

ALBUM REVIEW

Return to minimalism

» Lorde ditches psychedelic pop for electronic roots

BY JOHN TAN

INTROSPECTIVE lyrics and minimalistic production have always been a part of Lorde's musical charm. In a musical landscape where infectious pop dominates, the Kiwi singer's minimal yet complex artistry is a rare and delightful sonic treat.

From her *Pure Heroine* days, she demonstrated a strong sense of maturity and ingeniousness in her work, whether she was singing of teenage disillusionment or heartbreak. The release of her third studio album *Solar Power*, therefore,

came as a surprise to many.

Contrary to her debut and sophomore albums, *Solar Power* did not have the same amount of complexity and depth. Despite having some memorable hits, many deemed the album to be the weakest in her discography.

Four years have passed since and the 28-year-old returns to redeem herself with her fourth studio album *Virgin*.

Return to synth-pop

In *Solar Power*, the *Royals* hitmaker opted for psychedelic pop. Upon returning from her Antarctica trip and after the death of her dog, she envisioned a "relaxier" sound to capture solipsism and summer escapism as a means of escape.

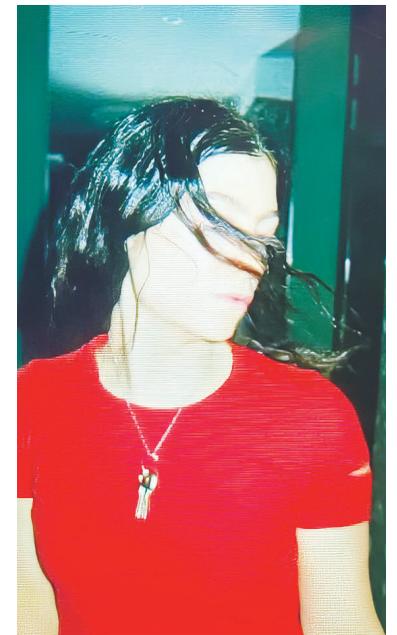
But *Virgin* sees her revisit her synth-pop roots once again. Lorde marries intense feelings with



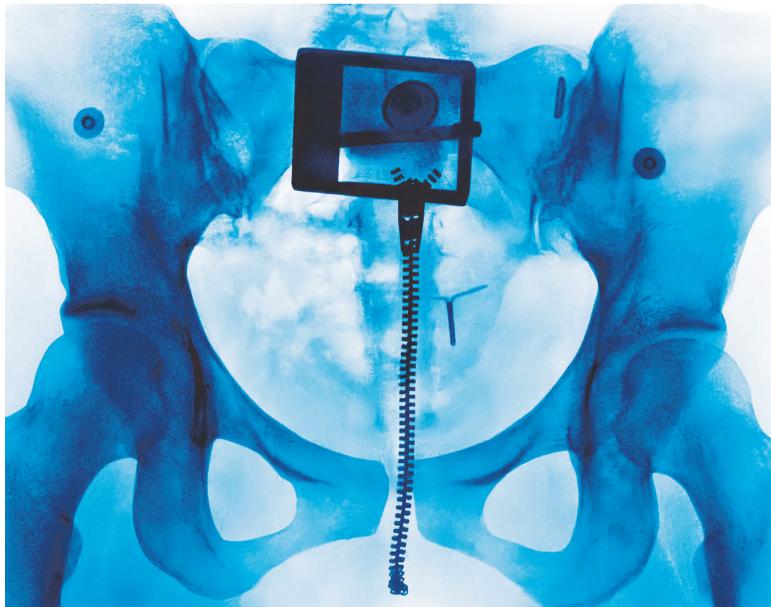
Virgin is Lorde's fourth studio album. — PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @LORDE



Lorde opens up about her eating disorder in the album.



Virgin consists of 14 tracks.



The album cover for *Virgin*. — PICS FROM FACEBOOK @LORDE

electronic-based instruments. The result is a warm reminiscence of her early works, reminding listeners why they fell in love with the songstress.

Virgin culminates to its peak with offerings such as *Shapeshifter*, *Broken Glass*, *Favourite Daughter* and *What Was That*. The idealistic productions complement the mellow lyrics well.

Lyrical growth

The sincerity and strength found in *Virgin*'s lyrics should come as no surprise. Considering the introspection she exhibited early on, it is expected of Lorde to come up with clever and heartfelt words to her songs.

Lorde levels up her wordsmith skills in *Virgin*, touching on matters she previously had not. The songstress poetically takes listeners

through her recent heartbreak, her struggles with an eating disorder, her relationship with her mother and her own femininity.

The subject of her relationship with her mother in *Favourite Daughter* is particularly haunting. These personal revelations not only creates a stronger resonance with listeners, but also shows how far she has come as a songwriter.

Mellow but no drama

The same cannot be said for the album's more mellow productions. While the lyrics to them are profound, offerings such as *Clearblue*, *Current Affairs* and *David* do not leave a lasting impression.

This is because the songs have no memorable complexities or substance. Their draggy melodies and production make it difficult to invest in what Lorde is trying to

convey. So much so that listeners may not complete the songs. For those who do, they may even forget their essence after one listen.

But overall, *Virgin* is a step forward for Lorde. While it may not be as memorable as *Pure Heroine* and *Melodrama*, the album is a sonic improvement from *Solar Power*. *Virgin* certainly cements her return as this century's indie pop princess.

Rouri404 releases fresh, upbeat single *Miss It*

GENRE-BENDING US artiste Rouri404, whose real name is Joseph (Joey) Cash, has released his new single *Miss It*, marking his first release in over a year, showcasing his evolution sonically and lyrically.

The track is upbeat and EDM-centric, but also layered in classic Rouri404 fashion – rife with raw vocals and a glitchy, synth-heavy production. Rouri404's last project saw him lean more heavily into the darker side of hyperpop, but with *Miss It*, he reveals another facet of his artistry.

Refusing to be put in a box, the single draws from trap, dubstep, hyperpop and pop-punk stylings – all seamlessly brought together by its introspective lyrics.

On returning with new music, Rouri404 reflected: "I have always made music from a place of pain, it felt safer to lean into sadness than to risk showing any other side of myself. I have always been afraid that if people

saw me for me, they would think I was weird or cringey. *Miss It* is different, it is me throwing those fears out the window."

A native of Orlando, Florida, Rouri404 sees artistes such as the prolific Bones and the perfectionist Daft Punk as his two guardian angels.

Relocating to Los Angeles from Orlando this year has had a clear impact on Rouri404, as he said: "After moving across the country, I had a lot of time to reflect, not just on music but on who I am and who I want to become. I grew up surrounded by a lot of negativity and for years, that shaped the way I expressed myself. I had become content with it and realised that is not who I want to be.

"I want to be able to create from a place that reflects better moments in life. I have been so focused on the past that I have let the good memories slip by without realising it. I do not want to miss anymore."



Hailing from Florida, Rouri404's real name is Joseph (Joey) Cash.



The song marks Rouri404's first release in over a year. — PIC BY ATTIKEN VEGA