

The title of Clay “Krucial” Perry III’s new Warner Records project, *Wake Me Up When It’s Over*, came to him in a reflective mood, late one night after a few drinks. The Memphis engineer and producer turned rapper was scrolling Twitter shortly after the release of his July 2022 EP, *CLAY*, when the idea made its way from his brain to the bird app. Once he put the thought out in the world, he had to find out what it meant to him. What about this era in his life and career made him want to hibernate? The examination led to more questions and some profound answers, all of which are explored movingly on *Wake Me Up When It’s Over*.

Take the album’s opener, “Time to Go,” which finds Perry crooning, “*Baby, I don’t give a damn if you’re gonna leave, roll / Let a n****a go/ Let a n****a fly away / Let me hit the door*” over contemplative piano notes and searching synths. As the song progresses, his voice takes on layers of pain, infusing it with palpable melancholy. There’s a deep regret in his delivery, not because he’s sad about the situation, but because he knows there was no other outcome. He also examines the stressors of his growing success, feeling the jealousy of his haters grow with each new and successful project: “*I know these n****s don’t want me guaranteed to go nowhere without a gun.*” It’s a great introduction to *Wake Me Up When It’s Over*, which finds the Bluff City spitter coming to terms with his problems and actively strategizing to alleviate some of his pain.

Perry has been a go-to engineer in Memphis for years, sitting behind the boards for some of the city’s finest rappers like NBA Youngboy, Yo Gotti, Blocboy JB, Rico Nasty, and Yella Beezy. But working with stars—and especially with other artists he suspected he could rap circles around—pushed him to step into the booth himself. Perry began making noise of his own with independent projects like *Krucifix* (2018), *It Could’ve Been Different* (2019), and *Too Sad for Tomorrow* (2019). He released his major-label debut *If We Must Die*, in 2021.

A lot of Perry’s struggles came from the drastic changes that occurred when he inked his first major label record deal, which recontextualized his life and career in a way he didn’t expect. “I don’t want to say life changed drastically, but it did. I realized I can’t kick it with some of the people I used to kick it with growing up. I can’t post up in the hood no more,” he explains. He equated the feeling to the Adam Sandler movie *Click*, watching the life he knew move forward without him. On “Dangerous,” the only song on the new project Perry wrote instead of freestyled, he examines this perspective further, rapping, “*Baby girl, I get so high I’m surrounded by angels / Baby girl, I’m getting high just to drive out that anger.*” That line helped Perry realize that his relationship with drugs was wildly unhealthy, so he quit smoking weed.

“At one point it was fun when I was a kid and shit. But I realized I’m doing this to run away from my issues,” he says. The only way for Perry to confront his issues was to hit the studio, the

place he felt more comfortable than anywhere else on this earth: "It's all in the music. The only thing that gives me any type of counsel is just going to the studio, recording and listening to it."

Despite these feelings of isolation, Perry takes pride in making art that other people in similar circumstances can relate to. "In Memphis, I was always known as the guy that would say all of the shit that nobody wanted to say," he says. "All of the depression, full transparency." At first, this pressure to speak his radically honest truth was a burden, but eventually, that feeling faded into confidence: "I noticed that there were a bunch of other people that felt the way that I felt, regardless if you were from the suburbs or the hood."

If you can relate to Clay "Krucial" Perry III, he's happy to invite anyone into his club. "I make music for myself, of course," he says. "But I'm trying to make it for other people that feel the same way I do as well."