

# SPOTLIGHT



January 13, 2017

Just released in December of 2016, *Awaken, My Love!* the third studio album from Donald Glover, a.k.a. Childish Gambino, nearly missed out on making it into year-end “Best of 2016” lists. However, the artistry was so immediately evident that many list editors managed to squeeze it in anyway.

Gambino’s earlier musical output was primarily rap-based hip hop. The beats were great, the lyrics a touch nerdy, and he quickly developed a cult following. But if any of those earlier fans had been expecting an encore, they were in for a

funky surprise.

Fitting for the title, it was like his musical ambitions woke up. Many other critics have noted the eclectic sounds of these tracks. Funk masters George Clinton and Sly and the Family Stone are obvious influences, but if you listen carefully, there are strains of soul, hip hop, jazz, and rock in the mix as well. (His voice at times reminded me of Lenny Kravitz). But make no mistake, the tunes themselves are unique and modern.

One unfortunate misstep is “California,” an auto-tuned calypso track that I can only hope was intended to be ironic. Nonetheless, it’s another example that Childish Gambino is a creative mind experimenting with sound. It may not all be genius, but most of this album is pretty darn close.

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