

REACTING TO MUSIC

BY AUSTIN HORNBOSTEL
Editor-in-chief
index.editor@gmail.com

Index EIC reacts to Drake's new "More Life" playlist.

I'll admit it, I'm a total Drake fan boy. One might even call me a stan — a term coined by fellow rapper Eminem in a 2000 song of the same name that refers to huge, borderline obsessive, fans. The guy Eminem's talking about in that song is kind of creepy though, so I'll just say I'm a big fan.

Drake's "Take Care" has always been one of my favorite rap/R&B hybrid albums of all time, but his new project has easily beaten it in my book. "More Life" released March 18, and I've already lost track of how many times I've listened to it all the way through. It's currently entrenched at the top of my queue basically any time I need something to listen to while doing homework or walking to class. In fact, I'm listening to it as I write this. Go figure, huh?

I actively struggle to find a song on it that I don't really care for — besides the Young Thug feature on "Ice Melts" because I can't stand his goofy, unintelligible autotune rap. In fact, I struggle to even make a top five list of my favorite tracks from the project since there are so many songs I enjoy. It's difficult enough for me that when I was discussing it with my friend, and fellow Drake stan, the other

day I had to divide my favorites into lists of the best rap tracks, R&B tracks, and rap/R&B fusion tracks — with honorable mentions, of course — which basically makes up the entire 22 song tracklist.

You might notice I've refused to call this an album up to this point. That's because it isn't one — Drake's calling this a playlist. Placing "More Life" in that category implies that the listener would be hearing a lot of songs from a lot of artists, at least that's what I was expecting when he announced the project. He's technically correct in applying that label since every track on "More Life" sounds different than the last and the project spans multiple styles, but most of the tracks are just Drake songs with or without features. There are only two songs in the entire tracklist that don't feature any trace of Drake — "4422," a track sung by frequent collaborator Sampha, and "Skepta Interlude," commandeered by British grime rapper Skepta.

So wouldn't it be more accurate to call this project an album, not a playlist? I think so, but the beauty of the whole thing for Drake is it really doesn't matter what he calls it, for two key reasons. He's already shattering streaming records with the project and has topped the Billboard albums chart even with the playlist moniker, so it's not like that label is holding him back in any way. In fact, I think my second key reason here is where the genius lies in the whole thing — you know, beyond the whole record-breaking success part.

Calling "More Life" a playlist allows Drake to experiment with whatever styles he sees fit from start to finish, something he's gotten flack for in the past. A lot of people see his loose experimentation with dancehall music on his last album, "Views," as hit or miss, or even an appropriation of style. People are poking fun at him with "More Life," because he's adopted a lot of British slang — like substituting "ting" for thing — that he falls in and out of throughout the project, and he continues his recent habit of exploring dancehall music without really diving into that genre completely.

Even further back in his career, I think some listeners might not be as keen on the two distinct sides of Drake as I and other fans might be. There's the Drake who brags about success and raps about being the best rapper alive, and there's the sad Drake who sings about his feelings and women from his past that he wishes he could be with. Maybe that's a cause for some to view his past albums as less cohesive from start to finish.

"More Life" allows him to do all of that without having to make the project totally cohesive, which we usually expect is a given for albums. He can continue to be the same old, two-sided Drake — tough rapper and sad singer — and also allow the songs on "More Life" to hover toward the influences of grime rap and dancehall in his typical not-actually-that-genre fashion. Sure, his adoption of Jamaican and British slang throughout the project is incredibly corny and almost out of char-

acter in a way, but I think that's one thing that draws me to Drake so much. I'm a pretty big fan of artists who can embrace sounding corny and make it entertaining because they know exactly what they're doing. Fellow rapper Lil Yachty is another recent example of this.

Drake's just like everyone else in that he obviously has some key influences guiding his work right now, and that shows on "More Life." It reminds me of kids imitating the things they think are cool — my friends in elementary school and I would always pretend to be our favorite characters from action shows or quote lines from cartoons just because we all found it so entertaining. I don't see any of it as an appropriation of slang or musical styles, I see it as an artist celebrating and sharing his influences. It simultaneously makes him an imitator and an innovator, in a good way, and I don't think there are a lot of other artists that could pull off something like this.

When it comes down to it, my favorite thing about "More Life" is that none of the songs sound too similar. From the hilarious but somehow fitting flute in the background of "Portland" to the beautifully sampled Jennifer Lopez song "If You Had My Love," included on "Teenage Fever," it's hard for me to leave this project alone for more than a few hours of my day. That'll be the case for a long time to come — maybe until 2018, when Drake raps at the end of the closing track, "Do Not Disturb," that he'll be back for more. The other stans and I will be waiting.

Marxian economist shares capitalism critique

BY KAYLA PERKINS
Staff Writer

American Marxian economist Richard Wolff came to Truman State University March 23 to give a talk on capitalism and the Marxian tradition of critiquing capitalism.

Wolff began by telling the story of Karl Marx, who longed for liberty, equality and fraternity. Marx found refuge in France during the German revolution, and believed capitalism would bring those things about. When it didn't, Marx began to wonder why. Wolff went on to explain feudalism and capitalism and said the two are not different enough. Throughout the presentation, Wolff criticized capitalism and explained Marxian thinking, ending with the statement that he believes capitalism has done what it was meant to do and is now over.

He illustrated this point with a story of feral dogs in Detroit, Michigan. He said Detroit was once the capital of capitalism but is now occupied by feral dogs who have taken over abandoned homes and wreak havoc in the streets. He said he believes this is a sign that capitalism is over, and it might take a while, but it's done.

After his presentation, Wolff stayed and talked to members of the audience more about capitalism.

He said he became interested in Marxism when riding the train with his father as a child. When passing by a poor neighborhood, he asked his father why it was that way, and his father explained some people have more than they need and others have less.

"Ever since, I've been horrified by inequality and the fairness of it all," Wolff said. "I've always been upset by the fundamental injustice of it all, and I still am."

Wolff went on to talk about studying Marxism, the fight for social equality, the political unrest in this country and making the topic of Marxism less taboo in this country.

For example, Wolff discussed countries particularly in Western Europe, like Italy, France and Germany which have taken steps to limit capitalism and the greed, corporate corruption and socio-economic inequality he said he believes it causes. Some of these steps, Wolff said, have included plans implementing free healthcare and higher education as well as more of an emphasis on worker cooperatives, or systems where companies are owned and managed by all workers.

He said he wanted people to walk away from his talk with a better understanding of what Marxism is and for them to be talking and thinking about things outside of what they are told to be thinking about.

History professor Marc Becker, who serves as chair of Global Issues Colloquium and faculty advisor for Students for a Democratic Society, organizations which had a hand in bringing Wolff to Truman, echoed this sentiment.

"Students in Students for a Democratic Society wanted to bring him here to expose Truman students to perspectives that most students don't get in the classroom, particularly a Marxian perspective of the current economic crisis," Becker said.

Becker said that he thought the event was successful in attaining that goal and was pleasantly surprised at the turnout of the event.

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*The Kohlenberg Lyceum Series St. Louis Brass performance will take place in the Ophelia Parrish Performance Hall due to the renovation of Baldwin Hall. The Performance Hall provides a wonderful venue for the performances, however, it has a smaller seating capacity, with 450 seats compared to 1,395 seats in Baldwin Auditorium.

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