

# Miley Cyrus Evolves from Disney to "Plastic Hearts"

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**Miley Cyrus** has been showcasing her ability to perform and conform since at least age 12. Her career was jump-started by Disney through her role as Hannah Montana, in which she lived a "double-life." Despite the attempt that was made to distinguish herself from her pre-existing popstar persona, this association remains a staple to her career. By the time she was 18, she knew she didn't want to play this persona anymore, which led to her final Hollywood Records release "Can't Be Tamed" (2010).

I bring this up because it is not since her latest release, "Plastic Hearts" (2020), that I've willingly gone out of my way to give an entire Miley Cyrus album a chance. This is also coming from someone who quite literally hoarded Hannah Montana merchandise as a child and grew up belting her songs at the top of their teeny little lungs. I do not doubt that growing into young adolescence on Disney Channel would be tough.

Once Cyrus left Disney, "Can't Be Tamed" established the first significant shift in Cyrus' sound going forward and was escalated by the "Bangerz" era. 2013-2017. From weird, unexpected, culturally-insensitive rap songs to an independent experimental release, to channeling her country

roots, Cyrus has certainly tested musical and personal waters.

Cyrus has settled back into the pop-rock vein of her early career with increased emphasis on rock and disco influences similar to those present in songs off of "Can't Be Tamed." This particular musical direction has had Cyrus shining in recent live renditions of Blondie's "Heart Of Glass" (1978) and The Cranberries' "Zombie" (1994), as well as her mash-up with Stevie Nicks' "Edge of Seventeen" (1981) and pre-existing single "Midnight Sky."

Her latest release "Plastic Hearts" kicks off with "WTF Do I Know," a song questioning her place having moved on from someone. It packs a punch as far as the rougher tendencies of her voice are concerned as well as the directness of the lyrics, and the heavier guitar solo towards the end. Following is the title track "Plastic Hearts," emphasizing vocal harmony and bringing up themes of longing. Later tracks such as "Gimme What I Want" and "Bad Karma" (feat. Joan Jett) are similar in themes but within a heavier sounding rock vein and with increased aggression. "Angels Like You," the track following "Plastic Hearts" is the first of a series of softer songs present on the

record. Gentler guitar parts with simple beats and progressions co-exist alongside themes of emotional instability and lack of belief in oneself.

The remaining tracks "High," "Hate Me" and "Golden G String" stand out to me in their structure and content. The lyrics of "High" and "Hate Me" hit close to home in describing the emotional experience of being hurt and not knowing what to do other than self-sabotage. The close-out track "Golden G String" feels like a self-reflection of Cyrus' career with finding her power, embracing her sexuality and walking away from toxic situations. I'm uncertain if Cyrus will stay in this musical direction, but I remain enthusiastic about where she takes us.

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