

Tomlinson breaks 'Walls'



4 stars out of 5

By Kayla Gayle, Student Life Editor

Since the split of the British boy band One Direction, the five ex-members have begun their solo careers. Louis Tomlinson is the last of the group to release a full-length album. "Walls" by Tomlinson was released on Jan. 31 and debuted at number nine on Billboards 200 chart.

This project is a 40-minute, 12-track album featuring songs that range from '90s Indie-Britpop to slow ballads accompanied by a live orchestra. Even with the range of songs, it's obvious that Tomlinson found his voice and the type of music that fits it, and his personality, best.

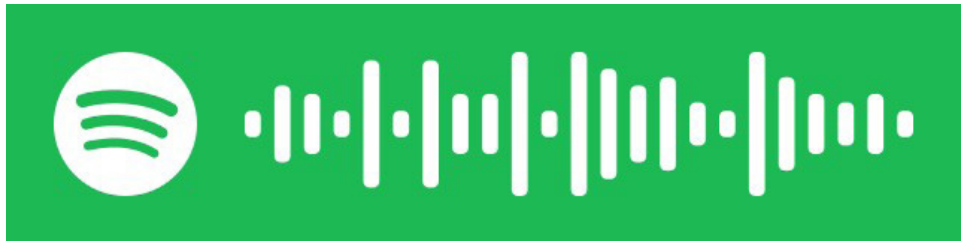
"Walls" starts off with the second single released to promote the album, "Kill My Mind." This track has a strong start with upbeat drums and a heavy guitar. With the lyrics "You kill my mind / Raise my body back to life / And I don't know what I'd do without you now," Tomlinson invokes a sense of thrill. That along with his raspy vocals make it the perfect song to begin this long-anticipated album.

"I was listening to the album and it annoyed me that I didn't quite have that moment of excitement, and I think ("Kill My Mind") definitely evokes excitement," Tomlinson said in an interview with Apple Music.

In the third track, "Two of Us," Tomlinson sings an emotional ballad to discuss the grief of losing someone close to you. He wrote the song about his late mother, Johannah Deakin, to help process his own emotions and to help other people deal with their own. It's a song about losing someone while still living life with hope. The song has resonated with me and many people around the world because Tomlinson perfectly captured the pain of losing a loved one while giving the message of "everything will be okay" in a tactful and respectful way.

"It was something I needed to get off my chest. I used to lean on my mum for a lot of things. Anytime I needed advice on something she would be the first call I made," Tomlinson said on BBC Radio 1.

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"I'm not at the stage in my grief where I'm going to open the first verse and burst into tears... I don't want people to get caught up in the sadness of it. The song should be hopeful"

In the title-track, Tomlinson discusses how the challenges of relationships and life, in general, make a person stronger. There is so much about this song that I truly love and appreciate. There is a heavy guitar sound with light drums and live strings throughout the entire song. Tomlinson's voice is audibly strong and powerful. The song is also incredibly lyrically strong. The line that begins the ballad, "Nothing wakes you up like waking up alone," is also the outro. I think the emotion, symbolism and meaning behind the song makes it an easy fan, and artist, favorite.

"It's my favorite song, it's the song I'm most proud of. I think it's an interesting concept," Tomlinson said. "(It's) a thought-provoking title, but more than anything it's just my favorite song, I wanted to show it off"

Tomlinson's album does take a turn on the 10th track "Perfect Now." This was the only song on the album that I personally did not vibe with. The vocals and the instrumental are really good but the song lacks depth lyrically. With lines like "Keep your head up, love" and "I guess some queens don't need a crown," the song seems cringeworthy. Lyrics like that work well when you're in a boy band, but when you're a 28-year-old man, they just don't fit.

Tomlinson even acknowledged that lyrics resemble the group's songs like "What Makes You Beautiful" and "Little Things."

"I think out of every song on the album ("Perfect Now") probably represents like a true One Direction style, lyrically," Tomlinson said. "It's almost an extension of some of the early One Direction stuff"

Tomlinson makes up for my dislike of "Perfect Now" with the last track of the album, "Only the Brave." It is the shortest track on the album, only a minute and 46 seconds, and has a different structure than a normal pop song. The song only consists of two verses, a pre-chorus, and the chorus only sang once. Throughout the song, a harsh acoustic guitar is played with a crackling sound to give a classical feel. Tomlinson sings about how love is only for the brave and people that are willing to take risks. It's the best song to close the album, wrapping the whole project up perfectly while showing his strong vocals again. It's my favorite song on the album; I love everything about it. The lyrics, the structure, his voice, the production is just *Italian chef's kiss*.

There are many songs on the album that I didn't mention that are really good as well. Tomlinson is a talented singer-songwriter whom I genuinely believe deserves more recognition and appreciation. "Walls" is definitely worth the listen, and I am excited for more music from Tomlinson.