



## **WHEN WE ALL FALL ASLEEP, WHERE DO WE GO? - Billie Eilish**

Review by Jack Johnston

Billie Eilish is a Los Angeles born singer-songwriter who makes music with her brother Finneas O'Connell, who also has a solo career in pop music. Billie's music can almost always be labeled 'pop' but it is influenced by a wide array of genres including: dance-pop, electropop, R&B, jazz, industrial, and avant-pop. Billie and Finneas have won several Grammy awards, and have received praise from the likes of legendary musicians such as Paul McCartney, Elton John, and Thom Yorke.

Billie was born on December 18, 2001 in Los Angeles, California. Both of her parents were musicians, and they were very supportive of her interests. Billie and her older brother Finneas were homeschooled in order to give them more free time. At 6 years old, Billie picked up the ukulele as her first instrument, which led her to writing her first songs at 11. In 2015, Billie started working with Finneas, who had already been writing and performing music with his band, The Slightly's, for years. Finneas has produced and co-wrote all

of Billie's songs since. The first songs they recorded were uploaded to SoundCloud.

On November 18, 2015, her first single, "Ocean Eyes," was released, reaching the Billboard Top 100 and launching Billie into stardom. "Ocean Eyes" was written by Finneas for his band, but decided it would suit Billie's voice better.



On August 11, 2017, Billie released her electropop and R&B infused EP, "Don't Smile at Me," featuring "Ocean Eyes" and other singles. The EP was a huge success, reaching #14 on the US Billboard 200.

**"WHEN WE ALL FALL ASLEEP, WHERE DO WE GO?"** is Billie Eilish's first album, released in 2019. In my opinion, it is one of the most unique and ground-breaking pop albums of the 2010's. It received several awards, including 7 Grammys in 2020. It is a dark album, covering themes such as depression, nightmares, sleep paralysis, suicide, addiction, and horror. Although there is an abundance of dark subject matter, there are happy and fun moments on the album such as "bad guy" or "my strange addiction."



What makes this album really special for me is the production. The album was recorded in Billie's bedroom, which was converted into a very small studio. Finneas wrote/co-wrote and produced every song on the tracklist and played all of the instruments on the album. Finneas has a very unique producing style that makes this album stand

out. He likes to sample sounds from everyday objects such as alarm clocks or matches and turn them into sound effects that work perfectly with the music. A lot of the songs on this album have very minimalist backing tracks. This is one of the best sounding albums I've ever heard, which is really impressive considering it's recorded in a bedroom.

Billie's vocals are another highlight of this album. Billie's singing is often described as 'fluttering,' 'breathy,' and a 'whisper.' She has such a perfect control of her voice of both pitch and volume, and it allows her to express her emotions very clearly. Her signature sound is quiet vocals

recorded very close to the microphone, so you can hear even the slightest detail in her voice. Often, her vocals are layered or put through effects to distort her voice. An effect she used throughout the album is layers of tremolo effects, which makes her voice sound almost like she is singing through a fan. This is a really cool sound that I haven't heard many other artists use.

### [Bad Guy](#)

The first song on the album, "Bad Guy," is Billie's biggest hit ever, with over two billion streams on Spotify and reaching #1 in 13 countries. It combines elements of dance-pop electropop, and trap music. The song opens with a catchy bassline that immediately draws



the listener in and gets them dancing. Billie's signature breathy vocals come in with a confident and playful vocal delivery. During the chorus, a fun synth hook sampled from a pedestrian crossing light takes control of the song. After the final chorus, right when you think the song is about to end, a jarring breakdown with heavy bass and trap-inspired drums slap you in the face.

The lyrics to "Bad Guy" are taunting a guy for acting tough when in reality, it's Billie who is the tough one in their relationship. Right before the hook of the song, all of the instruments drop out and Billie delivers one of the most iconic lines in pop music history: "I'm the bad guy... Duh."

### [Xanny](#)

In stark contrast to "Bad Guy," the next track, "Xanny" is a jazz-inspired ballad with minimal production and a much darker sound. During the verses, only Billie's haunting voice and a head-shaking, distorted bass are present. We don't hear any other instruments until the middle of the chorus, when a powerful drum fill grabs your attention and throws you into the second half of the chorus. "Xanny"'s jazz influence becomes more prominent in the second verse, when a piano enters the mix and provides a gentle counter-melody to Billie's voice.

The song's lyrics are about Billie's friends abusing drugs while she wants nothing to do with it. During the chorus, Billie describes hanging out with her friends presumably at a party. She is the only one not high, "drinking canned Coke" as opposed to the other kind of coke her friends are doing. In an interview with billboard, Billie explains that the message of the song is "less 'don't do drugs'; it's more 'be safe.'"

### [All the Good Girls Go to Hell](#)

The fourth song on the album, "All the Good Girls Go to Hell," is a pop

track that blends aspects from funk, hip-hop, and synthpop. The song opens with bells and the ominous line, "My Lucifer is lonely,.." which sets a dark mood right off the bat. Quickly, the song gets brighter as the metallic bass plays a catchy line reminiscent of older G-funk music. This awesome bass line is the main driving force behind the song. The post-choruses are filled with energy, with eerie synths and an additional synth bass. The song ends with Billie playfully singing along to the main bass riff and laughing.

On "All the Good Girls Go to Hell," Billie sings from the perspective of God and Satan looking down on humans destroying their planet. The song tackles climate change, mentioning "hills burn[ing] in California" and sea levels rising. The lines "My turn to ignore ya/Don't say I didn't warn ya," suggests that God has been trying to send a message that climate change has been an issue for a while, but not a lot of effort has been put into preventing it.

### [When the Party's Over](#)

"When the Party's Over" is a tear-jerking piano ballad featuring only piano, bass and vocals. Billie's vocals are the center of attention on this track. She demonstrates her perfect control of her voice, singing close to the microphone and very quietly, almost at a whisper. This is probably my favourite song on the album, mainly because of the amazing production. Although there is minimal instrumentation, Finneas does not hold back, using literally hundreds of vocal layers and there is always something new going on in the background in between lines.

This song was written entirely by Finneas, after breaking up with his girlfriend and feeling mixed emotions about the end of their relationship. He wrote the concept of the song while feeling sad that the relationship hadn't worked out, but content that he didn't try to stay together and make the issues worse.

### [Bury A Friend](#)

The ninth song on the album, "Bury A Friend," is a dark, industrial electro-pop track that is one of the creepiest moments on the album. In my opinion, this is the song where Finneas's unique production style shines the most. The galloping kick drum and unsettling tapping make for a minimalist drum beat that drives the song forward. Finneas scatters unnerving sound effects such as an alarm clock and a dental drill to constantly keep the listener on their toes. Billie's layered vocals are put through several effects to make her sound haunting and even demonic at some points on the track.

Lyrically, "Bury A Friend" is a very dark song, touching on themes of depression, sleep paralysis, and suicide. Billie was inspired by her experiences with sleep paralysis, this is especially evident in the lines "Then my limbs all froze and my eyes won't close/And I can't say no, I can't say no." The song is filled with violent imagery such as stepping on glass and stapling your tongue, which contributes to the disturbing nature of the song.

**“WHEN WE ALL FALL ASLEEP, WHERE DO WE GO?”** is the most important album of Billie’s career. This album solidified Billie and Finneas’s status as a force in pop music to be reckoned with. The fame Finneas got from working on this album also helped him start his own solo career. Billie has influenced thousands of up and coming artists since her debut, and will be a pop icon for a long time to come. I strongly recommend this album to any pop fans, and also to people who don’t necessarily like pop music, because this is an album like no other.

**9/10**

