

"Based means being yourself. Not being scared of what people think about you. Not being afraid to do what you wanna do. Being positive. When I was younger, based was a negative term that meant like dopehead, or basehead. People used to make fun of me. They was like, "You're based." They'd use it as a negative. And what I did was turn that negative into a positive. I started embracing it like, "Yeah, I'm based." I made it mine. I embedded it in my head. Based is positive."

*Brandon "Lil B" McCartney
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It's a beautiful thing, really. Complete acceptance of others. A disregarding of cultural differences and personal bias. A pipe dream, sure, but noble in both its aims and ambitions. Lil B has made a name for himself promoting this open-minded agenda, and it was refreshing to see such a positive motive given the spotlight. Say what you want about his music, a discography almost 4000 songs deep, but you can't deny his influence will eventually produce a progressive effect on the hip-hop scene and music in general. The revelation of his latest full-length's title garnered both praise and criticism. While some celebrated I'm Gay as a message in favor of LGBT rights, Lil B reportedly received numerous death threats from disapproving parties.

Musically, I'm Gay is a cohesive collection of elegantly produced tracks, aided by Lil B's competent delivery and lyricism. While his flow may be shaky at times, he jumps from track to track with a surprising amount of confidence and emotion. Samples are pulled from an eclectic group of influences, ranging from the soulful bridge of Eric Benet's "Lost in Time" and Joe Hisaishi's famous composition "One Summer's Day" from the Studio Ghibli classic Spirited Away. Even with such an impressive range of sources, I'm Gay rarely falters in the transition between songs. Each and every track stands strong on its own, but still flow gently into each other with ease.

Stronger still are the assortment of themes Lil B touches on as I'm Gay rolls along. Album opener "Trapped in Prison" is a statement on poverty and global issues that offers a small glimpse of hope compressed between gritty scenes of despair. More saddened than confrontational, Lil B seems to want to break the listener down before using the rest of the album to build them up. "Unchain Me" is a complete turnaround from the first track, providing a triumphant image of freedom as Lil B details his rise to fame. It's an endearing message that seeks to provide hope to those still stuck beneath oppression. "Gon Be Okay" opens with a portion of President Obama's New Hampshire concession speech. While Lil B never explicitly speaks on the history-making election, he is hopeful in the changes he's seeing in the world around him. The track seems rather short when compared to its neighbors, but showcases fantastic production behind Lil B's competent lyricism.

I'm Gay reaches its apex with "I Hate Myself," a nearly six minute therapy session that sees the rapper bounce from self-deprecating to upbeat within its confines. He laments his own loss of culture, but begs those around him to not give into society's expectations. "I see myself in the mirror, but I don't see nothing," he offers dismally, fully exposing himself within the lyrics in order to further his campaign of respect and non-violence in the face of adversity. "I Hate Myself" is easily the most personable track on an album full of endearing messages, and contains a perfect microcosm of Lil B's outlook on life as well as I'm Gay's overall theme.

While I'm Gay is technically not a perfect album when dissected and put through the rigors of the normal reviewing process, it builds its foundation on a concentrated layer of heart and soul. Lil B lays his whole being bare over the course of the album's forty-four minutes, creating an icon of absolute sanity and positivity even in the most bizarre compositions and production. I'm Gay is as humbling as it is uplifting, and it provides an enduring portrait of a man truly in tune with the world around him.