Record Report

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**Return of Frank**

Ocean ends four year drought with “Blonde”

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rank Ocean is back. Since his album “Channel Orange” released in 2012, fans and media alike have heard virtually nothing from hip-hop’s most low-key artist.

With his newest release “Blonde” (spelled “blond” on the album’s cover) Ocean harnesses an avant-garde approach to many of his new songs. While still having features from artists such as Beyoncé and Andre 3000, it is clear that this album is a progression rather than a recreation of Ocean’s work in 2012, while still providing fans with the lyricism and vocal performance that we came to love with “Channel Orange.”

The album contains interludes similar to “Channel Orange” which capture Ocean’s mother leaving a voicemail warning him of the dangers of marijuana usage on “Be Yourself” and a French man recalling a relationship which ended due to a Facebook dispute on “Facebook Story.” Ocean uses these interludes to highlight themes throughout the whole album and throughout today’s culture.

One factor that blew me away within “Blonde” was how much guitar was on the record. On almost every track the beat of the song is anchored in R&B styled guitar.

Ocean’s musical production is outstanding with drowned out guitar chords and a muffled bass line on the track “Seigfried,” and the symbiosis of guitar and piano on the track “Godspeed” is simply brilliant.

“Blonde” features 17 tracks that remind Ocean’s fans who he is after such a long silence while still showing us that he is not finished progressing as an artist. “Blonde” is an impressive new addition to Ocean’s catalogue, and for stylistic evolution with approaches to songs that bring nostalgia; I give “Blonde” 4/5 stars.