re drops in the sea
You feel the tides of change They are rising in we
so in this age that we all live in
If you need a compass use your intuition to navigate through the nation
Where the fires are a’ raging in the forest in the trees
In the cities in the streets where employees sweep for needles
On streets where people lay half asleep and half dead
By the drunks who creep to the bars looking for the face of god
In the bottom of the bottle go to church like a brothel go online and get hostile
It’s all helter skelter you can follow all the rules
Still wind up in a homeless shelter
Because the big business got with the politicians
Wrote all the rules in their interest
So at our expense is how they get rich
But baby hold on I know that it’s hard
Keep that vision in your mind and that hope in your heart
Can’t you see this is all a house of cards
And that their greeds causing it to fall apart
So when Babylon Be Gone Zion will be ours!

A whirlwind of transition until the world we live in

Is the world of science fiction
With the Crypto currency digital dollars
Radioactive rainbows stem cells and cell phones
Bionic limbs and genetically modified potatoes
With the rise of the robots everybody living in Virtual reality as the internet
Weaves her world wide web
So society’s now a spider
On social media
Technology it is taking over
Yet what it wants evolution began
So hydrogen begat carbon began life humans
than computers
So maybe this is all evolution
But still that don’t feel like a solution
I said they call it a riot
So what do we want to say about the future.

So we in the final hours of the ancient sunlight
Alive in these times that will try our souls
As we wonder worry woe if we can float while the sea herself fashions her own boat
I don’t know what this means for you and me in this moment but we gotta keep swimming in this ocean
So I looked within that was my notion And were 80% water
so it is not the Changes that we need to make
But rather the changes that are made through we
I navigate my space a captain of what I see
Because in the great shift many get lost in the mist
So I pray for those who won’t make it
With the faith that this is still sacred
Because it’s a brave new world
For the boys and the girls and the non binary
With the choice of who they want to marry
I never thought I’d see legal weed in the dispensary
So what I’m trying to say despite my fear in this age
For every yin there’s a yang so with a bigger yin compes a bigger yang
What I’m really trying to say about this change is it’s not good not bad not white not black it’s both it ’s neither, it’s gray
Just like everybody is a little gay
So the truth is scary but don’t be afraid
no one will save you but it will be okay (repeated a bunch of times)

8. TRUE FACE @ THA CROSSROADS

(I scored this beat from my homie the Solar Punk producer Ramayana while in Costa Rica and I just knew I wanted to come with some funky aggressive punk rock skater kid meets hip hop vibes. People say the Turntable is a dying instrument. And I get the argument, the Turntable is hardly present in the hip hop artform that it was once central to. But I think the Turntable is dope, and so it was a pleasure to bring my good friend and top notch turntablist Connah Jay to the studio to lay down a dope scratch solo on the song.)

Can’t stop the ticking tocking
So we rock it
Got no options!

The worlds psychotic neurotic toxic
All is a product sold for profit
And I want to stop it

Never would have thought that
It be from right here
That I would start it
But it’s only from here
That I can start it
In the land of the Godless
Cops and monsters
Gotta do your dirt than
Don’t get caught cuz
Black helicopters in the Sky
Van’s swoop you up
In the middle of the night
Behind closed doors
You get no rights
So they call it a riot
But it’s an uprising
I said they call it a riot
But it’s an uprising!

We moving through our shit
Moving through our shit
Throwing elbows like we in the pit
Giving that love given that love
Doesn’t it suck
To never feel like you are enough
Say fuck that
Kick it up like hacky sack
With all these drugs in my backpack
I’m dope as fuck y’all that’s a fact
If the end of times is where we at
Tell me how will you choose to react
Will you try to live in science fiction
Or will you paint it black
Will you try to survive the aftermath
On nature’s path
Or try to control the habitat
Change is happening fast like avalanche
Better have your maps like what!

The momentum of opposing directions
Is at an intersection
And in a second
With no second guessing
We must chose our truth
And if there’s one thing I know
Our true face will be shone
When we at the crossroads
So which way will you go!

Can’t stop that ticking tocking
So we rock it
Got no options!

9. SO WOKE IT HURTS

(This song was originally written and recorded 3 years ago. For a group project called, “Altered States of Consciousness” that never materialized. Unfortunately, this was one of the songs “lost” when my hard drive died in Costa Rica. I always loved that hook though! I felt like the hook is a hit for a certain type of person, the wild festie going street youth I like to work with. Ob, who I met as a street youth was one of the MC’s from Altered States of Consciousness and he’s really like a little brother, so of course I had to get him back on this new version. And I got a super dope verse from Def Devyne, who is such an interesting cat, super positive and wise, but elusive and mysterious. I sent him the song, but he never responded. So I sent the song to another MC, who began working on his verse for the song. Then one day, out of nowhere, probably three months after I sent him the beat, Def Davyne emailed me his amazing verse. So I sent him a

thank you message. Again no response...lol.)

I gotta change my story
If it keeps me from glory
I got too much to lose
To be addicted to the bad news
Which way to go I don’t know
I’m so confused
I thought I moved past
My past issues
I guess I just spiraled back
Into a greater truth
So reality’s my clue
To heal my souls blues
OCD ADD PTSD
I got an alphabet soup
I was given to consume
But that’s no excuse
To give out no abuse
If I made poor choices
can’t wallow in my gloom
It is what it is I gotta do what I can do
I’ll say I’m sorry to you
Take 2 steps forward than 1 step backwards
Towards my goals i move
Into something new
Slow it down
breathe through the ground and chose
Another destiny and Identity improved
They say the only way out of hell
Is to move through it
So what else can we do then
But dance to the music

10. 2ND ROUND GLOW UP

(I had just arrived in Costa Rica and I was looking for people who might be going to the Solar Sound Music Immersion Retreat when Nyrus spotted me. He was wearing a Run The Jewels T- Shirt and they are one of my favorite hip hop groups of all time. We started talking and the conversation naturally turned to our love of birds and our love of mushrooms, and from there I knew I had met a fellow kindred spirit. Upon leaving Costa Rica I cornered Nyrus and as politely as possible demanded a beat out of him before I left the country, haha. I wrote these lyrics somewhere on the path home after Nyrus and I talked about how we both had wild youths, but we learned a lot of good lessons that are helping us achieve more later in life.)

Time is the divine currency
And currently
I’m trading long term health
For short term Wealth
Cuz honestly you probably
Never met a mutha lova
Who work as hard as me
To realize the god in me
I’m gardening my artistry
You can not be stopping me
This be the prophecy
Watch and see
See your life change for real
Til the change feels so real
You say it’s surreal
The way it manifested
After we made the investment
Into our true essence
Spent years on these lessons
Not living right sipping wine
Sniffing lines smoking blunts popping pills
In the middle of the night

Been a long time waiting
But this ain't no desperation
Nah this is inspiration
Spirit fuels me
To my destination
I know I got the patience
You know I'm gonna make it
In this second round blow up
We glow love

And so we stand right here
Made it through the nightmares
Now awake still dreaming
Rising like a Pheonix
We made it to Costa Rica
For the pura vida
See I used to sell drugs
Now I sell music
Laced with my love still getting y'all high
It's Plaedo from the bird tribe
3rd Eye Open Wide
Feel the vibe
Like your heartbeat inside
Look at what this life do to you
Make you forget
This life can be beautiful
We take it straight to the cuticles
So you can scratch and sniff
The realness now feel this
Cuz at this point
It's all about the healing
So peace to the broken hearted
The start overs
The dreamers still searching
For their four leaf clover
The survivors of the 9-5
Yes and all of the spirits around us that guide us...

11. KEEP MOVING ON
(THROWING STARFISH)

(Humanity has destroyed much of the natural ecosystems that support life on this planet. Clearly if humanity is to survive, we must change. At some point we must come to terms with the destruction and pain of the past and ask how we can innovate and pivot and adapt into the future. And in an ironic way that's what I had to do with this song. While in Costa Rica my hard drive died and I lost 7-8 songs, this song being one of them, some of those songs are gone forever, but this song I knew needed to be on the album so I completely remade it, including re-recording the guest verses and it came out so much better! (which is the whole point of the title, "Empires Die... Life Evolves" in a spiritual sense)

The pain that I've lived through
Is the love that I give you
I cry daily but don't need no tissues
Because I don't cry tears from my eyes
I cry tears from my heart
As my eyes see this world I Love fall apart
I put it back together
Through making this art
Because the old gods are dead
And the people are searching
For the new dream
And the bombs have been dropped
More times than I can count
Still I'm here right now
Like even if the world were to end tomorrow
I'd Still plant a seed today
Bring joy to the sorrow

And I walk this beach
And throw each
Starfish that I can reach
Back to the sea
And I walk these streets
And work with the kids
At risk that I meet
To complete the prophecy
Because sometimes mistakes need to be made
Sometimes resolution is an illusion
Sometimes there are no solutions
Except to accept the pollution
make your contribution
And call it evolution

12. KID IN THA WOODZ

(My homie Drew, aka New Reb is like a big brother to me and he made this beat. I went to his house to get some reggae musical vibes but when I heard this soulful and strange beat full of bird sounds (I love birds y'all!!!), I fell in love. My entire verse is written to have a triplet flow, which is a cool exercise in mathematical writing. As for the subject, I grew up mostly in small towns during the pre-internet era, so this song is about leaving those small towns, yet feeling nostalgic for them, even as I know I would and could never go back. We live in a time of profound technological change, which I think is largely cool, but I also love the wild and worry for the future of nature.)

I grew up in the woods,
in the mountains with our wolves
a hippy child free and wild
it feels like another life
so much has changed but anyways
I'd explore the forest for
feathers berries magic fairies
feeling at peace as the breeze
through the leaves of the trees
waved high
I said goodbye
to the spirit of the forest
I fell in love with the stranger
and I moved to the city
yet something was missing
can we know who we are
if we can't see the stars
I tried to go back
to that old town
but the forest cut down
the mills shut down
it's a ghost town now
so in search of the forest
where more bliss is found y'all
I want to be in a place surrounded by trees
That grow eternally but yo I worry
So from the train tracks of our past
to traffic jams on trampled lands
the city expands in urban madness
Can't stop what's gonna happen
And so today I'm going camping
with my family relaxed and happy
because it feels real good
to be just with my kids
playing in the woods...

13. THA PRICE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

(I befriended Charlie Landeros, who plays guitar on this song and raps the third verse,

as we both were going through a hard time in life, paying the price of righteousness. For Charlie, they were kicked out of the University of Oregon for calling into question the administration's practices and treatment of POC students, from unfair treatment and neglect to the administration turning a blind eye to the rising white supremacist movement that would become a national issue within a few years. Charlie and their friends saw it rising and wanted to stop it early, sadly the administration didn't believe them (I believe because of racism and classism). For me, I was suspended from my job as a street outreach worker at the City of Eugene for trying to stop some police officers from brutalizing a teenager on a street corner. We bonded, talked about life, love and revolution together. We started a garden and for over a year we would meet weekly or bi-weekly. During that time we developed this song. And actually worked on the song and garden together the day before they were killed by the police. I feel honored to have known Charlie and to have Charlie on the album. Charlie was a true revolutionary, a larger than life character, and a beautiful soul. The beautiful soul that brought Charlie and I together and helped us develop the garden, Dave Villalabos, played the Cajon on this song and really helped me with the structure, which was a challenge as Charlie was killed before we could finish the song, so I had to build much of this song from scratch-scrap-rough demos we never intended to use on the final song. I got a major assist from Jordan Romani and Alex Grabofsky from FreshPac Studio's who really helped flesh out the song with keys and vocals respectively. A labor of love I probably spent more time on this song than any other song on the album and while not perfect, I'm proud of the song that was created.)

Empires Die and Life Evolves
So were here for the ride and we hear the call
cuz the world wasn't designed for our kind
yo we never fit in those boxes or descriptions
But yo we found each other and I'm grateful
for that
So Fuck The Empire and Fuck The Elites!
We Gone Rise like yeast through the belly of
the beast
take to the streets
or at least have each other to seek
shelter from the storm
cuz it's cold outside and we all need warmth
So when the towers fall we will be here
to heal and rebuild
we are made from the stars
our life is precious
yet they treat us like peasants
I see your royalty and give you my loyalty
livin in a system
where some work for tips and
some own the business
and some hate each other
because of skin color
it's just not fair
if you try to change things
if you live for a cause
you will pay the cost
because they will marginalize criticize
minimize criminalize
they will kill you
call you crazy
and make you pay
while a warrior for freedom's receiving no
wage.

Well my friend you paid it the price of
righteousness
now look at what you bought freedom
something for the people to believe in
so even when grieven were still going to raise
a fist
but yo were not afraid to let the tears slip
In love and in rage we promise to persist
through the fear and the pain the fog and the
hate
a terrible mix look at what it creates
more of the same yet were working for a
change
so this I know only love breaks the chains
but that's easier said than done when you've
been harrassed
until you feel the need to carry a gun
than that becomes the reason your killed
anyway
So I'll say it again Fuck This Empire
It's scary how with the fear and the pain
in one quick moment everything can change
that you can be murdered
your life can be taken away
But it's all for revolution right?
Aint that what we say
for people like us
in this game that we play
So in trust may you leave
the shores of this reality
and in love may you find
your next destination on this cosmic journey
So just know the garden will continue to grow
and I love you yo

14. SURRENDER

(While recording "Empire's Die...Life Evolves" my life started to fall apart. I was suspended from my job working with at risk street youth for trying to protect a youth from getting beat up by the cops. Another client was charged with murder (and I would be a key witness in the case) Shortly after my program got its funding cut. Around the same time my wife started to fall in love with another man. And every night I laid in pain dealing with my new mysterious nervous disorder, while crying about the state of my 13 year marriage. My homie, Zen Tempest called me up one day and was like, "You should go to the Solar Sound Music Immersion Retreat in Costa Rica that I'm organizing." I told him, I couldn't go, my life was a mess. The next day I was at a recording session at Thee Funny Farm with my homie and producer of this song, The Hopeful Child and he was like, "I'm going to this Solar Sound retreat in Costa Rica, you should come with me." I told him my life was a mess and that I could not go. But the other MC on the song, Zen Tempest, was one of the organizers of Solar Sound. So The Hopeful Child, impressed by this connection said, "I'm feeling moved by spirit and I have a rare cushion of cash, I want to pay for you to go." And thus I got to go to Solar Sound. I have eternal Love and gratitude to both Zen Tempest and The Hopeful Child, they are both magical souls. Samirra Lobby and Jorah Lafleur, the other two artists on the track, are also magical souls who I feel a deep respect and admiration for. They feel that way towards each other too, and are grateful that this song gave them an opportunity to collaborate. Even as my life was falling apart, the creation of this album was connecting people and cultivating community. The

community that would sustain me through my next chapter of life. I love that.)

Blessed are the weak the poor and diseased
the broken and homeless of which we speak
blessed be the pain that leads to the escape
we seek
through others and lovers drugs and tv
too tired to sleep too hungry to eat
those who don't get high no more but still
smoke weed
to try to cloud the memories and fear they
repeat
for when done with the running the god within
we shall seek
So it's the fear it's the pain that we must greet
in order for the broken to be complete
So one must become lost to become found
one first must die to be reborn
So cry cry until your tears run dry
sit with your pain
let it burn your image
let it burn your name
Give in to this flame
let it burn you to nothing
for to be nothing
is the beginning
of everything...

15. THE METAMORPHOSIS

(My good soul fam brother Kemy Joseph was moving out of Eugene and had a party. At the party was a musical jam in which an awesome freestyled song was created with the hook, "I'm going through some things, so I need to make a change". Afterwards, Maxwell Davis said to Kemy Joseph and M5 Vibe, 2 mc's who were part of the Jam," we should make a song about this!" I was like, "Not without me, my life is going through mad changes!" lol. And so this jam-band-esque hip hop song was created to recapture the vibe of that night. This song featured 8 guest musicians in total who all sent their parts to me separately to recreate a jam feel which was a unique process. One thing I love about working with so many live musicians, is for a song like this, which is anchored to the concept of change, the beat, as opposed to a programmed loop, is constantly evolving and changing.)

I just wanna live my best life
I just wanna be my best me
Don't know why life
Likes to test me
I seek comfort though
Not in control
So I wish you could see
The stretch marks on my soul
From the rocks I've had to roll
While polishing my stones
Now all I know
I am the flute
Played through me be the tune
So I like to let it blow
When it's time to grow
Your never glow unless you go
Into the unknown
So here we go
The motto I live by
Evolve or die
So I move on through detours and dead ends
The darkness and the struggle
Until we see the light at the end of the tunnel
I transform am reborn

As that rainbow from that storm
I move forward I move toward
I get lost I find my way
Now once more
I can feel it coming
My stomach is rumbling
With the hunger for something more
Ya gotta believe me
I know that growth aint always easy
It's painful it's beautiful,
It's ugly
As it must be
And I know I seem crazy
But y'all can trust me
I'm just going through some things
And making my change

16. TOO MUCH LUST...IZ LOVE
ENOUGH?

(The first part of the song was written and recorded during a cocaine and sex binge honestly. And it was put together real fast (what can I say, I guess Rick James, or was it Dave Chappelle?, said it best when he said, "Cocaine is a hellava drug." LOL. I added these two songs together, because to me they represent two sides of an attachment trauma. Two sides of a person's journey through dysfunctional relationship patterns. The second beat explores the undercurrent beneath the funnier funkier first beat. One night I fell asleep and woke up at 3 am and began working on this beat (the second part of the song) and by 5:30 am I had the words and beat completed. By 7 am I had posted a little video to Instagram and when I awoke at 11 am, I had a text from my friend Faelisha Dawn who saw the video and sent me the chorus to the song. Pure magic. Good thing the music came easy, because life was fucking hard.)

Shimmy Shimmy Yo
Shimmy Shimmy Ya
I was at my meeting
For sex addicts
When I started scheming
To get me some chicks
Ever since my marriage ended
Been living reckless so hectic
DMT for Breakfast
ODB be the Essence
Texted my Ex said
Lets get freaky with our fetishes
So Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes!!!
I say Yes when I should say no
When I know better
Yet I am a mad rapper
Mad as a hatter
Heading for an early death bed
I don't care no more
It don't matter
Scanning my friends
At 4 in the morning
Horny for some sex
Like maybe some lady
Can save me because lately
I've been making myself crazy....
So Why oh Why Am I such A Nympho
God I gotta stop thinking
With my dick yo (Repeated a bunch of times)

Took me years
To discover this truth
You can change your lover
But until you heal

The pain that is under
We're just covering wounds
Wondering what we should do
When the honeymoon is through
And we're not each others glue
when the truth gets told
Few want to grow old
Alone but yo
The older we get
The harder it is to commit
Once disappointment
Is expected
And moments are dissected
Inspected checking for clues
Reasons 2 distance from you
For sanity, safety and lady
Baby you do it too
Today I broke down and cried
Realized where all toxic at times
Wanting a love that's divine
Devoted to our own lives
So we can't find compromise
We just pass
Each other bye
Cuz even knots once tied
In time come undone
Cuz I would lie
If I said post divorce me and the ex wife
Don't have problems in our lives
Problems with the new loves
Problems that rhyme
So it doesn't matter
Who you are with
When true love
Is acceptance
Then the question becomes
When the depression comes
How deep can we love
And is love
Even enough?

17. GROWING PAINS

(Written during a weird lost period. I had been divorced, I broke up with my girlfriend and was living with my sister. The quarantine was in effect. And I had three broken ribs. To top it all off, historic fires gave my hometown of Eugene the worst air quality in the world for two weeks straight. I sat with my son for two weeks and reconnected with myself like I haven't in years. I don't remember writing or recording this song but it came from that period.)

I never thought that we would break apart
Just live together with our broken hearts
Make it work and call it art
For the family for the empire
My desire to hold it together
Help caused us to separate
Never would have gotten married
If I knew we'd go our separate ways
Knowing what I know today
Probably never would have taken that
First date but anyways
But then gone would be the family
No more camping by the lake
And I love that family
It exist forever in the memories
Because all the vicious trouble
Nowadays I just need
To let these memories fade...

The most important thing to me is my kids
Without them I'd probably be
Just another drug addict

But this isn't the life
I wanted to give them
Living in a state of constant transition
From home to home I need to know
There safe I try to stay with them
Drop them off at their moms
a couple hours After they are gone
And I Already miss them
Truth is I lost sight of my own vision
Forgot who I am and how to play
Nowadays I just want the people
That I love to be okay...

The chemistry between us
Made us perfect lovers
Until our traumas trip
The triggers of each other
And past heartbreak
Makes our current love suffer
I love her but yo
I don't really trust her
She don't really trust me either
Were two wounded people
Trying to love again and trying to trust again
When alone we were awesome
But together we became toxic
With the break ups and make ups
Month by month, but I know this much
You are the one that I truly love

To everyone that I've ever loved before
I hope you know that my love is eternal
It goes from a raging fire to a burning coal
Sometimes I just gotta go yes sometimes I just
gotta go
I've been feeling out my soul
Filling out my holes
Til I be feeling whole yo Til I be feeling whole
yo
I think I need to go home
Learn to love myself and be alone
I think I need to go home
Learn to love myself and be alone...

18. INHERITED DRAMA

(I wrote like 11 verses for this song that I didn't like. Many words were abandoned in my attempt to write a song that connected my abandonment issues from childhood to the demise of my marriage. Eventually I asked my good friend and the song therapist Joey Helpish for help. And this song was created in a really special way. We talked about my issues, soul growth, and then sat on that vibe for a few days. When we got back together, through zoom, Joey had the rough draft for the beat of the song and we wrote the lyrics line by line together, which was super fun, unique and healing. Check out Dandyland Studios, they are amazing!)

So at his house
The kids couldn't play
Cuz the parents caught up
In the stress and the drama
So he learned to plant seeds
In the cracks of his heart
As he grew these fruits from his trauma
Because all the vicious trouble
Taught him to be a gardener
Passed back to the forth
Had to put in the work
Just to get the harvest so
Before it would get good
It woulda get harder

And so his sword was abandonment
And solitude was his armor
As he had to learn
To be an alpha
Without the guidance
Of his father

And so he was like a child
When he met her
Treated her
Like the mother
That he never had in his life
And for a time
She became his wife
But neither role
Where for her soul
And like before
He had no control
He was stuck way down
Down in a hole
For him to level up
He had to let her go

19. KEEP LOVING, KEEP LEARNING

(The first person I made songs that were actually good with was Matt Monroe, when we were in college. Since then our friendship has blossomed beautifully. We are very similar creatures in many ways and have been able to help each other through many of life's passages. During the recording of this album, Matt has been particularly helpful to me. Matt is a professional counselor and soul fam. Matt is also an amazing producer and gave me this beat to be a part of the album, and instantly it felt like the musical equivalent to what my heart was feeling at the time.)

So I had my breakdown
And Now is the rebuild
And I still feel afraid
At my age
To turn the page
I was drunk on pain
Crazy and insane
But now I'm getting sober
Don't really know what's
On the road before me
Just know I need to let go
Of that old story
So no more late nights
In heartache and shame to lay awake
And think about mistakes
made that I cannot change
Still if I could
Go back to yesterday
I know I would
Before communication
Got misunderstood
Til I peered through the rearview
And in the echoes of my conscious
Yo I finally hear you
So I wonder if you hear me
Say I'm sorry and I forgive you
And So I say Thank You
Cuz I still love you
Thought you'd be my wife
But you taught me about myself
As a consolation prize
Now I got so much love
That I got to give
Time to ask myself
What type of life do I
Want to live

Yo that is a lesson
And a lesson is a blessing
So I can get it right
The next time be the message
So no more stressing over
Questions of direction
Cuzzzz I will live my answers
When I live my life authentic...

I finally see it clear
I can look in the mirror
Realize I deserve
Some of that love
I like to give others
See my heart was sacrificed
2 the martyr archetype
On a narcissistic ride
That left me high and dry
Empty and low
My heart so sore
But when the time comes
To fall back in love
I'ma do it like I never been hurt before
Yo I'm like a puppy dog
I am fun and I'm cute
Still might chew through your slippers
So please forgive me
I'm not a perfect man
But I'm doing the best
That I can
And if you give me enough tries
In time I will understand.

20. THA TRUTH OF IT ALL

(Another international collaboration, this from a producer from Peru. I really wanted to write and rap a verse that was in the style of like Q-Tip and/or Andre 3000. Both of these artists are capable of busting out these dope long ass rap verses. And so that's what I did, 32 bars in one take. So that was a little bit of flexing by me on the artistic tip. Content wise, I wanted to rap to the listener. I wanted a song addressed to a "you" and I wanted to offer loving advice to a few special people in my life who I love deeply and thought could really benefit from hearing these truths.)

Now what you telling me
That you don't matter
When you are matter
You are stardust gathered
In immaculate patterns
So the magic you have it
In your childlike eyes
Let em shine and join the dance and
Honor the prayers of your ancestors answered
Cuz I believe in you
2 make it beautiful
I see it true in you
But is a mirage
If you don't see it too
So don't self sabotage
Self hate isolate
We all make mistakes
Gotta own your shame
Make that change
Then release your pain
Cuz life is a game
Play it for the fun of it
Play it for the love of it
Play it Til we taken away
On the mother ship
And in the meantime
Relax your mind

Unwind be free
We put in a lot of work
Just to get here
So cheers for that progress
Know we aint stoppin
We treat each other tender
When we lose our temper
Remember we can't dance for another
Make them change or walk their path
Only offer our hand and words of advice
Learned from our life
So i'll tell you again
I believe in you friend
2 dance and romance
Enchant the path
Of your circumstance
Cuz I see no logic or reason
In us competing or beefin
Just believe in me and i'll believe in you
And together were surprise ourselves
With all the beautiful things that we do

21. #BESTLIFE

(Written during the early part of the quarantine. When we were all at home and homesteading and gardening was a thing again. I spent the day with my partner Jessica building a chicken coop blissfully in love and wanted to create a hip hop Motown type song, a funky little jam you could clean the homestead to and feel good to. A song about domestic bliss and the simple life.)

Feeling good in the hood
With my lady yeah she crazy
I am too
So life is never boring
There's always something
For us to be exploring
And I'm feeling euphoric
Just to be by her side
Cuz I laugh when I should cry
Thrive in the hard times
I don't need much
Just a little bit of love
Some coffee some bud
And a beat to rap too
Let's unite with the mushrooms
Live life like a cartoon

Last year I got divorced
It broke my heart
I cried leaving my garden my home
And everything I owned
So we bonded over pain
But yo we ain't staying there
Nah gotta keep it moving
Grooving to the now
No longer responding
To future fears
Or past traumas
We are moving passed drama
Like haha yeah yeah
You can check it
I like my new life better
It's more authentic

The worlds in a crises
Infected by the virus
And ran by tyrants
The systems crumbling
With so many struggling
It's time to give back
Yeah I understand that
Everyday I run around town

In love with the sound
Of the playground but now
I need to slow it down
Ease up the stress
Take a deep breathe
Release all the grief
That I've seen
So I can be empty ready
for the new dream
And now in between
Let us be
Not bitter for what's been taken away
But rather grateful for the beauty that remains

22. I FEEL GOOD

(This beat was sent to me by homie from Uganda, Analytical Alz. To me, it has that Jay Z in 2002 feel. And I knew I wanted to come strong and assured, on my grown man shit. That empowered embodied positive masculine feel. This is about going through hell but not becoming sad or bitter, but rather grateful and still able to feel good. The joy of resiliency. The grit. My favorite Vibe. I then workshoped this song with an amazing group of live musicians at FreshPac studios and got the legendary Eugene MC Marv Ellis to do an awesome guest verse!)

I feel good
Like I'm falling in love
Hanging with my son
Riding skateboard
To the basketball court
Gotta little cash in my pocket
The beat is rocking
And when I apply the optics
To my life I got options
Came a long way
From living in the trailer park
Getting robbed
Running from the law
Searching for jobs
Spent years on depression
Now I master my fear
Stay true to my essence
The city is my playground
Respected by all now
From gangsters to the mayor
I'm on my grown man shit
Handling my taxes
No more moving backwards
I'm living my passion
To the maximum going savage
Cuz I done lost it all
Except what matters
And it ain't about status
But if it was I'd be the baddest
Cuz I failed more times
Then you fools even tried
And I still find success
And I feel like sex
Been tested by tragedy
Found my inner strength
And met my soul family
I've suffered too many catastrophes
Not to be happy
With who I am
A flawed human
Doing the best that they can
And I'm still improving
I've saved lives
Watch people die
And sometimes
I just want to die

Realize y'all going to love me more
After I'm gone
But until that time
I'm gone shine!

23. RIZE UP

(At one point, I rented Freshpac Studios for a "Staycation" in which I slept on the studio couch and had at any given time a half dozen musicians hanging out and helping me out as I worked around the clock on songs. At this point the creation of the album was very communal, everyone was giving feedback, everyone was trying their best to make the album as good as possible. Everyone had their unique talent to bring to the table. I believe that team work is how you make the dream work. Album executive producer Maxwell Davis and I have spent years cultivating this network of artists and systems to get multimedia art created and disseminated. I treat my team like a family and this song is a celebration of people coming together to make art and to make their lives better and features a diverse cast of musicians including Savelle The Native (Who it took 7 months for me to nail down for a verse), the reggae artist Michael Leslie, and even my former student and beatmaking prodigy Droog.)

Life is too amazing
For me to ever waste it
So I'm staying activated
In the name of creation
Juicy Fruit Tasting
Forever Dream Chasing
Say I may flirt with death
But I make love to live
Make love to her right
In touch with the vibe
So I go all night
Til the morning birds sing
And get you so high
Might as well grow wings
I used to be a kid yo
My feet in the dirt
Now I'm big bro Plaedo
Hanging with the grown folk
And tonight we gone
Gather round the fire
Dance on the grave
Of the burning empire
And sweat our prayers
Like Awwwww Yeah!

24. ACHIEVE THA IMPOSSIBLE

(This song spontaneously emerged from a jam session at "The Great Shift" video shoot with Benny Cosmic, Ob the Server, Maxwell Davis, Nick Larson, Max Miller, Namasteez and myself. Instantly, we were like, "lets recreate this shit!" (This song, although featuring all the same people, sounds nothing like that jam, lol.) The recording session had some epic moments like Ob The Server riding his bicycle 7 miles after working a full day at a fast food restaurant and being tested by Maxwell Davis was told, "you only get one take" Ob slayed it on the first take! As well as Maxwell Davis, whispering in my ear before my take, "Don't Fuck This Up" lol. Maxwell is actually very caring and tender when it's needed. He is a

master of producing vocalist and knowing when to be good cop, when to be a bad cop.)

If Life is a hustle
Then this is what our love do
it moves through the struggle
to find its way through
so if we can't leap
over them hurdle poles
we treat em like a limbo
yo everything is changing
for some it drives them crazy
I think it is amazing
This all started with a dream
Now I'm in Love with the future
that I'm growing in the moment
flowing in the wisdom
of the rhythm in this infinite minute yeah
this is how we living it
our life is on exhibit
for your entertainment
for your education
for your motivation
for your transformation
we spreading love vibrations
all across the nation
so if your grateful
then give us a little payment
we removing obstacles
like we was Ganesh
Yes you got to know
we make the impossible
seem possible
probable and logical
because that's just how we flow...

25. WAVELENGTH

(Oftentimes I will be riding in my car, and I will be rocking out to some swaggerific jam, something cocky and confident. Not usually thought of as "conscious" or "positive". And then I'll go to a meeting with city officials and brainstorm improving the community or meet with one of my clients and be like, "So tell me about your feelings..." lol. But sometimes I need that James brown funky ass vibe so I can feel confident and bold and empowered enough to go make the change in the world I feel like I was set out to do. I need music that gives me confidence. That's one thing I love about hip hop, it's the sound of oppressed and poor people improving their situation, it's the sound of determination, and yes it's the sound of funk. And what is more fun than the funk? I wanted something like that on my album, something not as conscious but full of confidence. So I hit up Nara from High Step Society to get this bangin ass beat, Maxwell and I have done tons of songs together but we both really wanted to work with the incredible MC Cerebral Coretex so it was a pleasure for both of us to get to work with him on this song.)

It's Tha
A - U - T - H - E - N
To the T - I, C - I
T - Y See Why
I'm Fly 2 Live
2 Die, 2 Day
I say we gotta find a way
To love and celebrate (Hey)
We came from the section 8
Where they gave us lemons
And we made that lemonade

To slang at Heaven's Gates
4 the love of the Hustle like
Ooh - Ooh - Aah - Aah - Ee - Ee
We be from the jungle
trash pandas
With that checkered past
Getting ass smoking grass
Took a nap and still I pass
Now I get the cash just to give it back
Haha had to laugh
At the haters
Even when I st-st-stutter
I'm still a bad mutha la-la-la-lover
So I ride through my city
And I see my fingerprint
I ride through my city
You see we be lit
I ride through my city
With these gods and goddesses
So I ride through my city
On that boss shit...

26. CELEBRATE THA LIBERATION

(I post my old acapella rhymes online and I get remixed monthly from people all over the world. It's pretty cool and I meet a lot of cool people through this process. One of those peeps was Ricky Boot, a super talented producer and all around good guy out of the UK who found me online and we started to work on original material together. The lyrics to this song were inspired by the protest and political strife going on in the world.Funny little side story (that was traumatic at the time! haha) while shooting the video, I found out my ex-girlfriend Jessica was on social media talking shit about hip hop and challenging me to a rap battle with a few posts that generated 100's of comments and stirred up the whole local music community. I was like I don't want to rap battle you, I care about you. She was like, you're a Fucking Coward! Lol. I Love you Jessica. Lol.)

We need a celebration
For our liberation...
time to awaken the sacred
No more waiting lives we're saving
By breaking out the matrix
Through imagination inspiration
Innovation in this nation
Peep my proclamation
We cannot survive on the 9 to 5
When miss raising our kids
And robbed of our drive
So we don't wanna survive no
More now we wanna thrive cuz
This paid in the first
Broke by the third shit
You know it is absurd
We rise above it like the birds
Going garbage to glory
We're writing a new story
And the more we believe
The more it comes true
So this a celebration for our liberation
I wouldn't wanna be alive
At any other time
To redesign and realign
With the stars with our heart
Yo I know that it's hard
To make this transition so
We go left step right step
One step at a time

Is how we climb
To the top of the mountain
Yo I know it's hard to keep on climbing
But we gotta keep on climbing
That sun up there is shining
We gotta keep on climbing
Until we see the view
Peer clearly through the truth
That is what we gonna do
Tell the oppressor man no more
We will pray for his soul
As we take back control
Peacefully either that or either we
Be bringing back the guillotines
To these gully streets
We tried to come in peace
Was tear gassed shot by
rubber bullets in the kidneys
We all lost our jobs
In this quarantine
So we might as well reclaim the streets
Cuz we need some relief
Our hearts are filled with grief
From watching family
Be murdered by police
And I got no hope
For no change
Coming from a vote
When told then back to go
Punching the clock
Like punchline to a joke
You have to know
The status quo
It has to go
Yo the system won't save us
It was written to enslave us
Tax dollars as payments
To the state of surveillance
So the only solution
Is a revolution
But I don't wanna be a part
Of your movement
If I can't dance
To the music
So this a celebration
For our liberation (repeated a bunch of times)

27. THA NAME OF THE GAME (WHUT IZ EVOLUTION?)

(It was the middle of the night and I came home to my studio high on ecstasy. I finished another song and was inspired to create more. I had this verse sitting around and nailed it to the beat I also had sitting around in one take. Quick, Easy, Magic. But the beat was rough, it needed work. I proceeded to spend months upon months of altering this beat (there exist like 5 alternate mixes that have been mastered alone and about ten different versions of this song.))

With a Big Bang Explosion
The Word Love Was Spoken
As a verb that birthed the universe
begat the earths and the oceans
Now from the water and the dirt
emerged the human
so here I stand with mud on my hands
holding
bacterial battles molecular make outs
because under the naked moon my mushroom
blooms
like tonights archetype is hermes
from mercury I'm sure you've heard of me
Because I prefer absurdity

on the principle
of uncertainty
so certainly
I think I am badder than most of those radio
rappers
but personally
I think that type of shit doesn't even matter
because I play my heart like a harp
and the strings sing clearly a theory
that blows smoke rings around Saturn
so yep these are mathematical patterns
word to Pythagorus
students become masters
from cave walls to space walks
cradles to caskets
We author these chapters
As Kings and Queen's Reincarnated
to speak these truths so ancient
in a process of progress
that remains sacred
though it often feels
like were just put here as Sisyphus
to push stones up hills
go to work go to school pay dues pay bills
still all of times polishing reveals
The crystals to be clear
that we are put here
for our love to beat our fear
and to peer into the universe
as it is our mirror
until all the riddles have been solved
we're put here to evolve...

I am Nameless not Famous
To the Empire I am no one
Yet I am one with the one
energy enters me with the sun
I Manifest like Chloroplasm The Way I move my
Masses
I am the glasses that you see the truth through
And I am You Too
Who knew the voodoo is I am ego eating fish
becoming egoless
doing backflips through the double helix
of our DNA like Thoth Hermes Trismegistus
Slippin 10,000 visions into your inner picture
Sippin on that crazy wisdom a magician with the
system
So y'all better listen
I dream universes with blinks of my eyelids
Time is just a pattern on my Iris
So I've seen it all before and I'll be here again
to battle the shadows turn monsters to friends
I am the serpent the mycelium beneath the
surface
Beyond good and evil I'm both God and Devil
A spiritual gangster like Jesus Christ Merry
Prankster
Overturning tables on the bankers and the money
changers
So I am not afraid of your fear or your pain,
your greed or your hate
Your Devils your NSA that big brother the man
that incestral mother fucka whose also our uncle
sam
With this knowledge of who I am
You Cannot Kill Me
For The End Is The Beginning of My Circle
So I remain
Eternally Fertile
Through The Cycles of Circles
That I Spiral Through
I'm Just reborn remade and renewed...

28. THA WALK HOME

(This is a special song for me. I remember a night,
at a party at the Funny Farm, and everyone was

on mushrooms, and I was on a porch having a
conversation with friends and we were talking
about how beautiful it is that soul fam can find
each other and take care of each other in ways
that blood families cannot. At the time, I was
going through a break up with my wife of 13
years, and earlier in the night I dropped my
step daughter off at a party with her friends,
in the car ride we talked about soul family.
There is something beautiful about how each
generation does this. We find people who help
us walk through life in ways our blood family
often doesn't. Logan, who was at the party, is
super soulful and poppy and I knew I wanted to
collaborate with him for the song. We decided to
name this song after the Ram Das phrase, and
a few days later Ram Das died. The song was
written a few weeks later in the middle of a red
eye flight back from Costa Rica, I remember crying
intensely as I wrote my lyrics, from the middle
seat, in between two strangers, looking at me
weirdly, there's something about that that I like a
lot, lol!)

So here's what we gone do
we gone make our dreams come true
So after 13 years
I'm sorry boo
they couldn't be with you
I guess you needed someone new
and when I reflect I guess that I did too
so the relationship changed but the love remains
and it's so strange the other night
I scrolled through my timeline
and felt that I lived a few lifetimes
yo there's been so many faces in so many places
and we've all had our reasons
for how we've moved through our seasons
so I have love and no anger
for all the friends and neighbors
who've now become strangers
The moon has its phases
we're all vibrations
in states of transformation
so with seeds in one hand
and a gun in the other
we find each other
in back alleys and the streets
to laugh and to grieve
through the pain and the glory
of all the side stories

So I have dope friends we do dope things
we laugh we play we work for change
we get drunk on the weekend and hold each
other up
yo we're family related by blood nah
It's a spiritual bond
that is felt in the soul
as we melt in the flow
and trade yesterdays for tomorrows
yo I used to be scared of my death
now I accept it as another step in
my soul's quest for perfection
so let's lose our mind
and find a good time
we gone dance in the rain
until the sun shines
and I know so often
we feel lost and alone
so we find each other
and we find a way
through the unknown to where wisdom is shone
As together we go
on our walk home...

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