

Twenty-four hours later, Cautious Clay isn't calling it a day just yet. Over the past decade, the singer, songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist Joshua Karpeh has become one of the most quietly influential and prolific artists of his generation. With the release of his newest project *The Hours: High Noon*, he's completed his most ambitious conceptual endeavor to date; a three-part project that's equal parts mixtape and emotive timetable, his subjective interpretation of a day unfolding moment-by-moment. Following the bleary-eyed pop precision of *Morning* and the funk-driven depth of *Night*, *High Noon* faces the heat of broad daylight with the same anthemic touch that defines the best of Cautious Clay's catalog.

Ever since debuting with "Cold War" in 2017, Karpeh has been fastidiously 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 opportunities followed subsequently: 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 last full-length LP, 2023's *KARPEH*. Dubbed "a radical reinvention" by NME, the record was a cathartic exercise on cultural identity, as he traced his lineage from West African roots to his 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 yet, 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 sixty songs over the course of a year.

Of this batch, the twenty-four that appear across each installment of *The Hours* were selected on the basis of which Karpeh associates with each hour, infusing *Morning* with daybreak optimism, and *Night* with a darker, sensuous undercurrent; the latter includes the smoldering "5th Floor," a song he wrote and produced with Raphael Saadiq, who then brought on Q-Tip for an unforgettable verse. With those first two segments of the project more obviously defined, *High Noon* proved to be a bit harder. "Midday is a nebulous time, so making songs for that felt challenging, and it took me a bit more time to address sonically," Karpeh says. "These songs are generally more laid back and downtempo, with some reggae influences."

Lyrically, they address a relationship held to the harsh light of day: how to embrace the detours and doubt that come with sustaining something that's meant to last. It's a feeling that comes out most candidly on the soft groove of "Trail Mix (3pm)," written with Braxton Cook, in which all trails lead back to the same special place: "whenever you find yourself a sensation that you never felt impossible to run from... can you change the subject slowly, so by the time I see what's in mind, I know I have to settle into what's meant to be." With their inclusion, *The Hours* ebbs and flows as a complete body of work, always demonstrating Karpeh's remarkable ability to craft songs that breathe with the humanity of their creator.