

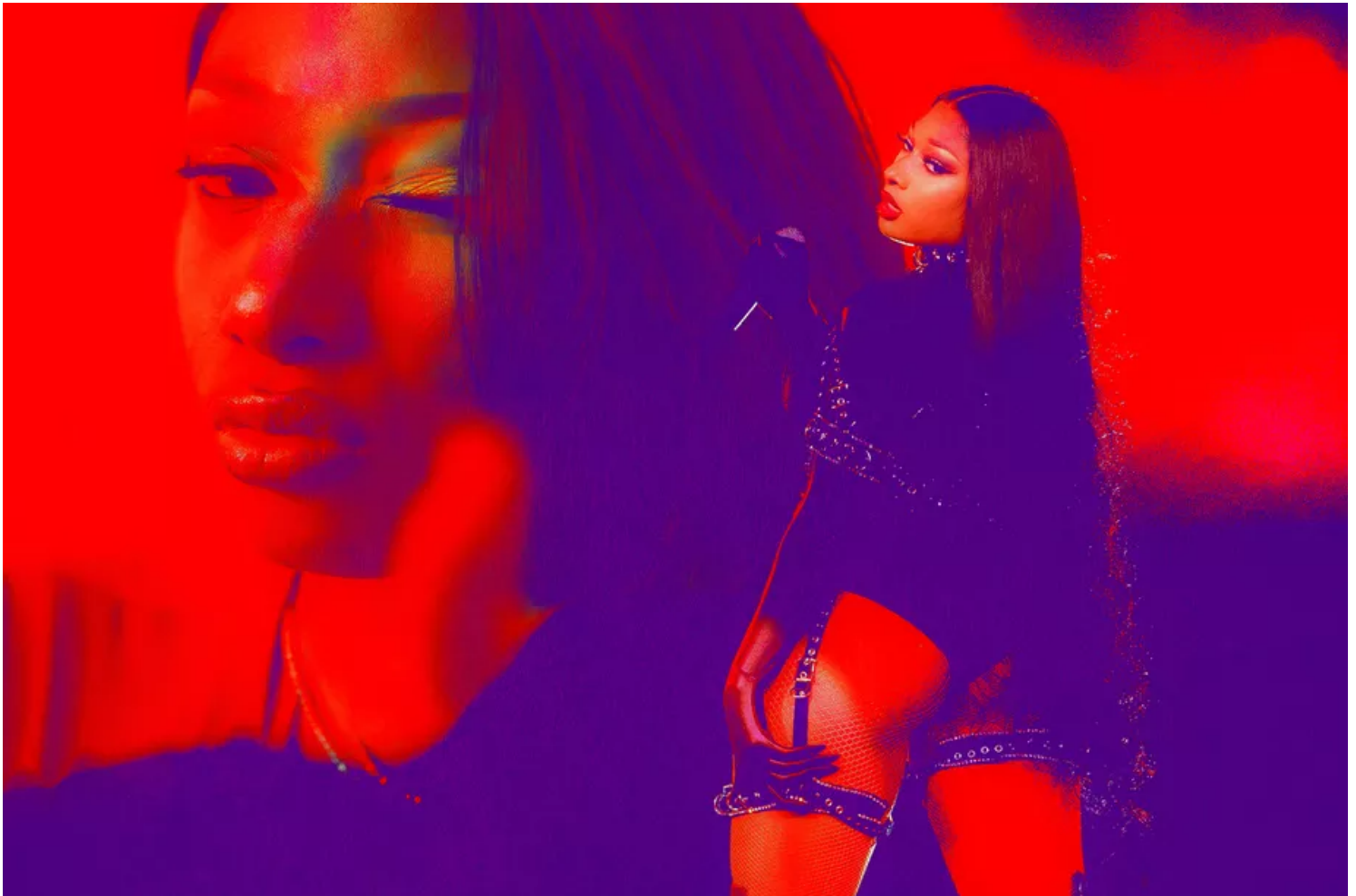
RAP MUSIC POP CULTURE

# Megan Thee Stallion Doesn't Exist to Meet Your Expectations

The rapper's debut album, 'Good News,' may not fulfill her promise, but after a traumatic year, it does exactly what she needed it to

By [Taylor Crumpton](#) | Nov 24, 2020, 3:48pm EST

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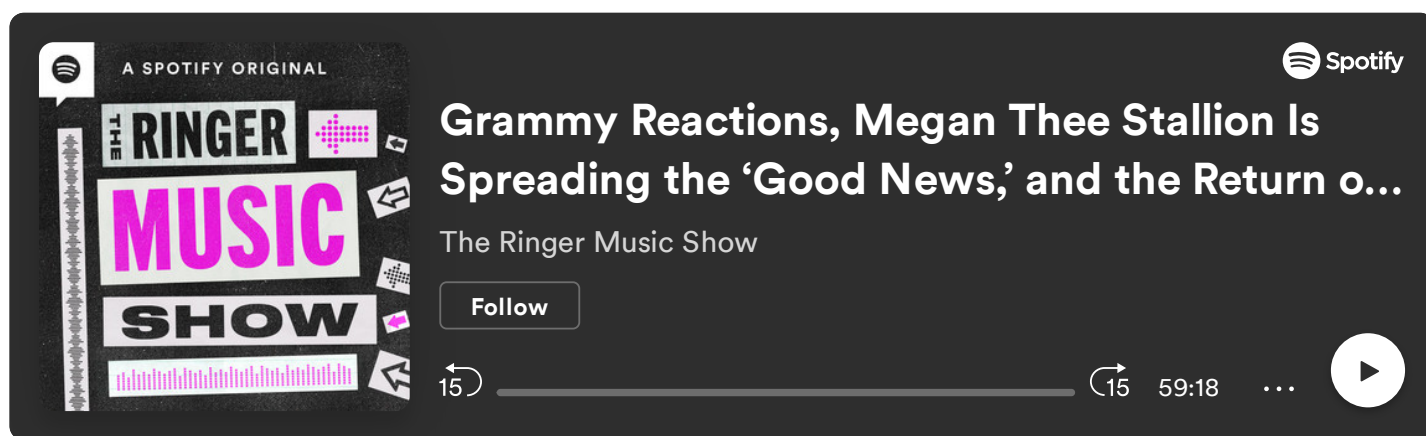
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The world expected a lot out of *Good News*, Megan Thee Stallion’s debut album.

In the week leading up to the album’s release this past Friday, critics, listeners, and “hotties” talked about what to expect from the highly anticipated project.

Comments ranged from parallels to *Pink Friday*, Nicki Minaj’s debut album that was released on the same day 10 years prior, to “Hasn’t she debuted several times?”—a reference to her existing projects, a plethora of features, mixtapes, and EPs.



Hours before *Good News*, the Houston rapper spoke with Nadeska Alexis on Apple Music about her “making a commitment” to an album and the timing behind its release. “It felt like something I needed to do,” she said. “Sometimes when you go through something, it helps you be able to speak about it better, and this year was a year for me where it felt like I wasn’t super protected. So I was like, ‘I can’t be the only woman that feels this way,’ so I wanted to put a piece out where other women of color can feel what I’m saying. It’s just not for me.”

2020 is Megan Thee Stallion’s most successful year to date, but it’s also the second year in a row that the 25-year-old has endured traumatic experiences while in the public eye.

Earlier in the year, when 1501 Entertainment threatened to halt the release of her music because the rapper wanted to renegotiate her contract, she filed a restraining order against the record label and shared her thoughts on Instagram. She went beyond the dispute with 1501's Carl Crawford and Houston rap impresario J. Prince and tackled the issue from a feminist perspective. "I will stand up for myself and won't allow two men to bully me, I am NO ONES PROPERTY. Y'all are choosing to highlight the issue of music splits...talk about everything else," she wrote.

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The legal issue dampened the reception to March's *Suga*, which was originally slated to be her debut album before it was repurposed as an EP. But "Savage," *Suga*'s third single, became the unofficial anthem of quarantine, thanks in part to Keara Wilson's viral TikTok dance challenge. Megan Thee Stallion won her showdown with her record label and secured a Beyoncé feature for the "Savage" remix. That collaboration was a long-awaited dream for the Houston native, one that marked a coronation by the biggest star the city ever produced.

Megan also spent much of the year establishing herself as a force for good beyond music, creating scholarship programs, criticizing Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron for his handling of the Breonna Taylor case, and writing a *New York Times* op-ed about her advocacy for Black women. Megan appeared to be unstoppable, until the night of July 12.

The LAPD responded to a "shots fired" incident in Hollywood. Megan Thee Stallion had been shot in the foot—reportedly by singer and rapper Tory Lanez—and taken to a local hospital for medical treatment. (Lanez, who denies shooting Megan, was

later charged with carrying a concealed weapon and assault with a semiautomatic handgun.) For weeks, Megan Thee Stallion was forced to relive the incident in public. False reports of what happened that night were published on blogs, leaked videos of the Los Angeles Police Department arriving on the scene appeared on Twitter, and memes about the incident spread across social media. She twice clarified the night's events on Instagram Live: In the first video, she tearfully spoke about "the worst experience of my life"; the second video was prompted by the release of *Daystar*, Lanez's album, which largely attacks her.

Megan Thee Stallion was in desperate need of good news. She spent the following months trying to live her best life. Mornings on the beach. Nights at the strip club. Parties with celebrities. A trip back home to Houston. Megan needed to escape not only the traumatic experiences of 2020, but also of the previous year, when her mother, Holly Thomas, died of brain cancer.

She needed time to rest and process. In the *Nadeska Show* interview, she described *Good News* as a combination of "all the Megans": Tina Snow, Hot Girl Meg, and Suga. Megan Thee Stallion takes charge on *Good News* as the sex-positive, shit-talking, banging-body 20-something who has the world in the palms of her hands.

*Good News* does not exist to fulfill anyone's expectations, except hers. (After all, she did say, "Fuck all the critics and fuck how they feel, I'm getting money, it is what it is" on "Realer," a standout from her 2019 mixtape *Fever*.) For critics, a debut album is the encapsulation of an artist's growth and development, from freestyles, mixtapes, and EPs into one singular project. It's reminiscent of the presentation at a debutante ball, where gawking spectators revel in one's formal introduction to society. In Megan's case, she floated down Billboard-charting singles and TikTok dance challenges to release a pop album.

The 17-track album—which features hip-hop’s biggest stars like DaBaby, City Girls, Lil Durk, Big Sean, and 2 Chainz; the sultry vocals of Beyoncé and SZA; and Jamaican singer Popcaan in collaboration with Mustard—is the fulfillment of her childhood fantasy of becoming a star—except with *Good News* she appears to be aiming for pop stardom over hip-hop.

For Megan Thee Stallion—an excellent MC who can freestyle powerfully off the dome—the decision to release a pop album reads as a form of escapism. At the beginning of hip-hop, MCs and DJs were responsible for innovation, an ideology that was lost in the commodification of hip-hop.

Hip-hop heads have characterized Megan as a necessary breath of life into the genre—her word choice, diction, and tone invoked an auditory sense of hip-hop’s days as a subculture, when lyrical content was highly valued and battles were instrumental to the development of rappers.

Megan is equipped to carry that legacy, but is it fair to place that responsibility onto a 25-year-old Black woman? *Good News* is a pop-centric album that favors Instagram captions in lieu of hooks, loud production that drowns out Megan’s lyricism, and a lack of individuality in the 17 tracks. No one is above criticism, not even Thee Hot Girl. After all, these are Megan’s expectations for the world: to see her as the young Black woman she is, not who it imagines her to be. ■

*Taylor Crumpton is a music, pop culture, and politics writer transplanted in Oakland, originally from Dallas. Taylor’s bylines have appeared in a variety of publications, including Pitchfork, Nylon, Playboy, Marie Claire, and others.*



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