

New York itself might as well be a concrete orchestra of clattering train tracks, piercing sirens, and bellowing crowds.

Manhattan is a borough of sounds just as diverse as its denizens. Against that backdrop, rapper, songwriter, and artist Skizzy Mars always set himself apart since his childhood in Harlem. With equal readiness to name check Morrissey, nod to big screen romances, and precisely spit an ode to a stranger on the subway, an outlier perspective fuels his full-length debut, *Alone Together* [Atlantic Records].

“I took a liking to being different,” the man born Myles Mills affirms. “For my whole life, I was the only black kid in mostly white schools on the Upper East Side. I never wanted to listen to what everyone else was listening to. In high school, a friend sent me a bunch of files with Beirut’s *Gulag Orkestar*, Animal Collective’s *Strawberry Jam*, and a bunch of things like that. That kind of songwriting was fascinating. Once I discovered A Tribe Called Quest, I got into rap. Records like Kid Cudi’s *Man on the Moon* and The Killers’ *Sam’s Town* can bring me back to a time in my life. That’s what I aim to do with my albums.”

At 17-years-old, he began making music in his childhood bedroom. Shortly after graduating high school in 2011, his introductory single “Douchebag” would ignite enthusiasm from numerous blogs. Skizzy built a fervent fan base by engaging a marathon of touring alongside the likes of G-Eazy, Logic, B.o.B, Ty Dolla $ign, and more. His 2013 mixtape *Phases* and 2014 follow-up *Pace* became fan favorites, while he started to infiltrate the mainstream on 2015’s *The Red Balloon Project* EP. Buoyed by the single “Time” [feat. G-Eazy & Olivver the Kid], it debuted at #4 on *Billboard*’s Top Rap Albums chart and peaked at #35 on the Top 200.

In the midst of sold out shows, he headed west to Los Angeles in order to record what would become *Alone Together* alongside longtime producer and creative kindred spirit Michael Keenan. Skizzy possessed distinct vision for the entire body of work from the start.

“Before we even began recording, the album title actually just hit me,” he admits. “I was at a table with a bunch of friends playing some drinking game, but we were all on our phones. I thought, ‘It’s amazing how we’re all together, but we’re also alone.’ The social media age is great because it connects everyone, but there’s a huge disconnect because you don’t know the people you’re talking to. On the one hand, the title reflects our generation. On the other hand, ‘Alone Together’ is a song by The Strokes—my favorite band of all-time.”

The single “Recognize” [feat. JoJo] illuminates his ability to bob-and-weave through styles with substance. Deft wordplay drives the verses as he makes admissions about a budding relationship before JoJo carries a striking, soulful refrain.

“It’s about having experiences with a lot of females that aren’t maybe as legit as other girls are,” he explains. “From a girl’s perspective, it’s telling a guy, ‘Respect me for who I am. Respect me for the fact that I’m more legit than everybody else.’ I’m realizing that. JoJo has an amazing voice. The song needed attitude on the chorus. She was perfect for it and pushed me to improve my lyrics. I thought we played really well off each other.”

On the heavenly hypnotic opener “Crash,” Skizzy rides the crest of a swelling hum before Pell’s hook kicks in. “It’s about—as they used to say—‘Going steady with a girl,’ but she’s out of your league,” he says. “She’s a bit hesitant, yet you assure her to ride the wave. At the same time, I’m in this crazy part of my life where people ask me how it feels to ‘Make it.’ I don’t feel that way though. I feel like it’s only the beginning, and I’m just going to ride the wave.”

Elsewhere, “Hit Me Harder” [feat. Jaymes Young] tempers a lush beat with sharp lyricism and an artful melody, while the energetic “I’m Ready” [feat. Olivver the Kid] showcases his mic prowess. Lithe acoustic guitar and finger-snap percussion punctuate “Girl on a Train” where Skizzy daydreams about what could be the lady of his dreams in the same rail car, conjuring a vision that wouldn’t be entirely out of place in a Nicholas Sparks novel.

“I took a glance at her and all of these thoughts came up,” he goes on. “I thought it was a very relatable topic. It’s one of the most stripped-down and honest records I’ve ever done.”

That honesty and steadfast declaration to breaking boundaries instantly drew the spotlight towards *Alone Together*. As soon as the album went live on iTunes, it captured #1 on the Top Hip-Hop/Rap Albums Chart and #3 on the Overall Top Albums Chart.

Now, Skizzy is giving fans his own sound and so much more.

“I want to make thought-provoking music,” he leaves off. “I want people to hear what I have to say and really think about it. I’m trying to be a voice of the youth. I’m trying to speak about things some people are too scared to think about and personal experiences they won’t open up about. I want everybody to have a better sense of who Skizzy Mars is as a person when they leave.”

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