

BY JOHN TAN

As much as other artistes get personal with their music, no one comes close to Taylor Swift. Ever since her career blossomed in Nashville in 2006, Swift has gained a reputation for notably detailing her personal affairs in her music - to a point of being too literal.

In fact, with each new record from Swift, comes a whole new level of success, musical sound, and rounds of speculation. Her latest studio release, *Midnights* is no exception. While her two previous records consisted of fictional storytelling, *Midnights* sees the songstress returning to her autobiographical style of narration.

This time around, however, it is centred around Swift's "13 sleepless nights" scattered throughout her life. They are true "a collection of music written in the middle of the night, a journey through terrors and sweet dreams."

And in those midnight moments, Swift indulges in self-loathing, fantasises about revenge, and reflects on what could have been, falling in love, and falling apart.

Going to the core

Although Swift has always maintained a sense of honesty and vulnerability in her music, the openness and transparency *Midnights* offers are on a whole new level. It is certainly fair to call *Midnights* Swift's most personal project to date.

Here, Swift truly does not hold back when expressing and sharing her truth. So much so that it is painfully honest at times. Like when Swift is discussing her insecurities in the lead single, *Anti-Hero*.

Though she has mentioned them in numerous past tracks like *Archer* (2017) or *Teardrops on my Guitar* (2006), *Anti-Hero* intensely details the many things she hates about herself - from her physical appearance to her personality, and even her fear of her future daughter-in-law disliking her.

She also delves into her approach to relationships in *Mastermind*. Coated in the sounds of electro-pop, the last standard tune elaborates on how she meticulously plans things out in her relationships.

And while doing so, reveals her fear of missing out and abandonment which originated from her experience of being bullied.

As such, these revelations give fans and critics alike a closer look and a better understanding of Swift as a whole. And this also naturally increases her relatability to them.

In addition, these realisations also



Midnights quickly became the best selling album of 2022 upon its release. - BETH GARRABRANT



Midnights serves as Taylor Swift's tenth studio album. - BETH GARRABRANT

Climactic confessions

► Taylor Swift takes us through all her glorious and haunting late night thoughts in her latest record, *Midnights*

show how far Swift has matured in her mindset. Listeners would be glad to know that Swift no longer has a black-and-white point of view on things.

Reflecting in pop

But of course, in classic Taylor Swift style, the confessions here were perfectly presented through catchy and infectious melodies. Swift looked to her dear friend and longtime collaborator Jack Antonoff to craft her desired sound.

In the past, Swift has generally stuck to producing radio-friendly hits - be it country or pop.

However, upon her introduction to Antonoff, the 32-year-old slowly ventured out from the mainstream. Here, for instance, Swift embraces

moodier and softer pop hues.

My personal highlights are *Lavender Haze*, *You're on your own, kid*, *Labyrinth*, *Karma*, *The Great War*, and *Would've, Could've, Should've*. These tracks, in particular, sounded like a good fit for Swift.

Unfamiliar territory

Maybe it is due to my sense of comfortability with Swift's more spectacular and upbeat melodies, but I could not resonate with certain offerings of *Midnights*.

Tracks like *Maroon*, *Glitch*, and *Dear Reader* were a bit lost on me. Even with *Vigilante Sh*t*, it did not sound like Swift was in her natural element.

Her darker side and edginess definitely felt more believable in



Swift is set to go on tour next year to support the album. - TAYLOR SWIFT

tunes like *Better than Revenge* and *Look What You Made Me Do*. Aside from that, Swift's collaboration with Lana Del Ray on *Snow on the Beach* felt incomplete. While I very much enjoy the end product, the track certainly could use a remix.

Seeing how Swift excitedly announced Lana was going to be featured, it was disappointing that Lana's contribution could barely be heard in the final version.

Therefore, I believe the track could have achieved more if Lana was given a more prominent role vocally.

Ending on a good note

Midnights is definitely yet another brilliant Taylor Swift record. Although it is not my favourite one, Swift's latest offering sure was a good trip back to the Swift's universe after a two years hiatus.

And considering how *Midnights* is more of a reflection than a reinvention, it was a delight to see and enjoy all the familiar elements of Swift from all her musical eras in one record.

Revisiting the past sixteen years sure worked well on Swift.