

It's a brand new day for Cautious Clay, and he's taking it head on. The singer, songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist also known as Joshua Karpeh hits a galvanizing stride that unfolds hour-by-hour on his newest project, *The Hours: Morning*, a conceptual endeavor that's equal parts mixtape and emotive timetable. Facing daybreak with a certain pop precision that he's honed over the past decade, it's a project that further illuminates Karpeh as an artist whose strength lies in his dexterity.

Ever since debuting with "Cold War" in 2017, Karpeh's life has been committed to his craft. That single, an instantaneous success first on Soundcloud and later on streaming, allowed him to quit his day job and turn what was once a hobby into a sustaining career. A near-constant stream of music and subsequent opportunities soon followed: EPs, albums, collaborations, tours, festival slots, and an enviable number of film/TV syncs. His homegrown soul captured the attention of fans such as Taylor Swift (who interpolated "Cold War" on her song "London Boy"), John Mayer (who joined him on stage at The Fonda in 2019) and BLACKPINK's Rosé (who released a cover of "Wildfire" on Youtube in 2021).

With the abundance of mainstream success under his belt, Karpeh took his saxophone and swung to the left for his most recent full-length album, 2023's *KARPEH*. Dubbed "a radical reinvention" by NME, the LP was a cathartic exercise on cultural identity, as he traced his lineage from West African roots to Ohio upbringing and his Brooklyn present via conversations with family members. Six years of preparation were distilled into six days of recording alongside musicians such as Immanuel Wilkins, Julian Lage, Arooj Aftab, Ambrose Akinmusire, and Karpeh's uncle, Kai Eckhardt. The result was his most challenging and satisfying work to date, a full realization of the jazziest aspects of his discography flecked with R&B panache.

As his creative process evolved, so did his sense of normalcy when he moved to Philadelphia following the release of *KARPEH*. Suddenly time spent in Brooklyn — the place where Cautious Clay bloomed into the project it is today — became much more precious. Ritual became a necessity. Pushing the limits of a freeform existence that once felt natural, he began etching out a schedule that prioritized time away from the studio and diverted toward hobbies such as basketball and painting. Consequently, these limited windows of time for music provided the infrastructure for focused creativity, and soon enough, Karpeh had netted over 60 songs over the course of a year.

Of this batch, the eight that appear on *The Hours: Morning* were selected on the basis of which Karpeh associates with each waking hour. Lead single "No Champagne" radiates with the warmth of sunrise beaming through the window, casting light on hard truths in a relationship: "Whether it's morning or night, I see the waves taking their shape when your skin hits the light, I get a feeling I can't shake" he emotes on the song. "It was keeping me awake till six in the morning."

"I was really trying to set an image around defining the difference between expectation versus reality. Being in a space with someone that you care about and understanding what they want out of a relationship versus what you want out of a relationship," Karpeh says of the song. "When we're at our worst, how are we translating with that person in a room? When there's no champagne, when there's no real reason to celebrate - how are you actually connecting to me? How are we actually connecting to each other?"

Vacillating from bleary-eyed to bombastic, the eight pop-driven tracks on *The Hours: Morning* continue to steer the listener through an entirely subjective interpretation of daybreak, one he describes as "more conversational than intensely personal." Time may be a flat circle but the dimension that Karpeh is evoking through the ever-expanding scope of his work is indisputable.