

“Collapsed In Sunbeams”: Pain, Healing, and Growth

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Upcoming singer-songwriter and poet, Arlo Parks, dropped her debut record “Collapsed In Sunbeams” earlier this year — peaking at No. 3 on the U.K. charts in early February. Parks’s music is a unique mix of indie pop, lo-fi beats and neo-soul. Park’s artistry is embodied by her spoken-word-inspired lyrics and her ability to convey 21st-century struggles.

In an interview with Apple Music, Parks said, “I wanted a sense of balance...the record had to face the difficult parts of life in a way that was unflinching but without feeling all-consuming and miserable. It also needed to carry that undertone of hope without feeling naive. It had to reflect the bittersweet quality of being alive.”

Parks wanted to explore holistic healing, growth, an inner peace.

“This album is about those first times where I fell in love, where I felt pain, where I stood up for myself and where I set boundaries,” Parks said.

The cathartic exploration of teenage adolescence, unhealthy relationships and self-acceptance is a lyrical masterpiece—justifying a deep-dive into her uplifting choruses, dance-worthy beats and soulful voice.

Collapsed in Sunbeams

The title track, “Collapsed in Sunbeams,” is a spoken word poem—introduces Parks as she describes herself, sitting beside the listener and comforting them. As they sit, Parks says, “Stretched out, open to beauty, however brief or violent,” proving she is willing to accept them no matter what they may reveal.

She also addresses the discomfort that often results from vulnerability but urges the audience to be comfortable around her. “We’re all learning to trust our bodies/ Making peace with our own distortions/

You shouldn’t be afraid to cry in front of me,” Parks sings. These lyrics create a bond between the audience and artist, making the album a safe space to feel all emotions.

The light strings and calming synths create a meditative track that inspires a bodily relaxation. The imagery of someone being “collapsed in sunrays” prepares the audience to absorb the light that radiates from the record.

Hurt

“Hurt” describes a boy named Charlie who struggles to take care of himself. He forgets to eat, longs for his mother and turns to alcohol for support. Parks accurately portrays the aches of emerging into adulthood and deteriorating mental health.

Parks responds to this sadness with an uplifting chorus. “I know you can’t let go of anything at the moment/Won’t hurt so much forever,” Parks sings. She begs for him to persevere. Parks reiterates that this state, though it may seem inescapable, is impermanent.

Caroline

This song is a narrative based on when Parks watched two individuals break up. As the woman leaves the man, he desperately tries to salvage the relationship. In the chorus, Parks sings, “I swear to God I try,” as if the reminder would mend his decaying relationship.

“Somehow have to stop her leaving,” Parks sings. The man seeks to physically keep her as he chases her down the street. Parks uniquely conveys the desperation to cling onto the person you love and the aggressive attempts to not let them go.

Black Dog

In an interview with Apple Music, Parks explains that “Black Dog” is about her best

friend. She expresses the pain of watching a loved one struggle with mental health and wanting to help them.

Arlo uses the imagery of a black dog to represent the lingering effects of depression. “I’d take a jump off the fire escape to make the black dog go away,” proving the drastic action she would take to save her friend. Parks sings, “At least I know that you are trying/But that’s what makes it terrifying,” as she expresses the uncertainty of knowing she may lose her friend to their mental struggles.

A Must Listen

These tracks set the scene for the remainder of the album as Parks continues to explore relationships and their many complications. While every song presents a unique set of struggles, each song also shares a spirit of hope for the future.

The album concludes on the track “Portra 400.” The song is about unhealthy coping mechanisms, substance abuse and ultimately, the destruction of a relationship. True to the album’s optimism, Parks describes it as, “euphoric, but capturing the bittersweet sentiment of the record.” The track ends on the uplifting line, “Making rainbows out of something painful/Getting fried as hell and dodging gravestones.”

“Collapsed in Sunbeams” is a complex and layered record that speaks to modern struggles. It is the perfect balance between detailed imagery, life’s many difficulties and unwavering optimism — setting the record apart from others. Arlo Park’s ability to be vulnerable and honest makes “Collapsed in Sunbeams” one of the most notable albums so far this year.