

Hiss Golden Messenger

Quietly Blowing It MERGE



If there's a prevailing notion—a thesis, if you will—to *Quietly Blowing It*, **Hiss Golden Messenger's** latest

album, it's that, no matter how bad things seem, hope springs eternal. "So forward, children/ Never back down," frontman **M.C. Taylor** remarks on the optimistic singalong "Hardlytown." "What used to hurt you can't hurt you now/ The world feels broken, I ain't joking, babe/ Never back down." Written in the throes of the earliest months of lockdown in 2020, *Quietly Blowing It* is the sound of a man who, for the first time in a long time, had a moment to pause, but didn't back down. It's a culmination, in many ways, of the evolution of Hiss Golden Messenger, from the lo-fi kitchen recordings of 2010's *Bad Debt* to a rotating outfit of stellar musicians from North Carolina and beyond, one of the most reliable touring bands in the cosmic Americana space. Taylor has been on a musical journey since 2014's breakout *Lateness of Dancers*, fleshing out his sound and cast of supporting players, which on *Quietly Blowing It* includes Dawes' **Griffin** and **Taylor Goldsmith, Josh Kaufman,**

Buddy Miller and Scott Hirsch

(notably absent is Taylor's usual right-hand man Phil Cook). *Quietly Blowing It* follows on the heels of 2019's Grammy-nominated *Terms of Surrender* and carries that vibe and ethos forward. If you like cosmic country grooves, there's "The Great Mystifier." Looking for something soulful that recalls the sound of Richmond's Spacebomb House Band? Try "Way Back in the Way Back." "Glory Strums (Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner)" does not reference "Fire on the Mountain," but it does recall Fleetwood Mac's enduring "Dreams" in the way it floats along, mystically. Taylor has been sharing his record collection on social media, with a particular emphasis on dub and reggae. That influence comes through on album highlight "Mighty Dollar," a song about the pitfalls of capitalism set to an infectious reggae beat destined to become a standout live track. *Quietly Blowing It* ends with "Sanctuary," a John Prine-referencing balm that opens with a verse that might as well sum up Taylor's career to date: "Feeling bad/ Feeling blue/ Can't get out of my own mind/ But I know how to sing about it." *Rudi Greenberg*