After Hours

With almost every album Abel 'The Weeknd' Tesfaye creates unique and engaging stories, and the *After Hours* album is some of his best work in creating a story full of heartbreak, partying, acceptance, and of course, depression. From the beginning of the album, Tesfaye sets the scene, creating a character that simply cannot be 'Alone Again', but also knows that he is not deserving of love, eventually asking his lover not to be 'Scared to Live' again. These opening 4 tracks depict a man who has all but given up on love. The next 2 tracks, 'Snowchild' and 'Escape from LA' depict this man's distaste with Los Angeles and how he had always dreamed of living there, only to now want nothing to do with the place. Through the line "Cali was the mission" he connects 'Snowchild' to his song 'The Morning' from his first mixtape *House of Balloons,* from back in 2011 in which he claims "Cali is the mission", thus, there is a complete reversal by the end of 'Escape from LA'. By the next track, 'Heartless', the Weeknd is back to his old ways of partying, taking drugs and sleeping around. This is one of the most upbeat song on the album (also my favourite), although it is also about how he has lost himself, maybe going too far. Following from this, 'Faith' continues from where 'Heartless' left off in the story, continuing to party and take drugs, ending up overdosing and being taken away in an ambulance. You can hear the sirens within the music itself, as the outro to the song states that he has "ended up in a flashing car", leading directly, and perfectly, into the Weeknd's most popular song, the most popular song of all time, 'Blinding Lights'. The entirety of 'Blinding Lights' takes place within the ambulance, hence being "blinded by the lights", so the song maybe isn't quite what you thought it was about. This song truly does deserve all the attention it has achieved, even though it is not my favourite on the album, it is the definitive anthem for fans of the Weeknd. Therefore, it is an almost impossible task to follow on from such a banger, but of course, in typical Weeknd fashion he comes back with another banger, 'In Your Eyes'. At this stage of the story, he seems to be in a delirious state where he decides to try to be with his lover again, believing that he can see "in [her] eyes" that she still wants him too (spoiler alert, she doesn't). This follows into the next track, 'Save Your Tears', where he is stalking her at a party. Again yes, this is what the song is actually about. The 'Repeat After Me' interlude finds the Weeknd trying to convince the girl that she doesn't love her new man, and that she still loves him, which of course is not true. This leads into the emotional climax of the album, the title track 'After Hours'. This is a heartfelt and heart wrenching song to his lover, begging for her to come back. He knows it's a futile effort, that she will never come back to him, but tries anyway. This song has one of the best instrumentals of any Weeknd song, so when its paired with the truly heartbreaking lyrics it produces a truly unforgettable song. The final track, 'Until I bleed Out' is sombre and melancholic ending for the album, where he is essentially committing suicide by overdosing once again.

This album takes you into a world that you have very likely never experienced fully, but may have in some aspect. Whether you have or haven't the Weeknd pulls you into this world, if just for an hour. The whole album flows brilliantly and the story that it tells is deeply personal and fully immersive. This album is close to perfect as could be, my only issues are with specific songs; 'Too Late', 'Hardest to Love', 'Escape from LA' and 'Repeat After Me (Interlude)' I find are not quite as enjoyable to listen to as the rest of the album. That being said, they are still very good songs that just don't quite match up to the rest of the album. In all, this is the most complete and most recognised album by the Weeknd.

4.5/5