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Valley Entertainment

Childish Gambino is good ... but for how long?

Length is not the issue. Some of the best films I've ever seen are lengthy. *The Godfather*, *Seven Samurai*, and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* are all in excess of three hours.

Stephen King's novels *It* and *The Stand* are beefy tomes that pack serious punch.

Very few long albums, however, have ever seemed to justify the runtime. Double albums are rarely worthy of it. Even the Beatles' White Album could have used a trim in places – notably with "Revolution 9," which is the worst track (I can't call it a song) the band ever produced.

If the songs are all good, there isn't a problem. An album can be two hours long, but for some reason in practice it's difficult to achieve.

Childish Gambino's new album, *Because the Internet*, clocks in at just under an hour. It's not a double album, but it falls into the same self-indulgent trap that often accompanies one.

Gambino, a.k.a. Donald Glover, made a name for himself as a dorky and charming former jock on the sitcom *Community*. His Troy is an endearing and funny character, and often the heart of the show. *Because the Internet* is his second album that he hasn't put out independently. And it's not bad. There are some excellent grooves. He doesn't just stick with predictable raps, he experiments with flow and tempos and overall hooks. One of the later tracks, "Earth: The Oldest Computer," is all over the place in aggressive intensity and an electronica score. It is ready-made to be blasted from club speakers.

It's one of the instances where his instincts to go overboard work. It's a feverish song that should get people up and

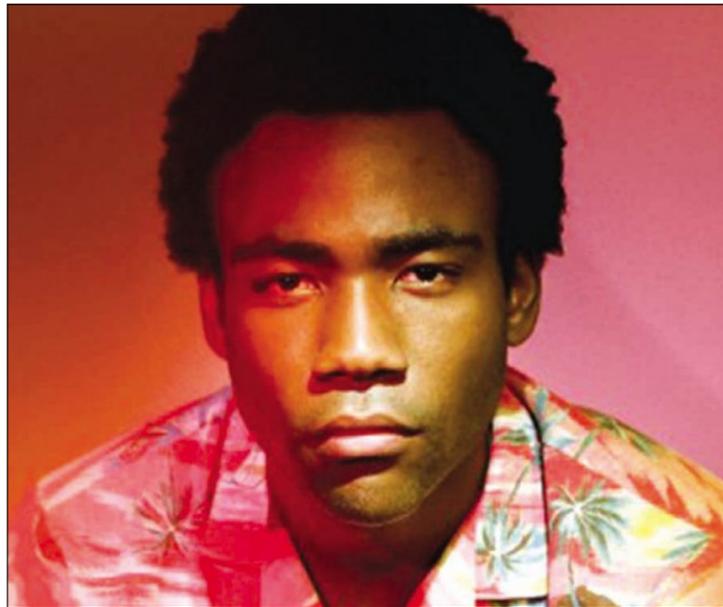


PHOTO SUBMITTED

Donald Glover a.k.a. Childish Gambino

Jason Wilson
Liner Notes

moving. On other tracks, like "Flight of the Navigator" and "Sweatpants," there is an abundance of sonic chaos that distracts from the rest of the song.

That's the bulk of my issues. It's a loose record that could probably have a track or two, but overall it's a solid

album that's worth a listen. It ends with maybe the strongest songs on the entire playlist. He rips through "Life: The Biggest Troll" with self-aware abandon. It's not a cry for help, it's an admission that the isolation created within our lives is damning and we need each other to get ahead. Childish Gambino is exploring the meaning of life, which great art often does.

He's finding his voice. He's asking questions, and it's a lot more interesting to venture through than the familiar stereotypes in some other rap albums. He is not adhering to what might

be expected of him, as an actor/comedian. Eminem's newest album suffered because he pandered to his old audience. Childish Gambino is trying to cut his own path in a different artistic medium, and it could work.

Some tracks meander too much before finding the groove. The last minute (out of nearly five) in "Zealots of Stockholm" is a somber missive of the struggles to be good in a world indifferent to dark. He says, quoting comedian Sam Kinison, "if you're gonna miss heaven, why do it by two inches?" In other words, no more half measures. From the end of the first verse through the bridge, the song loses its way. Theoretically, this might hold water, but it's still a song and it's not nearly as interesting to listen to as it is to think about.

The interesting thing about him and his words is his ability to be both self-assured and self-conscious at the same time. There is a genuine vulnerability to his delivery that is a rarity in mainstream rap more concerned with looking tough and masculine. It's not attractive to expose your own weaknesses. But here, he makes his weaknesses his strengths. His curiosity of the human condition and his place within it makes it an interesting listen. The fact that it's accompanied by some strong beats is a bonus.

Because the Internet won't set the world on fire – it is uneven and there are unfortunate pre-conceived notions because music is not the first place he found success (an unfair assessment) – but it should give be a worthy listen for casual hip-hop fans or rap fans looking for something new. He's a talented wordsmith (he was a writer on *30 Rock*, after all) and he knows how to string

a hypnotic series of phrases together with speed and grace. Listen to it in the car. Try to stop yourself from bouncing.

UNNECESSARY DISCLAIMER: My overall opinion of *Because the Internet* could do a complete shift by the time this review prints. My initial listen was extremely favourable. It was upon closer inspection on the second and third listens where some of the cracks started to show. How it stands up after that will determine if it remains on my iPod playlist, or if it gets lost in the shuffle.

THE SCENE: Old Mother Mountain, the trio of Joel Graham, Nick Dorcas, and Will Crocco will be playing at the Woodstock Golf and Curling Club on Saturday, Dec. 21, at 9 p.m. They bring the rock and know how to put on a fun show. Cover is an incredibly reasonable \$5. It's December ... it's Saturday ... go see some live music! The boys are joined by guest Lance LaPage.

If you find yourself down Fredericton way on Dec. 19, 21, or 23, the Capital Complex is hosting its annual set of covers shows. Local bands will be playing sets of tunes by the Eagles, Queens of the Stone Age, Motorhead, Beach Boys, and more. It looks to be a pretty fun time.

CONTACT: As always, any feedback, questions, requests (no Free Bird), and concert listings can be sent to news@thebugle.ca or directly to me at Jason.clare.wilson@gmail.com.

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A Woodstock-born and raised teacher, writer, traveller, freelance journalist and columnist – and longtime supporter of the local art and music scene.

Fredericton country music festival nabs legend

Woodstock-based East Coast Productions announces Ronnie Dunn of Brooks & Dunn to headline two-day festival

ADAM BOWIE
THE DAILY GLEANER

Country legend Ronnie Dunn, accomplished solo artist and half of the iconic award-winning music duo Brooks & Dunn, will show off his boot-scootin' boogie in Officers Square in 2014 as the headliner of the ninth annual Maritime Countryfest.

Though the full two-day lineup is still under construction, Countryfest organizers wanted to give fans a bit of a preview to whet their appetites about the downtown concert, which will take place June 13-14, 2014.

The festival announced on Wednesday that it has signed Dunn, along with Manitoba-based country-rockers Doc Walker, American Idol finalist and popular country star Kellie Pickler, and St. Catherine's, Ont.-born singer-songwriter Tim Hicks, for this year's blowout.

Dunn, who's sold more than 30 million records with Brooks & Dunn, released a well-received solo recording in 2011 that found its way to the top of the Billboard country charts thanks to songs like, "Bleed Red," "Cost of Livin'" and "Let The Cowboy Rock."

He'll headline the Saturday-evening showcase with support from Kellie Pickler, another artist who topped the Billboard country charts with her debut album *Small Town Girl*.

Pickler, who recently out-pranced all the competition on the popular TV show *Dancing With The Stars*, will be touring in support of her new album,



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Let's boogie down in June: Officials with Maritime Countryfest have signed country legend Ronnie Dunn, pictured above, American Idol finalist Kellie Pickler, Canadian country-rockers Doc Walker, and Ontario-based singer-songwriter Tim Hicks for this year's downtown country music festival.

The Woman I Am, which was released in November.

Last year, Maritime Countryfest shrunk to a one-day event, tightening

up the schedule to focus on providing a revamped experience for country fans.

This year, it's expanding to a two-day affair.

For the Friday-evening kickoff showcase, the festival will highlight an all-Canadian lineup, which will be headlined by Doc Walker – a band that's earned multiple Juno Awards, multiple Canadian Country Music Association Awards.

Riding high on the recent success of its single "Put It Into Drive," the band relies on sweet-sounding harmonies and fun, sing-along choruses.

After a local opener kicks things off, rising star Tim Hicks will strut his stuff on the big stage with high-energy tunes such as "Stronger Beer" and "Hell-Raisin' Good Time."

Festival vice-president Ray Haines said it's exciting to be able to share the good news with capital region country fans.

"It's going to be a great summer event for Fredericton," he said.

Haines said because last year was the first year the festival was managed by Woodstock-based East Coast Production Group, and because they changed up the event's format, there was a bit of a transition.

"I think last year we kind of went into it not knowing 100 per cent how things were going to turn out with the re-vamping of the festival, with the whole outdoor stage, with removing the tent, just having the whole event outside with nothing covered," he said.

"And we changed it from a three-day event to a one-day event with a pretty strong headliner in Travis Tritt. But the response was a bit overwhelming,

actually. It turned out really well. We didn't have the best weather, but the response was really great."

Despite a heavy, continuous rain through the event, about 3,500 fans showed up to kick up their heels.

Joe Keenan, president of Maritime Countryfest, said he's grateful to be able to give fans a special musical experience in the heart of the city.

"After last year's overwhelming support, we were ready to step things up yet another level. The road for 2014's event has been long already with planning, offers, negotiating and so on, but the best is yet to come," he said in a news release.

"Today is just phase one of announcing our artist lineup for June."

Any local musicians interested in applying for an opening slot at Maritime Countryfest are encouraged to submit an application online before Feb. 14 by visiting sonicbids.com.

Tickets are available now online at ticketbreak.com or by calling 1-866-943-8849. Festival organizers will make tickets available in the new year at local retail outlets.

If you want to take in Friday's concert, you'll have to pick up a \$65 ticket. To attend the Saturday-evening concert, you can pick up \$85 passes. Or, to make sure you don't miss any of the fun, you can grab a full festival pass for \$125. Prices already include taxes.

For more information, you can visit the festival's Facebook page or follow the event on Twitter.

Guides help hospital patients



PHOTO SUBMITTED

The newly formed Upper River Valley Hospital Auxiliary hosted the South Carleton Pathfinders, Guides, Brownies, Sparks and their leaders in a tree decorating sing-along with patients at the hospital recently. The guiding groups decorated the Christmas tree with their handmade decorations while musical entertainment was provided by Pathfinder Sarah Slipp. The auxiliary will be hosting fundraising activities throughout the area and is seeking new members. If interested, contact Carla Smith at 278-5872 or 245-1105.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD Christmas Contata

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Dec 13th - Dec 19th

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Nightly @ 8:00

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Sat & Sun @ 2:15

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