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## Album Review: David Bowie – Blackstar

David Bowie's morose, claustrophobic final studio album sits amongst his finest in a distinguished career

By Jack Davies, Deputy Editor (2017)

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Source: Press

★★★★★

This review is an incredibly unusual one to write, because, it was as I was applying the finishing touches to my evaluation of David Bowie's *Blackstar*, that the news broke of the man born David Jones passing away from cancer aged 69.

The world, as should be expected for a man that has impacted so much of popular culture as we know it today, was devastated. But Bowie's passing has also given a completely new context to *Blackstar*.

Bowie has produced a brilliantly dark, engaging and inventive album that will sit as one of his most

experimental in what was an outstanding, diverse career.

*Blackstar* itself comprises just 7 songs, each track exhibiting the lyrical genius that Bowie was renowned for over the years. 'Sue (Or In a Season of Crime)' sees Bowie call upon motifs of death that are present throughout *Blackstar*, adding to its powerfully morose feel as he sings of pushing a woman named Sue "beneath the weeds" and kissing her "good-bye".

The album is one of the best arguments anyone could put forward for claiming that popular music is not something you just listen to on the radio in the car or at parties, but an art-form as powerful and relevant as any painting or poem.

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Aside from Bowie's distinctive and familiar voice, the album is a whirlwind of experimentation, seeing him explore life, death and the boundaries of popular music in the unique way that only Bowie could – there's even a song on the album sung in Nadsat ('Girl Loves Me').

However, the album will always be thought of as his swansong, being as it is so close in proximity to his death. The eulogistic feel is best captured on the biblically named 'Lazarus', as the opening line sees Bowie sing "look up here, I'm in heaven", before the epic song continues with spine-tingling key changes and sullen brass as a background.

The harrowing video for the song has Bowie, looking gaunt, writhing on a sickbed with outstretched hands, before another Bowie appears, dressed in black, eventually disappearing into a coffin-like wardrobe – a man leaving *Blackstar* as one last gift to the world before ascending to his place amongst the gods.



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