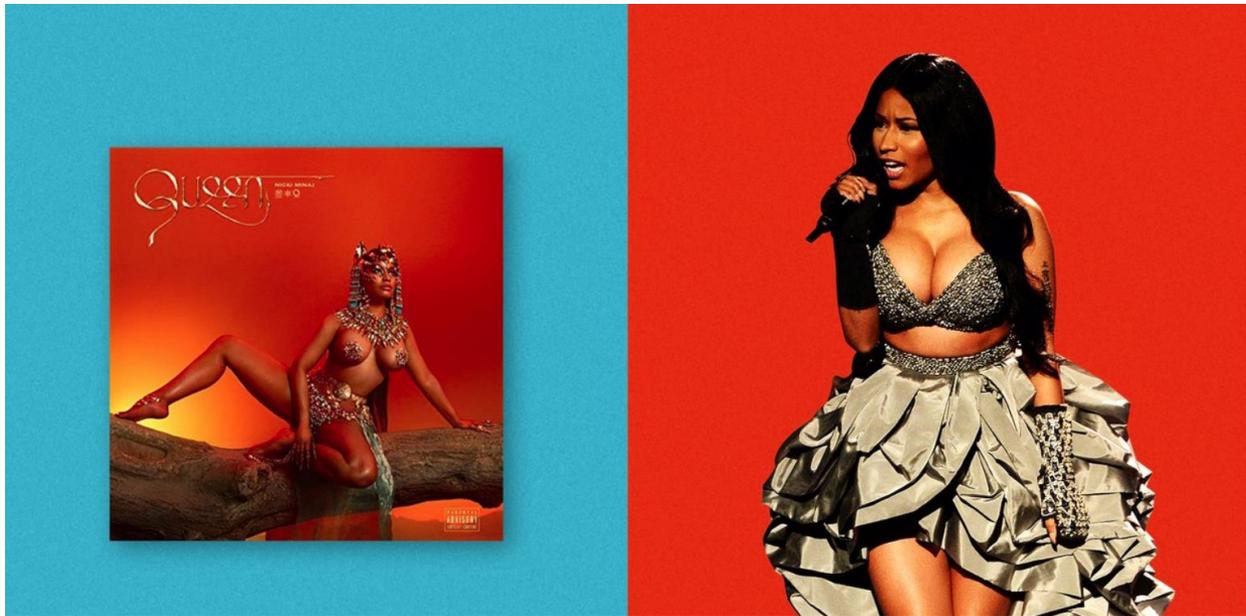


The Best Song on Nicki Minaj's *Queen* Is...

The rapper goes in, and goes hard.



BY [BRENNAN CARLEY](#)

August 10, 2018

Most casual music fans know Nicki Minaj best [for her verses](#). It's what catapulted her to the forefront of modern pop and rap—think "Monster" and "Bottoms Up" and, later, crossover hits like "Bang Bang" and "Side to Side"—and it's part of the reason she's so consistently in-demand. But for her longtime, hardcore stans (hello, it's me), she's always been an albums-artist first. *Pink Friday* was unlike anything else out there at the time of its release. *Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded* brought pop-leaning Nicki closer to the forefront, and succeeded. *The Pinkprint* went deep and introspective, adeptly flipping back and forth between emotional nuance and fast-paced bangers ("Anaconda" and "Feeling Myself"). And now, today, there's *Queen*, her fourth album, nearly four years in the making.

There were always going to be huge expectations going into *Queen*. Early singles "Barbie Tingz" (which didn't make the album) and "Bed" (which did) and "Rich Sex" (ditto) didn't quite perform the way Minaj lead singles have in the past; "Chun Li" made the biggest cultural impact of the bunch, but didn't have a moment on par with

"Anaconda" or "Starships" in the narrative. And then there were the oddities in the album's rollout, first scheduled for June, then pushed to August 10, then (maybe) pushed to August 17 for sample clearance issues, then back to today, then midnight, then, ultimately, to around 11:45 am EST.

To all that, Queen says: "Who the fuck cares when I'm *this* good?" The standout on several early listens, the Internet seems to agree, is "Barbie Dreams." It's five minutes of bars, with Minaj systematically running through her rolodex of male counterparts and playfully reading them all for filth. It's old-school, funny-as-fuck rap. It samples and flips Biggie's "Dreams" (for the [second time in her career](#)). It's Hot 97 in summertime, smart, no-nonsense realness, totally overflowing with classic Nicki lines like "Drake worked a hundred milli / Always buying me shit / But I don't know if the pussy wet / Or if he crying and shit?" and "Meek still be in my DMs / I be having to duck him."

"You guys know that's not a diss, right?" Minaj clarified on her Beats 1 show earlier today. "I love them. I said things about people who can take a joke and not be emotional about it." (She [later added in a tweet](#): "I only mentioned people in #BarbieDreams that I fuk wit. This isn't a diss. Yikes. This is culture, this is BIGGIE!!!! New York!!!! This is FUN. Light hearted fun FUN.") But "Barbie Dreams" amounts to more than just jokes and lighthearted drags. It finds Minaj's delightfully still-heavy New York accent on full display, front-and-center, just where it belongs. The sparse production and crisp, charismatic delivery both evoke [mixtape-era Nicki freestyles](#) her ride-or-die fans treat as canon. Then the song flips a switch *just* when you think it's come to an end, cycling in production that's reminiscent of [Rihanna's stuttering Bangladesh-produced "Cockiness,"](#) which suits Nicki's cadence and rhymes *just* as perfectly.

Queen has ample thrills—"Chun Swae" and "LLC" and "Miami" all warrant closer listens and heavy radio rotation—but "Barbie Dreams" is, in pop parlance, *The Song*. It's the one fans never thought we'd get. It's the one we don't deserve. And it's what I'll be rocking to until the temperature starts dipping.