



## Beck - Mellow Gold

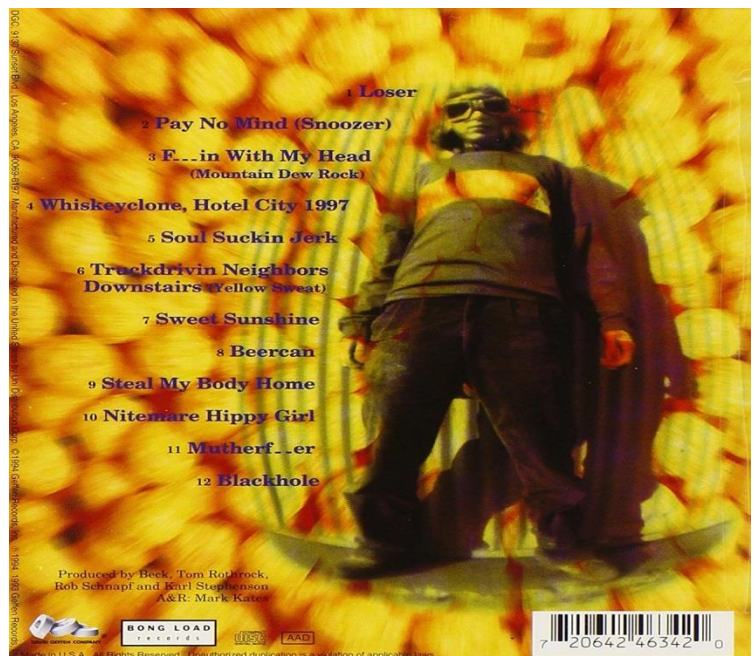
### Review

In an extremely busy and impactful year in music, Beck's 1994 release of his breakout album was not one to be ignored. *Mellow Gold* stood its ground against other strong alternative albums such as the Weezer's self-titled LP and Green Day's *Dookie*.

Mellow Gold is a very interesting album that blends many genres (rap, folk, psychedelia, etc.) into one piece using unorthodox forms of recording reminiscent of The Beatles at their most experimental. Beck (Beck Hansen) utilizes a variety of instruments, sampling, and editing to get the scuzzy, laidback vibes heard in the LP. The album is mostly made up of tracks created in makeshift home studios, and range in topics from minimum wage, to crushes, to no topic at all. Mellow Gold epitomizes "slacker" culture through Beck's seemingly lazy singing/rapping, and a sloppy production style. With the success of this breakout LP, Beck has been able to try out new genres in later works and has collaborated with the likes of Childish Gambino and Lady Gaga.

### Track list

The entire album is accompanied by art that screams homemade and psychedelic. The video released for the single "Loser" was directed by Steve Hanft who utilized 16mm film to create distorted images and videos, an experience that totally matched the demeanor of the song and album. The album art is pretty sick to say the least, it's all washed with a sepia tone that pairs with the music beautifully.



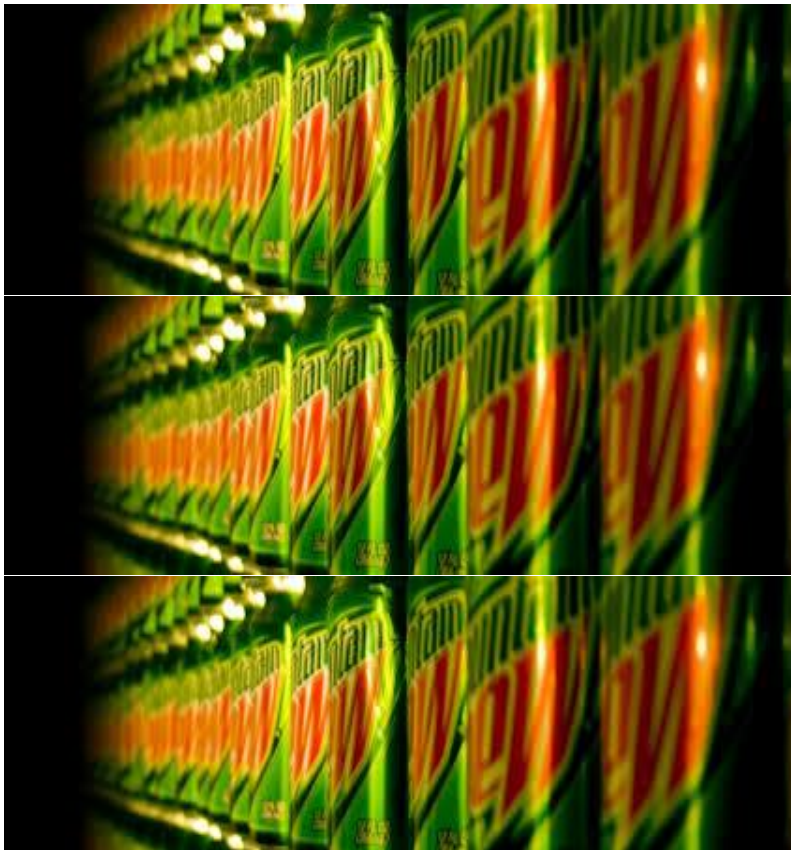


### “Loser”

The opening track of the album “Loser” has its origins in Beck singing in local blues cafés. Since he wasn’t well-known at the time, the audience would often treat him as background noise and talk over his performance. As a test, Beck began putting nonsense phrases into songs to see if people noticed.

While at a friend’s house, Beck decided to create a song with that idea in mind, the near-full recording was done in just over six hours. The song features a guitar, drums, sitar, and a couple other samples. The chorus “soy un perdedor, I’m a loser baby, so why don’t you kill me” comes from Beck’s friend, Karl Stephenson, critiquing his terrible rapping, to which he started singing that line.

The single was originally released by itself, and surprisingly started gaining airplay across the States. The demand for the song was actually so high that the record label Beck was previously signed with was unable to keep up with the demand, forcing Beck to sign with a larger company.



### “F\*\*\*\*n’ With my Head (Mountain Dew Rock)”

The third track on the album has a fun, jangly guitar riff as its heart, complimented by a raspy vocal performance. This main guitar melody has gone on to *inspire* other artists, namely The Sheepdogs in their track “I Don’t Know”.

**Beck:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbJ6b8io9dY>

**The Sheepdogs:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_5q0n2mDR8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_5q0n2mDR8)

The lyrics loosely follow a narrator's life that's having many problems, one of which is unrequited emotions of love towards another person. He figures that once they feel the same way as he does that his issues may go away, Beck expresses this notion through the chorus “*When you want to be with me, then we will see, who's f\*\*\*\*n' with my head*”.





### "Soul Suckin' Jerk"

"Soul Suckin' Jerk" is the fifth song on the album with a quirky plot surrounding a minimum wage job in a restaurant. It starts out with a man being fed up with his job, so he decides to burn his uniform and go downtown. He then finds himself getting arrested because he shared a "fake fur coat" with a hooker, ultimately leading him into another job just as terrible, if not worse, than the last. The storyline is pretty out there but the message remains clear; jobs suck. This idea really ties into the 'slacker' ideology that Beck inadvertently puts across, and it's sort of a theme song for those tired of meaningless jobs with bad pay and horrible bosses.

Sonically, this track is heavy with distortion, the chorus *'I ain't gonna work for no soul sucking jerk, I'm gonna take it all back, and I ain't saying jack'* sounds as if it's sung under water.

### "Truckdrivin Neighbor Downstairs (Yellow Sweat)"

The title for this track is a pretty good synopsis for the song. A song about Beck's truck driving neighbor downstairs, a man that is *'a lousy lowlife who can't do nothin' for himself'*, and a *'Vietnam vet playin' air guitar'*. The track vividly outlines average "white trash", the visuals alone of *'a wet cigarette'* or *'Yellow Sweat'* can make one think of a stereotypical trailer park.

### Nitemare Hippy Girl

This song is definitely my favourite of the album, I like simpler, more lyric based music and "Nitemare Hippy Girl" fits the bill. Beck describes a woman in detail that he's magically enthralled by, a woman that is no good for him and is "changing his style". Beck is undoubtedly referencing a Manic Pixie Dream Girl archetype and her faults, saying that "It's a new age let-down in my face," and that she's "uptight and a little bit snooty". The instrumentals are pretty basic and the chorus is enhanced through subtle harmonies, leaving the focus on the lyrics. This song is similar to "Truckdrivin' Neighbor Downstairs" in that it paints a picture of a very specific character. I really love how blatant Beck's wording is, things like that are something that makes me gravitate towards a song. I personally know many girls similar to the one in the track which just causes it to be more enjoyable to listen to.



Anna Sparrow, History of Rock & Roll, 2016

All in all, this album is my go to LP of the nineties. It has a personality unlike many others and the variety to find something enjoyable no matter what your mood. The main drawback is that it isn't the most accessible music, it's music you have to 'get used to' before you can fully understand and appreciate it. I personally love the experimentalist vibes *Mellow Gold* brings to the table, it's what makes it stand out from any other singer/songwriter.

Thanks for reading, hope you learned something new 😊.