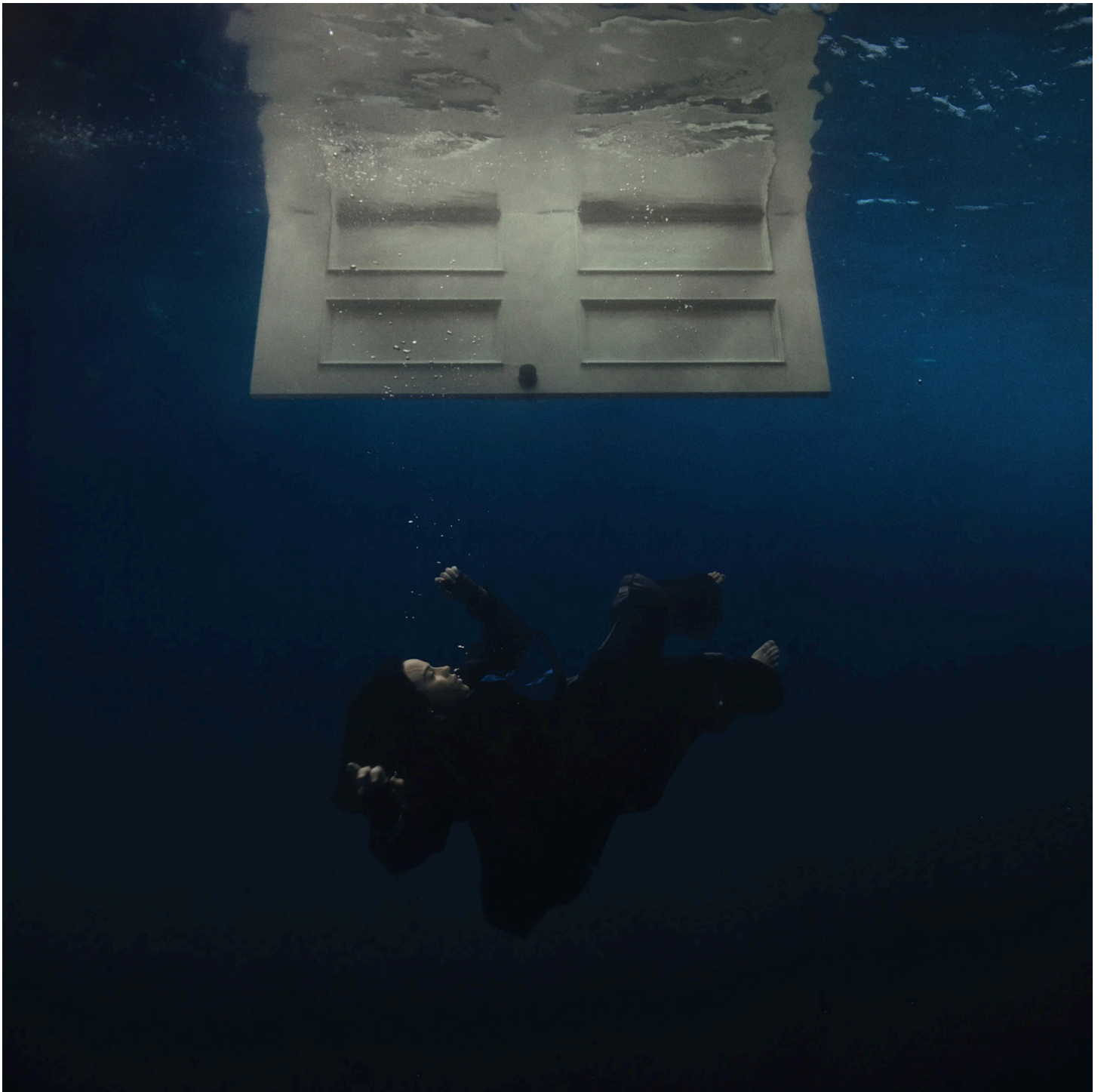


HIT ME HARD AND SOFT

By: Billie Eilish



Album review by: Marin

BILLIE EILISH

Background information



*“I'm gonna make
what I want to make,
and other people are
gonna like what
they're gonna like.
It doesn't really
matter.”*

-Billie Eilish

Billie Eilish has come a long way since winning her first Grammy for her debut album, *WHEN WE ALL FALL ASLEEP WHERE DO WE GO?* From making two more successful albums, and winning two Oscars and two Golden Globes for her work with movie soundtracks, she has become an incredible and well respected artist.

Billie is 23 years old, born and raised in Los Angeles with her brother, Finneas O'Connell, and was homeschooled by her parents. She and her brother always had a passion for creating music, as they both took singing lessons and Finneas had a band with his friends.

When Billie was just 14 years old, Finneas asked her if she would sing a song he had written for his band. They later put it out on *SoundCloud*, thinking no one would listen to it. However, within the next two weeks, the song would blow up. This song was, *Ocean Eyes*, which would later create more opportunities for her to make a name out of herself.

During the time her first album came out, Billie was quite depressed, and often had thoughts of suicide and self harm. In an interview with Gayle King on *CBS*, Billie stated, “I was crying because I was thinking about the way I was going to die, and that I was gonna do it.” After her quick rise to fame, Billie didn’t know how to deal with it. She was in a dark place and felt lonely, which led to her depression. She was so unhappy, that she didn’t think she would make it past 17.



However, thanks to Billie’s mother, and therapy, Billie came out of it and now shows support for her fans who are going through similar struggles as she did. She’s a strong advocate for mental health and self love, using music as a form of therapy. These struggles that Billie went through, led her and Finneas to write a song called, *Everything I Wanted*, which was about her having nightmares about suicide, where nobody cared, but realizing that her brother was there and that was all she needed. This song would lead to Billie winning her sixth Grammy Award.

In May 2024, Billie Eilish released her third album, *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT*. The album focuses on exploring a new age, and creating sounds she’s never done before. Billie’s past work has been more about telling stories and being angsty and scary, but this time, her new album is raw and creates a level of openness and vulnerability.

SKINNY



Rating: 10/10
Track no. 1

This song is her first track on the album, and in my opinion, is a great way to start it off. Her vocals are soft, and emotional, which gives you a taste of what the whole album will be like. Already, it shows her exploring different styles and trying to make something new compared to her old music. In the lyrics, Billie sings, “The old me is still me and maybe the real me, and I think she’s pretty.” These lyrics address how Billie has struggled with her body image, and mental health, and that she is coming to terms with accepting who she was and who is now. Skinny showcases her ability to make a song about a specific situation in her life that means something to her.

In addition to the lyrics, the song starts off slow, and quiet, with just an electric guitar in the background. However, more and more start building up. Her vocals get stronger, more emotional, and the strings start to play louder. Until the end, where a string outro plays, keeping the song emotional and powerful, but a sweet ending, that leads to the next song.

In the live version of the song, at [0:35](#), you can hear her voice go from whisper-like vocals, right to a clear, and crisp sound. This is just another reason to differentiate between her younger self and older self’s vocal abilities.

Album recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6YSdMnCOC>

LUNCH

Track no. 2

From something serious and personal, to something light-hearted, and playful, this song is completely different from *SKINNY*. I believe it shows a new side of Billie and her humour which I had not heard in her other albums.

The song has a catchy beat to it, with a groovy bass line and a basic drum beat. As well as a couple piano solos in between the verse and chorus, which contrasts well between the low and simple bass line.



LUNCH's music video is inspired by music videos in the 90's and is filmed with an older camera. There are many vibrant colours and clothing changes with different transitions. But it is kept fairly simple, with Billie dancing to the beat and singing to the song. I found the video brought out the playful side of Billie. Some of the artists that inspired the *LUNCH* music video were Green Day, Tupac and the Spice Girls.



Rating: 9/10

MUSIC VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB3VkzPdgLA>

CHIHIRO

Rating: 9/10
Track no. 3

A lot of people recognize the name of this song as a character from an anime film, “*Spirited Away*”. The song is slightly based on the plot of the movie, and it’s incredible visuals. Billie has said that the song incorporates the young girl’s perspective, with direct references to the film, but it also incorporates Billie’s perspective as well. The lyrics showcase Billie’s loneliness, and fear of the unknown, building the sense of angst which you can hear throughout the song.



During the writing process, Billie and Finneas had gotten into an argument about being vulnerable and having a clear subject matter. Billie was having a hard time expressing her emotions and being honest to herself at first, while Finneas encouraged her to put into words her own emotions and dig deeper into what she was feeling. Eventually, after putting more effort in the studios, it would end up being the song it is today.

Billie and Finneas have developed a sound that feels like I am floating, as though I’m in a different dimension. Billie’s vocals are chill and subtle, until certain parts where you can hear her screaming in the background. There are many hidden vocals that are quiet and meant to feel a bit unsettling, as you get closer to the end. The music starts to get louder, and more intense right up until the last second of the song.

Music Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY_XwvKogC8



BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Track no. 4

Rating: 8/10

If you're not a fan of Billie's, you likely still have heard the song, *BIRDS OF A FEATHER*. This song has made it on the charts, and is ranked at number 5 on *The Rolling Stones The 100 Best Songs of 2024 chart*, and is constantly played on the radio, or on *TikTok*.

In the song, Billie sings, "I'll love you 'til the day that I die", rather than meaning it more figuratively, it's taken on a literal term. Throughout their time in the studio, Billie and Finneas wanted to write a song about love, since they hadn't really done that before. But ironically, they ended up twisting it in the end, comparing love to death.

You can hear in the song, there is a slight echo to her vocals, and a catchy keyboard riff that continues to play throughout the whole song. It's steady and sets the vibe. In my opinion, *BIRDS OF A FEATHER* is another example of showcasing Billie's experimentation with her vocal abilities and how much her voice has developed from the whisper-like vocals she had when she was younger. In the end of the song, you can hear how much she pushed her vocals, holding a four note high belt, which has been one of the hardest notes she's had to sing in all her songs.

Billie has stated multiple times that she wants people to interpret her lyrics as they'd like, and this song is a perfect example. To me, the song can be about friendship, a relationship, or family and it is the type of song that anyone can relate to at any time.

Music Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9PVRfjEBTI>

Live Performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_uBbDkiALA

WILDFLOWER

Track no. 5

Rating: 10/10

Billie wrote this song about her own guilt and responsibility of dating her friend's ex boyfriend. She recounts comforting her friend after they broke up, and then going on to date her friend's ex boyfriend, Jesse Rutherford. This song is an "apology song" to her friend, admitting to her mistakes and what she did wrong. However, it was really a one-sided feeling, that Billie couldn't get out of her head, as her friend didn't really share the same feelings as Billie did. This song is a little



Live recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAWDqdpOlu8>

different from the other songs. Billie's vocals are raw, with more emotion to it, and she holds her notes for longer, using a lot more vocal runs. Every single ad-lib, and backup vocal are incredibly important and powerful. Without

them, the song would not be the same. When Billie sings, "But I see her, in the back of my mind, all the time." You can hear the vocal harmonies start to sing higher at the word, "time". It adds depth and more emotion to the song. By the time you get to the second verse, you can hear Billie repeat the same phrases back to herself each time, eventually building up into the second chorus, and making it even stronger than the first one.

At the start of *WILDFLOWER*, it starts out quieter, where you can hear rain falling and footsteps on the ground. The main instrument in this piece is the guitar strum, but as the song progresses, the more instruments come in. The drums come in at the second verse, as well as more piano. Billie's vocals are just so smooth, and heartbroken. Personally, I believe this song has some of the best vocals on the album, second only to *THE GREATEST*.

Album recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l08Zw-RY_Q

THE GREATEST

Track no. 6

Rating: 10/10



Like most of her songs, *THE GREATEST* starts off with just guitar picking, and then gets more powerful as the song progresses. Meanwhile, Billie sings in a breathy, high pitched tone. However, her vocals start to get stronger and louder, releasing all her anger and frustration out on the surface.

Towards the end, Billie uses drums and synths to amplify her emotional release. Up until then, the song is stripped down and quieter, so when the heavier elements come in, it hits hard. They symbolize her anger and frustration finally boiling over, making it feel like she's pouring all her feelings out.

What is also interesting about this song, is that the outro to her song, *SKINNY*, uses the vocal melody of *THE GREATEST*, just changed into a different key and played by the strings.

This song is about putting effort and energy into a relationship, and not getting it reciprocated back, and about feeling lonely and devastated that the appreciation and love is not getting returned. Billie uses the phrase, "Man am I the greatest", sarcastically, highlighting that she did everything they wanted in hopes of being loved, even though she got no "reward" for it. It's a bitter reflection on how it might have made her the stronger person in the end, but left her wondering, at what cost?

Live performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZqCFE_9U9o

Album Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkdQhfDRBKs>

L'AMOUR DE MA VIE

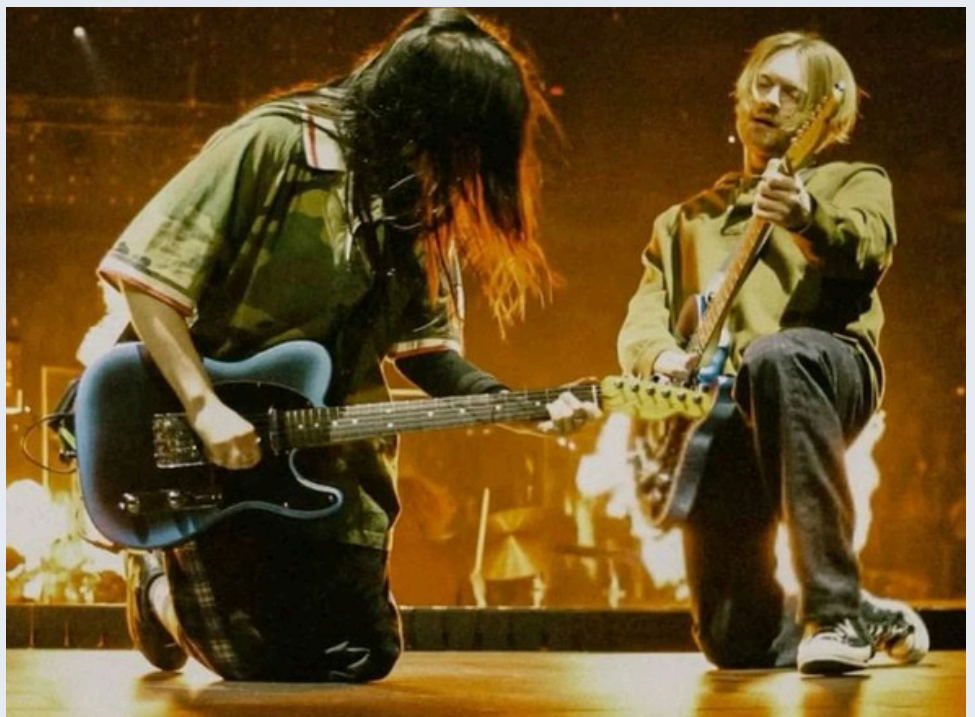
Track no. 6

Rating: 10/10

The literal translation of, “l’amour de ma vie” is “the love of my life” in French. The lyrics are both harsh and dismissive, giving the song a careless tone, where you can even hear some moments where she scoffs in the middle of the song. Additionally, Billie talks about how she doesn’t really care anymore and that she lied to her ex when she told them that they were the love of her life.

When you start listening to the song, it starts off normal, with a rhythmic electric guitar and a few piano notes here and there, but as you get closer to the end, the tempo starts to get faster, and the tone shifts. The song starts to get more electric, with Billie’s voice autotuned, and screaming into the mic, being more sarcastic and referring to a third person as well. Billie mentions how the person talked about has moved on fast, but that she's relieved that it's over now.

During the writing process, Billie and Finneas had made an electric and synth-y beat, where Billie was just singing random lyrics. Even though they both liked it, they decided not to put the whole part on the album and only keep the start, since it didn't fit the vibe. However, they later decided to release the *OVER NOW EXTENDED EDIT* after the album was put out.



Album recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=am5FI9DkO80>

OVER NOW EXTENDED EDIT:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WSIpxukIO8>

CONCLUSION



All in all, Billie Eilish has worked incredibly hard at making an album that showcases her vulnerability and vocal talent. She has pushed herself to the limits, and continues to be passionate about her art, all while not taking herself too seriously. Her songs are all connected somehow, and she incorporates humour in the mix as well, also creating music that everyone can relate to.

She continues to advocate for social justice, whether it’s the environment, or women’s rights, she has always spoken out publicly and helped around her community. Billie is a young artist with so much potential, and I cannot wait to see what she does next.



HIT ME HARD AND SOFT has a special place in my heart, and I believe it is one of the top albums of 2024. I rate this album a 9.5/10.

