

Anyone in-tune with today's pop culture knows the name Justin Timberlake. First arrived on the scene as a child actor in the Disney show *The All-New Mickey Mouse Club*, then fronted the highly famed NSYNC, JT has grown substantially since his boyish days. In a class of his own in anything he touches, Timberlake has transformed into an idol amongst those who grew up with him watching from their living rooms.

This role of superstardom didn't come without its many bumps along the way, however. JT took full advantage of the life he was thrust in to. Immaturity showed in his actions of partying and getting into trouble with the law a number of times. The consequences of his actions began failing in his relationship with Cameron Diaz. This eventually led to a bad break up and sent Timberlake into an artistic slump. Years went by and he went on hiatus from music to focus on acting. Upon his return, he released successful visionary albums with producer/hip-hop artist Timbaland. He fell head over heels for Jessica Biel, stating in an interview that she "saved him and his career; the fans have her to thank." His latest album *Man of the Woods* is dedicated to his growth as an artist and relationship with his wife and child. As he continues to broaden his abilities, he expects to further merge the gap between the r&b/country/pop genres.

The first song we uncover is the captivating *Say Something*. Sung in a heavenly duet with Chris Stapleton, there are minimal lyrics that repeat until they saturate the listener, which is why it works. The message is not to get caught up in the world around you and just live your life the way you choose without taking anyone's opinions into account but your own. "Sometimes the greatest way to say something is to say nothing at all." The music is fantastic in the sense that it was a very mellow tone, yet feels so vibrant and moving that it resonates in your head for hours after listening. *Say Something* begins and ends in the same dramatic fashion with the instrumental simplicity. There is no hidden beat that will make you say "wow" at any point in

this song; you can't help thinking there should be. The composition both musically and lyrically is so minimal it's beautiful. The song rests heavy on a simple message sang by two powerful voices and forces your attention by making you wait for something big to come but never does. We need more songs like this in the genre today.

Next is the title track *Man of the Woods*. The song describes his feelings towards his significant other because he can't seem to say it out loud the right way to make people understand how in love with her he really is. "How do I ever explain what I've got with you? I try to find the words but they hide and that's the truth." He's afraid to open up because he needs to protect his pride and be "manly." The tune moves well with the lyrics, strengthening when he tells her he brags about her outside; calming down when he seemingly feels bad about not being able to express himself to her directly. This beat definitely places you at a summertime BBQ where you are surrounded by people you want to be with so the conversations are endless and enjoyable. The guitar riffs are snappy; the vocals fun and catchy. There is one high point in the song where symbols are crashing and tempo picks up, but that doesn't last as long as one would like. Perhaps that is to showcase the vocalist's dynamic ability, but as the listener I have to say it just doesn't work in his favor.

*Filthy* is just that; this song is about sex. However, not just anyone can pick up on that. The cleverly hidden message is about his group of friends and her group of friends hooking up "til 6 in the mornin'." "Haters gonna say its fake. So what, it's real." The music is trancy and feels like you're in the club with them as they are having this discussion together. Arguably the poppiest track on this album, Timberlake hides his sexual driven message cleverly under a club-esk type of mix. It makes you want to nod your head regardless of what is being said. The tones

are aimed at grabbing downloads and that is it. I don't believe JT was trying to please his loyal fans from the nineties on this one, rather aimed to appease the new generation of listeners.

Then we have *Supplies*. At the opening of the song we picture two people arriving at an event "solo," but the female is approached by an ex-lover. The singer tells her "I'm leaving, do you wanna go?" The rest of the lyrics explain what he has to offer her; he's got all the "supplies" she needs to be happy. Musically, this project was a very thrilling adventure: containing spectral bass lines, a vaguely psychedelic mandolin, even Pharrell Williams growling and barking words; they must have had fun putting this track together. JT has expressed himself that this is his "Southern Jam" on the album. It's not something you'd listen to all the time, but when it comes on you will want to nod along to it. The string lines and beats that make it a complete song are refreshing with what is currently popular in music right now. Another club-sk mix next to *Filthy*, he lowers the intensity on this "love" song in order to make his lyrical message clear and open for interpretation.

Finally, I give you my favorite on the album, *The Hard Stuff*. This song is very relatable as it is someone trying to express that he's not in the relationship just for the easy and fun times, rather he is here for the long haul and wants to go through every up and down with his partner. He asks for "the hard stuff, the kind that makes you feel real," and "my god knows I'm not the man I want to be; please forgive the things in this life I have to learn," which can mean a number of different things. In this case, I believe he is asking for forgiveness for something he may have done; for her to see past that mistake and fix it together because he loves her. The music sets a somber tone throughout the track and is the type of soft soulful music that today's pop culture is lacking. Another simply composed track with a huge meaning in the lyrics, *The Hard Stuff* doesn't offer any wow factors but keeps you in the hopes that one will come. Sprinkled with yet

more acoustic chords and noncommittal glimmers of twang, this track is pleasant to listen to and will probably be added to wedding playlists in the upcoming season.

These tracks I just reviewed don't even begin to incorporate all that Timberlake is capable of. He has become a visionary and it has been inspiring to watch, being one of his fans since the Mickey Mouse days. One could build admiration for this man and his acting and singing career, plus the numerous business ventures, as he has grown into a likeable, well-rounded, mature role model for not only his own child, but the people who grew up with him and their children they are soon to have. We could definitely use more JT's in the music/film industries.