

# UC Riverside

## UCR Honors Capstones 2022-2023

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The Average Life of Chun

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“THE AVERAGE LIFE OF CHUN”

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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University Honors  
University of California, Riverside

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## ABSTRACT

Would a good story be the same without a real struggle? Probably not. Struggle is part of the human experience and makes for good story telling. Good stories also include extraordinary elements that make the story interesting to those reading, listening, or watching. Many of the most successful rappers, and musicians in general, have stories of great hardship and traumatic experiences they were unfortunately forced to endure. But despite the pain caused by their struggles, these difficulties give artists' listeners a reason to root for them. These artists' experiences also infuse purpose, passion, and meaning into their art. But what if a musician has an "average", "easy" life that has not been filled with "real" trials and hardships? If their life is "normal", is there any purpose to the art they create? Do they have a "real" story to tell? These are some of the questions I address in my final capstone project, a musical album titled "The Average Life of CHUN". The album shares a loosely chronological narrative about my real-life experiences to convey a message about embracing the ordinary and realizing that everybody has a story to tell regardless of how "normal" their life may seem. My album was created under the mentorship of Professor Rickerby Hinds and Dr. Dana Kaufman. Due to an unexpected and prolonged absence by Dr. Kaufman, Professor Bradley Butterworth stepped in as my co-mentor for the last two months of the capstone creation process. My finished capstone was showcased to a live audience at a film screening event on Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at the Barbara and Art Culver Center of the Arts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to give all the honor and glory to God for the creation of this album. I believe He has gifted me with my musical abilities, and I would be nothing without Him and his provision. Time after time, God worked out seemingly impossible circumstances for the best, and I cannot be more grateful for His blessings.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my three, wonderful, faculty mentors, Professor Rickerby Hinds, Dr. Dana Kaufman, and Professor Bradley Butterworth. Without your precious wisdom and guidance, I would have never had the courage to pursue the album concept I was truly passionate about. I appreciate your nudges to push me to think deeper about the meaning of my project.

I would also like to thank Kevin Sustaita, the visionary film maker and editor who helped bring my album to life through simple, yet captivating visuals. Your creativity and resourcefulness are remarkable; I believe you have a bright career as a film maker ahead of you.

I would like to give a special thank you to Johnnie Gonzalez, the audio engineer who mixed and mastered each song on “The Average Life of CHUN”. Without your mixing capabilities, the album would have sounded unfinished, unpolished, and quite simply, inadequate. Additionally, I would like to thank the music producer Versus, who is credited with the production for the tracks “Slice of Life” and “The Art of Facing”, and 8een, who produced the tracks “Awkward” and “Shattered”.

Finally, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my mother, father, brother, sister, and every friend who has loved me and supported my creative endeavors over the last 7 years.

## “THE AVERAGE LIFE OF CHUN”

In March 2019, I was accepted into the University of California, Riverside (UCR). I was overjoyed when reading the email informing me, I had been admitted into the rapidly expanding school. UCR was my first choice, and in fact, I only applied to two other schools apart from UCR. Not too long after notifying my family of the good news, my brother suggested that I apply to the UCR Honors program. He was also a UCR student at the time, and he painted a pleasant picture of the Honors program and its significant benefits. He also made sure to include the detail that I would have to turn in a major project at the end of my senior year; this was the first time I heard about the capstone project.

I decided I would not worry too much about this project, as it was many years into the future, and applied to the UCR Honors program. In all honesty, I did not think I would be admitted into the program. I didn't believe my GPA, despite being a 3.9 in high school, was all that impressive, and felt similarly insecure about my personal statement responses. To my surprise, I received an email on April 26, 2019, stating “Congratulations! On behalf of the University of California, Riverside, we proudly offer you admission to join University Honors”. I was ecstatic about the decision and began looking forward to participating in the Honors program later that fall.

Time flew by, and before I knew it, it was September 2019, the month I would step onto the UCR campus as a newly admitted freshman student. From my early freshman days, I began throwing around ideas about what I would pursue as my capstone project. And in all honesty, it didn't take much thinking to reach this decision: “My capstone will be a music album”. At that point in time, I had already been making music, specifically Hip-Hop/Rap music, since December 2015. I had made strides of improvement in lyricism, beat-making, and storytelling

since my that year, and now I would only improve throughout the course of my college journey. Although I had been admitted into UCR as a Business Administration major, I decided, when the time came to make my capstone, I wanted to look forward to working on my project. I didn't want working on my capstone to be a chore or be constantly worried about the project's deadline. And as much as my love for business grew over my undergraduate experience, my desire to make an album never fizzled out; it only grew stronger. But despite knowing from my first year that I wanted to create a Hip-Hop album for my capstone, there was one thing I didn't know: what the album was going to be about.

Time didn't exactly fly by (I and billions of people experienced an entire global pandemic), but eventually, I got to my Junior year of college. And as soon as I knew it, I was sitting down at my desk watching HNPG 150 lectures held through Zoom in Winter Quarter 2022. HNPG 150 was the course where I would need to formally propose a capstone idea to the class and would need to find a faculty mentor to oversee my project. At this point, my desire to make an album was stronger than ever. The only problem was I still didn't have a clear idea of what the album was going to be about. The time to propose my preliminary capstone project idea was closing in, so I quickly formulated a couple of potential album concepts that might suffice. I was very stuck on the idea that my album needed to have scholarly research to back it up and to add credibility to my project abstract. After some thought, I finally landed on an idea.

I decided I would write about the life of a fictional musician who adapted his sound to the decade he was living in. For example, if the time period was the 80s, he would make 80s synthesizer heavy music. In the 90s he would make 90s R&B, in the 2000s he would make alternative rock, and so on and so forth. I was even going to get a bit experimental and try to predict the sounds of future by taking this musician's story well past the year 2030. I was

satisfied with this concept, and I proposed this idea to my HNPG 150 professor and fellow classmates. I also proposed this idea to about 8 full-time and assistant UCR professors who I thought might be a good fit to oversee my project. With a real idea in hand and a number of professors that I had reached out to, I was feeling pretty good about the future of my capstone. But little did I know that the road of making my album would be one full of obstacles and setbacks.

I must be transparent; I didn't believe it would be so difficult to find a faculty mentor. Not long after sending out emails asking professors from a plethora of disciplines to oversee my project, I began receiving emails from many of these professors turning me down. Email after email, I read messages beginning with "Sorry", "My apologies", "I regret to inform you", and other similar words. Although all of these professors had valid reasons to turn me down, and none of them belittled my ideas, I couldn't help but feel a sense of disappointment and frustration that I couldn't find a faculty mentor. At some point, I began worrying that I might not be able to find a mentor before the deadline. But thankfully, this wasn't the case. As the deadline drew closer and closer, I received an email from a professor that surprised me. Although her email was another rejection message, she did something no other professor had done so far. After letting me know she couldn't be my mentor, she provided me with two recommendations for professors that she believed would be a good fit for me. Looking in retrospect, it is no coincidence that these two professors happened to be Professor Rickerby Hinds and Dr. Dana Kaufman.

To my surprise, Professor Rickerby Hinds happened to be a Hip-Hop Theater professor. Dr. Dana Kaufman was an Opera specialist, which, although not exactly Hip-Hop, would still be very relevant from a story telling perspective. I reached out to these two professors, and unlike

the other six or so that turned me down, both Rickerby and Dana expressed interest in overseeing my project. I set up a meeting with both professors and thankfully, both meetings turned out excellent. I thoroughly enjoyed speaking with Rickerby and Dana about many different topics, some which weren't even directly tied to my capstone. When the time came to choose my faculty mentor, I was conflicted about who to choose. Not wanting to turn one down, I chose both. Professor Hinds would serve as my main faculty mentor and Dr. Kaufman would assume the role of a co-mentor. At last, I had found mentors to help me, but more challenges would lie ahead in the album creation process.

I began meeting with Rickerby and Dana to discuss my capstone not long after I had confirmed them as my mentors. We continued our discussion of the original capstone idea I had proposed to them. But as any good mentor should do, both Professor Hinds and Dr. Kaufman began to open my eyes to some of the issues with my idea. They both enjoyed my story about the life of a fictional musician, but they both believed trying to explore multiple genres through multiple decades was too ambitious for the time frame I had. They also pointed out that my story lacked an overarching meaning and that my main character's central motivation was absent. Their constructive criticism forced me to go back to the drawing board and rework some of the elements of my story. After much thought and additional conversations with my mentors, I reworked my first idea into a completely new concept. I decided I would tell the story of a man, who I would later name Eli Santos, that came from a family riddled by generational fatherlessness. This generational curse would affect Eli as his father was absent in his childhood, leaving Eli and his single mother to try their best to survive in a cruel world. A young Eli Santos would cope with the effects of his father's absence by making music, specifically, Hip-Hop

music. To make a long story short, Eli would eventually become a successful musician, would reconcile with his father, and would break the curse of father absenteeism in his lineage.

For a long time, I was satisfied with this idea. I continued discussing this idea with mentors in the Spring Quarter of 2022. I started making decisions about the types of sounds I would use in the album and started producing instrumentals. I decided I would produce most of the instrumentals in the album and would purchase some beat leases from a website called Beatstars. Beatstars is a website where producers from all over the globe upload beats they've produced and put leases up for sale for artists to purchase and use in their music. In addition to purchasing beat leases, I purchased many sample packs on the The Drum Broker, a site where world-class producers sell exclusive samples to use in beats. Eventually, Summer 2022 came along, and I continued to think about the story of Eli Santos. By the end of summer break, I had a full story arc for Eli Santos and a rough outline of how the album would play out. I also had multiple instrumentals, some being rough ideas and others fully completed, and even had some lyrics written.

In Fall 2022, I took everything I had worked on and decided I would discuss it with Dr. Kaufman first. I had a meeting in her office where I told her the outline of my fictional story. I went through as many details as I could, although many times in that meeting, I found myself forgetting key plot points and fumbling over my words. By verbally reciting the story I realized just how convoluted my narrative actually was. After I was finished speaking, Dr. Kaufman shared her honest thoughts with me. She was all for the idea, but she asked me something that surprised me. She asked me if I was truly passionate about my story, or if I had simply been holding on to the idea because I had spent a lot of time thinking about it. And the more I thought about, I realized that, in fact, I wasn't all too passionate about Eli Santos' life story. Why?

Because I knew Eli's story wasn't *my* story. Unlike Eli, I was blessed to have a wonderful mother and father in my life who loved (and still love) me very dearly and were always present. Part of Eli's story would also be that he grew up in a hard environment, but I had the privilege of growing up in a safe, humble neighborhood in Cypress, California. My life was essentially the complete opposite of Eli's, and stepping into the shoes of a character who didn't actually exist wasn't something I was excited about. I knew I would never be able to fully understand this fictional character or relate to his struggles.

In all honesty, what I really wanted to talk about was my own life. But back in Winter 2022, I thought my life wasn't interesting enough and wouldn't be taken seriously without scholarly research to back it up. So, I formulated an idea that had at least some research to support it. My second idea, the story of Eli Santos, had even more research behind it with thousands of scholarly articles written about the negative effects of father absenteeism. But as Dr. Kaufman helped me to realize, I wasn't passionate about either of my first two ideas despite the research supporting them. Dr. Kaufman recommended that I don't worry about the research but focus my energy and efforts to landing on a topic I was passionate about. I had a similar discussion with Professor Hinds, who also advised me to pursue an idea I was truly passionate about. It was during a Fall 2022 meeting with Rickerby where I had an epiphany.

I realized that I was trying to be like other rappers. A lot of rappers unfortunately had to experience extremely difficult upbringings. Many grew up in ruthless, poverty-stricken neighborhoods with unforgiving individuals willing to do anything to survive. It's these types of environments and circumstances that shape many rappers and their stories. When these rappers share their stories with the world, their experiences resonate with many people, and their listeners root for them, wanting to see them win. I thought could compensate for a lack of a

difficult upbringing by stepping into the shoes of a man who *did* experience “real” trials and struggles. But as I’ve said before, I couldn’t fully relate to this fictional man, and creating an album about a life I didn’t have would be disingenuous. Then I thought, what if I take the opposite approach? Instead of telling a story about a difficult life, what if I tell a story about an “easy” life? What if I simply tell the story of my life? I shared the new idea with my mentors, and they quickly picked up my passion and enthusiasm towards the idea. On that day, “The Average Life of CHUN” was born, and the rest is history.

## ALBUM TRACK LIST

**1. Average (4:09)**

Produced by CHUN  
Mixed and Mastered by J-Notez  
Visual Shot and Directed by Kevin Sustaita

**2. Slice of Life (4:15)**

Produced by Versus  
Mixed and Mastered by J-Notez  
Visual Shot and Directed by Kevin Sustaita

**3. Awkward (3:06)**

Produced by 8een  
Mixed and Mastered by J-Notez  
Visual Shot and Directed by Kevin Sustaita

**4. Pressure (3:21)**

Produced by CHUN  
Mixed and Mastered by J-Notez  
Visual Shot and Directed by Kevin Sustaita

**5. Dreams (3:38)**

Produced by CHUN  
Mixed and Mastered by J-Notez  
Visual Shot and Directed by Kevin Sustaita

**6. Shattered (2:31)**

Produced by 8een  
Mixed and Mastered by J-Notez  
Visual Shot and Directed by Kevin Sustaita

**7. The Art of Facing (6:21)**

Produced by Versus  
Mixed and Mastered by J-Notez  
Visual Shot and Directed by Kevin Sustaita

## LYRICS

### Track 1: "Average"

Written by Jonathan Chun

Produced by CHUN

#### [Intro]

*A heartbeat emerges from the silence. Rhodes begin to play as a new life is born. Hospital ambience like monitoring beeps and nurses chatting can be heard. After a few bars, a piano begins to play.*

#### [Verse One]

Came out the womb with minor complications

Thank God ma's cesarean was smooth operation

No IV's in me or ventilators

Or parents hyperventilatin' cause the M.D. said "You might need to bury him later"

August 10, 01'

Went down the elevator and left OC Global Medical a healthy son

The drive home was smoother than my newborn skin

Exited the 55 to a humble residence

No, I didn't grow up in the projects, the slums, Sodom

Where rocks get slung and blocks gettin' spun

By some runnin' round' with choppas

More like a typical Southern California Suburb

Where birds and sirens ain't disturb the silence

Where crime is minimal and kids can shoot hoops

Without fear of violence from criminals with "do-do-doos"

Only saw shots like that on the news and in the movies

A hard environment wasn't part of my origin story

I won't forge it in to gain your pity or glory

Life in the city of Orange was pretty ordinary, even boring

Wasn't much different when I moved to Cypress in 03'  
I'm grateful though, I had everything I needed  
Like a roof over my head, and a bed to sleep in  
AC on the scorching days and heat on the cold nights  
Food on the table keepin' my stomach satisfied  
Man, at the time it was only four of us  
But I blinked my little eyes and poof, we were a force of five  
Fortified in our home, man those times were some dreams  
I remember finding joy in the simple things  
Playing hide-and-seek round' the house with my siblings  
Making friends, learning lessons at King Elementary  
Playing with my LEGO's spending hours just imagining  
Fantasies that could be  
Man, I made so many memories in OC with my family  
Thank God those times were filled with routine and not tragedy

**[Break]**

*Audio from a video plays during this part.*

**[Verse Two]**

Fast forward, it's fall, 2011  
My fam and I packed our things  
Headed east down the 91 to the I.E.  
No place on Earth is Heaven, but,  
It was evident my new home was even better than my old residence  
Everything was new  
New crib, new neighbors, new friends, new school  
New papers, new flavors, new tools  
But after years began flyin' by and I began to settle in  
My new life became more and more predictable

Yeah, I admit  
Life hasn't been that different since  
It ain't extraordinary  
But I ain't trippin' I'm just glad to be alive  
Cause' this morning I could've been mourned in a mortuary  
But I woke up just fine  
It's just that lately I've had questions on my mind  
Questions that make me question the reason I write  
Like if my life ain't one of pain and struggle  
And if I ain't ever have to hustle in these streets  
Will anyone take my lyrics seriously?  
Cause many rappers in the industry had to shovel their way out the mud  
But no, that just isn't me  
CHUN, your life isn't perfect but sure isn't difficult  
Problems are trivial, minuscule  
You didn't start from the bottom or come from the pinnacle  
You from the middle, fool  
Your life is typical  
No, you don't got a real story to tell if you ain't face trials from hell  
If you don't got real conflict or enemies, you ain't not hero  
So please stop pretendin' your music is savin' the people  
This art just arbitrary nonsense  
Spit by an "innocent calm kid"  
You from Corona, not Compton  
Quit talkin'  
Hey, am I average?  
"You're just average"  
Am I average?  
"You're just average"  
Am I average?

“You’re just average”

“You’re just average”

“You’re just average”

“You’re just average”

**[Outro]**

*Jonathan wakes up from his sleep and debates if he should press snooze or get up to get ready for school.*

***End of the song***

## **Track 2: “Slice of Life”**

Written by Jonathan Chun

Produced by Versus

### **[Intro]**

Get up, wake up

Get up, wake up

Get up, wake up

Get up, wake up

Get up, wake up (and so it begins)

Get up, wake up (and so it begins)

Get up, wake up (and so it begins)

Get up, wake up (and so it begins)

### **[Chorus]**

I just wake up (work)

Eat up (sleep)

Go to school, then I cook up some beats

Kick it with my friends, go home, repeat

My life ain't a thriller, it's bittersweet, yeah

This a slice of life (uh-huh)

This a slice of life (uh-huh)

This a slice of Life (uh-huh)

This a slice of Life (uh-huh)

Ooh, slide you a piece of my routine

Yo, this really how I do things

No, my life ain't a movie, yeah yeah

This a slice of life (uh-huh)

This a slice of life (uh-huh)

This a slice of Life (uh-huh)

This a slice of Life (uh-huh)

**[Verse One]**

Wake up every morning since 01'  
It's 6:01, still got O2 in my 2 lungs today  
Should I press snooze?  
Too late  
Got Business 151 in 2 hours  
So I hop out my bed  
Half awake, half dead  
Hair messed up, and my breath?  
Ugh  
Grab the Crest and I brush  
“Err”, Stomach growl loud, hush  
Need the breakfast  
Just heat up a burrito with chorizo  
Then I bow my head  
“Thank you God for the blessings”  
Eat it up, in a rush, stuffed  
Next, take a shower and I shave  
Now, need to dress  
Should I wear my best fit to impress?  
Should I rock the AJ's or the ALD's?  
The cargo pants or the straight jeans?  
The Fear of God long sleeve or the plain white tee?  
Woah, is its 7:23?  
Pack my bag and my lunch, grab the keys  
Yeah it's time to depart  
Hop in the car  
Swivel the key

Ignition sparks  
Sis' gon' ride shotgun  
I unlock her door  
We pray to the Lord for Protection and heavenly blessings  
Yeah, then I accelerate (skrrt)  
Greenlight, stop  
Red light, cop  
Yield sign  
Turn signal  
Wheels might pop  
Low gas  
Hope I don't blow no gasket  
Traffic tragic  
Accidents gon' happen  
Cutting off  
Merge, swerve, honk  
then we park at UCR campus  
It's 7:48  
Got like 12 minutes fo' I'm late  
Hit the 100 meter  
Wind kissin' my face  
Why this guy in my way?  
Going in for the win  
Step inside the class last minute  
Sheesh, it's a buzzer-beater  
Sit down, unpack  
"Lord, I need a breather"

**[Chorus]**

I just wake up (work)

Eat up (sleep)  
Go to school, then I cook up some beats  
Kick it with my friends, go home, repeat  
My life ain't a thriller, it's bittersweet, yeah  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)  
Ooh, slide you a piece of my routine  
Yo, this really how I do things  
No, my life ain't a movie, yeah yeah  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)

**[Verse Two]**

"Business, business, numbers"  
All I hear from professor  
"Do you understand?"  
I just nod my head like "yes sir"  
But no, I really don't  
Hoping he don't call my name  
Know that every other student be thinking the same  
Lost in a daydream  
"Dang, Mia looking amazing"  
"Imagine if I was like 'Baby, you wanna go out on a date with me?'"  
"See you next week, class"  
Pack up, Next one  
"See you next week class"

Thank God, finally done with that  
Get up, leave class, walk around campus  
Spot my homies, give em' dap  
"Ayo what's happening?!"  
I Kick it with them for a minute  
Check my phone for the time  
"K, See y'all later I got work to finish"  
Find a spot  
Whip out my laptop  
Open up Logic Pro X  
Then start messin' with the drums, the keys, the samples  
The 808's banging like sheesh  
Inspiration flamin'  
Pull my pen out  
Gettin' silly with the sayings  
Playin' with the schemes and phonemes  
Concentrated train of thought  
Feeding my artistic cravings, then I pause  
It's already 3:00 clock  
Hop in the whip again  
Pull up to Goodwin's Organics  
I put on my forest green uniform  
Clock in, then begin to work  
I face bottles and Boxes and Stock groceries  
Ring up customers  
And if they ring the bell I help out with their needs  
Work together with the homie Eli  
Till' we close for the night  
Then I finally go  
Contemplate bout' my day on the ride home

Man, by God's grace, I do make it safe  
Can't wait for tomorrow

**[Chorus]**

I just wake up (work)  
Eat up (sleep)  
Go to school, then I cook up some beats  
Kick it with my friends, go home, repeat  
My life ain't a thriller, it's bittersweet, yeah  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)  
Ooh, slide you a piece of my routine  
Yo, this really how I do things  
No, my life ain't a movie, yeah yeah  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)  
This a slice of Life (uh-huh)

**[Outro]**

*Jonathan gets a call from his brother. His brother asks if he can stop by the store to get some groceries. Jonathan agrees and starts making his way to the grocery store.*

***End of the song***

### **Track 3: “Awkward”**

Written by Jonathan Chun

Produced by 8een

#### **[Intro]**

*Jonathan is at the store buying groceries when he spots the girl he has a crush on not too far away. Jonathan immediately panics and tries to avoid her and any awkward interactions.*

*Jonathan: “Ok I got the milk, let me put it in there, I just need some bread bu-oh my. Oh, shoot, what is she doing here? Oh my gosh, hopefully, she doesn’t see me. Oh, I’m not ready for this, nah.”*

#### **[Chorus]**

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

I’m a little bit awkward

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

I’m a little bit awkward

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

I’m a little bit awkward

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

I’m a little bit awkward

**[Verse One]**

Stroll inside the store for some groceries  
But I'm paranoid, I feel like someone scopin' me  
I'm in aisle 10 and I'm browsing bread  
That's when I see my friend  
I turn my head then hope she don't notice me  
"Oh no, she's approaching me!"  
I hear the footsteps  
Right, left  
Deep breath  
She know it's me  
I try to flee the scene without seeming so mean  
My social battery on low power mode  
"Oh no, she just poked my shoulder"  
My heart beating speedily  
Feel a rush of dopamine cause' my crush is two steps away from me  
I turn around, palms sweaty, eyes set on the ground  
Face twitching, I open my dry mouth  
"Bye, nice to meet you"  
"I-I mean nice to-nice to-nice to see you"  
She looks at me confused  
"Jonathan, are you ok?"  
I said "Yeah, I'm pretty cool"  
Didn't know what else to say  
So I stood there silent for like twenty seconds  
"Yeah, Jon, being smooth wasn't something you were blessed with"

**[Pre-Chorus]**

Hey, hey, hey  
I apologize if I don't know what to say

Hey, hey, hey  
I apologize if I make you feel some type of way  
Hey, hey, I admit it  
I'm a little awkward and I don't know if it's wicked  
Maybe I should quit the fuss and accept it  
Yeah

**[Chorus]**

I'm a little bit eccentric  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah  
I'm a little bit eccentric  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah  
I'm a little bit eccentric  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah  
I'm a little bit eccentric  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah  
Woah, woah

**[Verse Two]**

Do people cringe when I st-st-stutter?  
Or tell a joke that lands in the gutter?  
Ooh, I wish I was butter smooth with it  
But I get bu-bu-butterflies inside my stomach when I conversate with others

My cheeks, they blush  
My knees, they buckle  
My lips, they quiver  
I shake and shiver  
Fidget with my fingers like a nervous tick  
And I only get more nervous wondering if some will notice it  
Like, "Bro, what's up with the awkwardness?"  
"AWKWARD"  
But is that label really a curse?  
What if I'm just an introvert  
I know that everyone fumbles their words  
Everyone, "wait you go first"  
Talks at the same time sometimes  
We make silence a crime  
But we all quiet with the stranger in the elevator  
So if we don't know what to say, can you really hate us?  
We do embarrassing things that make us feel ashamed but,  
Awkwardness ain't a mistake  
It's a trait  
It don't gotta be shunned  
It gotta be embraced

**[Pre-Chorus]**

Hey, hey, hey  
I apologize if I don't know what to say  
Hey, hey, hey  
I apologize if I make you feel some type of way  
Hey, hey, I admit it  
I'm a little awkward and I don't know if it's wicked  
Maybe I should quit the fuss and accept it

Yeah

**[Chorus]**

I'm a little bit eccentric

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

I'm a little bit eccentric

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

I'm a little bit eccentric

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

I'm a little bit eccentric

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

Woah, woah

**[Outro]**

*Jonathan awkwardly remarks that the weather is nice*

***End of the song***

## **Track 4: “Pressure”**

Written by Jonathan Chun

Produced by CHUN

### **[Intro]**

*Jonathan has an awkward interaction with his friends. He proceeds to go to class and regrets his small talk. One of Jonathan’s professors speaks to his class about an upcoming final. After he dismisses the class, he pulls Jonathan aside to talk express disappointment towards his grade.*

### **[Verse One]**

I've got a final tomorrow, it's worth a third of my score  
If I don't ace the exam I'll need to repeat the course  
So I force myself to study, but, it's kinda boring  
I'd rather binge YouTube  
“I'll just study in the morning”  
It's 4 am  
Still got 14 formulas to memorize, but I can't recall a single one  
Soon my cheek meets the textbook, I'm snoring  
I just ignore my self-inflicted situation and not face it  
When did I engage in this affair with procrastination?  
I miss the simple days back in elementary  
When school wasn't comparable to penitentiary  
When I turned my homework in on time,  
Aced my tests, and read 3 grades ahead of me  
When I received awards each semester for my academic excellence  
Nowadays I pray professor's curve will be enough to get me a C  
Cause' those get degrees, you feel?  
The bare minimum is my field of expertise  
So no need to achieve anything above  
I'll just go back to sleep

Please, do not disturb my peace

**[Chorus]**

I just want a break from all the stress

From all the grades

From all the pressure

All of the pressure, yeah

Pressure weighs me down

Pressure weighs me down

Pressure weighs me down

Pressure weighs me down

**[Verse Two]**

My ignorance won't fix the pressure to be exceptional

Summa cum laude, straight As be the threshold

Sometimes I'm ashamed that my major ain't medicine

Do they need to see M.D. or Ph.D. after my name to believe I'm intelligent?

I once heard a girl say business is a plan B profession for science rejects

She said it in jest but it was hard to ingest it

I yearn to earn respect

To impress my friends

The girl I like, and the execs that gon write my check

I feel the pressure to hide my stress and still perform

To break ground, yet to conform

The pressure to make the illest art on the side and to please the Lord with the realest heart inside

To have my own real estate before my thirties

By then I gotta be working at a top 100 firm earning 100k

I wanna be the pride of my parents

They didn't get no average life

Blood, sweat, and sacrifice the price they paid for me

I don't them to be ashamed of me  
But tell you what  
I'm not gonna burn myself with loans to earn a third degree

**[Chorus]**

I just want a break from all the stress  
From all the grades  
From all the pressure  
All of the pressure, yeah  
Pressure weighs me down  
Pressure weighs me down  
Pressure weighs me down  
Pressure weighs me down

**[Outro]**

*A saxophone plays a solo.*

***End of the song***

## **Track 5: “Dreams”**

Written by Jonathan Chun

Produced by CHUN

### **[Intro]**

*Jonathan gets ready to go to bed. He wishes his brother a good night and falls asleep. Jonathan enters the REM state and is fully immersed in a dream. He dreams about being on tour in a stadium about to perform for his fans.*

### **[Chorus]**

Chase yo' dreams

Chase yo' dreams

Finna go get em' by any means

They fo' you, they fo' me

We gon' reach our destiny

We don't wanna hear your doubts

Bag em' up and throw em' out

They gon' see, they gon' see

We gon' get it guaranteed

### **[Chorus]**

Been tryna run up the streams since 2018

In 23, I might just blow

Might take the show from my lawn to Milan to Paris to London

We tourin' the world

God on my side

I don't need no crystals or blood oaths or rituals

I'll keep my soul

You can have the fame

Me, Imma build up some wealth for my future kin all on the low

Yeah, yeah

If the bars don't connect, they won't receive the message

I wanna build a legacy that's gon' be cemented

But not on no tombstone or plaque

I want that eternal legacy, please, up in heaven

These dreams be livin' eons beyond the cemetery

No, they don't ever sleep, so

**[Chorus]**

Chase yo' dreams

Chase yo' dreams

Finna go get em' by any means

They fo' you, they fo' me

We gon' reach our destiny

We don't wanna hear your doubts

Bag em up and throw em' out

They gon' see, they gon' see

We gon' get it guaranteed

**[Verse 2]**

Let me specify the vision

I wanna build a business and carve a brand for myself

No copyright infringement

Whether marketing or music

I wanna multiply the digits in my division

Then proceed to divide the spoils for my future wife and children

Yeah, I wanna put a diamond ring on a dime and sing on my wedding night

No, a fling ain't my type of thing

I wanna build a bond with her and never bail

That's loyalty

I don't plan to pay no divorce lawyer fees  
I plan to be present for my kids like my parents before me  
Yes, I'll grind hard, but won't let work get in between my family  
They need a provider, priest, and protector  
If God stewards me with possessions, I ain't gon' let em' possess me  
I know vanity leads to insanity  
I gotta please God  
Honor my parents  
Bring pride to the people that love me  
I wanna get my degree and still run up the streams on my free time  
It's lovely  
How nowadays all you do need is a phone or computer to make it in music  
We students of Google  
We leverage our tools we don't fool with these dreams  
We really pursue em'  
If I wanna make it, know I gotta put the work in  
Whatever the profession, so I'll put in that work  
I wanna give it all I got,  
Life is gonna end  
I don't wanna have regrets when they put in the dirt  
Huh, yeah  
I'm finna chase my dreams, huh  
When I awake from sleep, huh  
Oh yeah they taste so sweet, uh  
I'm 21, most of my life I've been afraid to rock the boat  
But it's time to man up and step outside my comfort zone  
When I die and my loved ones sit at my funeral  
I want them to end the eulogy by saying  
"and that's why he's the goat"

**[Outro]**

“That’s what I’m talking about”

“That’s why he’s the M.V.P.”

“That’s why he’s the G.O.A.T.”

“The G.O.A.T.”

*Drums play while shattering glass can be heard following a car crash.*

***End of the song***

## **Track 6: “Shattered”**

Written by Jonathan Chun

Produced by 8een

### **[Verse]**

WAKE UP

Let me snap you back to reality

Those dreams are cute, but Jonathan, you know they childish

Happily ever after?

You wild if you think that'd actually manifest

I pray you don't cosign that manifestation bull ish

You foolish if you think you think you can speak your dreams into the universe

You think persistence will build your dreams?

I agree mediocrity makes a mockery of greatness

But this game ain't a meritocracy

It's not about the product as much as it's bout' the marketing

You disagree?

Well, let's check your stats

You've been at this since 2015 and spent well over 1500 Washingtons for a return of \$70 dollars

Most of your songs don't crack 1,000 streams

You only have 470 Instagram followers

You ain't even on TikTok

Ah, can you just acknowledge the truth?

Numbers on the spreadsheet don't lie, you do not excel

Don't try to deny the proof

Oh, well

You might as well shoot for that other stupid dream you had when you were 5

When you wished to be in the NBA

The odds are about the same as making it in music

Near Impossible

Yeah, technology has given you a thousand more tools  
But millions of more obstacles too  
Cause' everybody and they mama wanna rap like you  
The market ain't optimal  
Chun, your music won't ever be profitable  
Don't you know a thing or two about that as a business major?  
Oh, I forgot, you don't pay attention in class and turn in last minute papers  
Praying professor will play the saviour and save your grade with a curve  
Thank him for the favor  
CHUN, you not a victim you're the perpetrator  
Instead of fantasizing about Mia 24/7 you should apply your mind to studying for tests  
Man, Mia probably don't even like you  
She got her priorities right, her standards high  
She definitely a solid 10, but you a solid two  
Get used to solitude  
He gon' be your best friend when your old and fragile  
In your rocking chair playing solitaire  
You know you're an awkward dude  
And even though you try to convince yourself it ain't wrong  
You know it's an issue  
Cause' what's gon happen when you at the business meeting with those execs  
You wanna impress and you start stuttering  
Missing key details, forgetting what they just said  
Cause' you nervous out your mind  
Give em' a weak, sweaty handshake at the end  
They might even get offended and say  
"We regret to inform you that our answer ain't yes"  
Now you lost a critical deal and the boss calls you to his office with a slip  
Tells you "Jonathan, I'm sorry, but today's your last shift"  
Now how are you gon' provide for your kids?

It's only you cause your wife dipped since you were never home  
Don't tell me it's not possible that divorce rate at 50%  
You say you wanna be the G.O.A.T., but you know that's bull  
My advice to you, burn your dreams  
Reality is not a fool  
I'm just being real with you, you know where you stand  
You just a common, regular, comfortable, generic, average man

*End of the song*

## **Track 7: “The Art of Facing”**

Written by Jonathan Chun

Produced by Versus

### **[Intro]**

*A drum break plays with grocery store ambience in the back.*

### **[Verse]**

Another typical Wednesday afternoon

Clock in a 3:30, not a minute late, not a minute soon

First thing I do is cruise around the grocery store and assess the shelves

Analyzing if the wellness products look well

As of now, they could use a bit of facing

That term refers to the look of the product placement and organization

A factor that affects our sales

On a scale of one to 5, the store could use a level 4 facelift

But to be honest, right now, I'm feeling complacent (Lazy)

I stare at the crooked pasta boxes,

Knocked-over Kombucha bottles

Scattered veggies and fruit

A lot of shelves looking hollow cause' they ain't been stocked in a min'

I pause, take a deep breath

Got a five-hour shift ahead of me, and so it begins

I start rearranging the bottles

Slide the first two to the front

That's when I realize all the other bottles behind em' messed up

They're not in a straight line, they crooked

Some facing the wrong direction

The facing is looking reckless

But I accept it

I make excuses

“It doesn’t look half bad, I’m used to seeing worse-looking shelves in other markets”

“The bottles look ok, this facing will do just fine”

As I’m thinking I hear the bell ringing,

(Ding, ding, ding) few times

I leave what I’m doing and walk to the check stand

Put on my best happy face

“Hello m’aam, how you doing today?”

She replies “Hi, everything’s ok”

And lights up a pleasant smile

She’s got a child, he's hugging her hips

He let’s go, runs up and down the aisle, laughing

Makes me miss the innocence of being a kid

Passive, minding my own business

Absent from the pressures that come with being 21

I finished bagging her groceries

“Alright, who’s next up?”

A middle-aged man plops a frozen pizza box and a 6-pack on the counter

He clearly knows how the encounter will go

He tells me “no, I’m not a member I’m paying with credit, and I don’t need a receipt”

He seems a bit grumpy, bothered, weary, scruffy

Definitely not the type to get teary-eyed, at least not in public

He completes the transaction

But his countenance makes me ask him, “Is everything alright”?

He replies “yeah, I’m fine”

But I can tell that he's lying, trying to keep something inside him

"Sir, are you really good?"

He remains defiant

“Yeah, I’m ok, just leave me alone”

I reply "Ok, goodbye" and he's gone

I leave the check stand  
Can't help but ponder what problems the poor man might be facing  
And speaking of facing  
I decide I'll finally face the drink section  
But when I arrive I see the bottles are in worse condition than I'd left them  
Cause' more bottles knocked over  
The stock lookin' lower  
Different brands and colors mixed with others  
I try to keep my composure  
Take another deep breath  
"Let's get this over with"  
I palm a sparkling water  
Don't got a glove, so the chilly glass gives me goosebumps  
Slide one to the front  
Then another  
And another  
And another one  
Agh, the freezing glass got my fingers numb  
"Oh, somebody rung the bell"  
I run to the check stand and help the customers  
Every time I ask them how they're doing they tell me  
"I'm doing good"  
"I'm doing great"  
"I'm doing fine"  
"I'm doing amazing"  
But I wonder how many of them going crazy inside?  
How many of them shoving stress, anxiety, depression,  
Debt, overdue rent payments, death of loved ones,  
Illnesses, addictions, tragedy, traumas and Transgressions under the rug?  
Do they shrug em' off?

Doesn't matter where they come from  
Regardless of skin color, age, or gender  
Whether poor, rich, middle class or anywhere else in between the spectrum  
I know everybody facing something  
Although sometimes it feels like I'm facing nothing  
At least nothing serious  
"Wow, you're lucky"  
As I'm contemplating these concepts  
I see a familiar face  
It's the angry man from earlier  
His expression looks honest  
He walks up to me and says  
"Hey, I'm sorry for telling you to leave me alone"  
"I don't want to be mean to you bro"  
I can see him becoming vulnerable  
It's just, you know, um, I lost my only son a week ago  
This weekend's his funeral  
I know this might be too personal  
But I want you to understand where I'm coming from  
Please pray for my soul?  
Then he departed  
The man's comments left me speechless  
As I headed back to the drink section  
I began thinking, "That tragedy might haunt his regular life forever"  
That's when I realize the definition of an average life differs depending on perspective  
It varies from situation to situation  
One person's daily life might be heaven on earth  
And the next person's life might be Hades  
It's amazing that every single person I've ever seen in my life has a story  
And they playin' the main lead

That makes me have more empathy  
For those who might be seen as nothing more than NPCs  
They got a history present, and eternal destiny, like me  
It's crazy how we all so similar, yet so distinctly unique  
Man, I try to keep facing the shelves, but now they look abysmal  
But it's not the customers' fault  
I did it myself  
As I'm staring at the bottles it hits me  
I do have issues and the problem is, I don't face em' well  
I face my problems like I face the products  
I fix up the ones at the front to hide the real mess behind em'  
Cause the truth is I am facing problems, I just do it in silence  
Cause' I'm afraid of what some will think of me  
If they caught wind of the things I'm hidin'  
Inside my mind and, inside my heart  
It's filled with darkness  
The hardness of heart is a condition I was born with  
Sin, been there since day one when I came out the womb  
Even though it ain't visible it's a deadly wound if left untreated  
I learned in church that Jesus is the treatment  
But the way I treat Him is treason  
With my, lust, pride, and greed and my hate, selfishness, idolatry  
These are Sins I keep feedin'  
If I don't face em' they'll be the death of me  
When I stand face to face before God on the judgment seat  
In my lifetime, will I fully surrender?  
Holding on to habits cause' I'm scared of change  
It will never be the same if I give up my ways  
My choice will impact my future forever  
I know the right choice to make

But that walk of life ain't an easy highway  
I head to the restroom  
Stand in front of the mirror and stare at my face  
That's a sight I hate to see some days  
I have to face the fact that I'm not that attractive  
And what's inside my heart is less than average  
I am a broken man in need of Grace  
Doin' dirt, maybe cause' I was made from it  
Demons and skeletons I ain't facing em'  
In fact, I'm escaping em'  
Leaving them in the closet because facin' em is costly  
So I'm asking myself "Do I wanna change?"

**[Outro]**

*A slowed down version of the instrumental plays while haunting vocals hum in the background.*

***End of the song***