

Estelle - True Romance (Deluxe) (2015)

Written by bluelover

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01. Time After Time 02. Conqueror 03. Something Good / Devotion (Passion Interlude) 04. Make Her Say (Beat It Up) 05. Time Share (Suite 509) 06. The Same 07. Fight for It 08. Silly Girls 09. Gotcha Love 10. She Will Love 11. All That Matters 12. Not Sure (Bonus Track)

With her fourth album, British singer/rapper Estelle postures as a Beyoncé-type figure and fails to achieve comparable results. Clunky songwriting and mediocre lyrics sink an album full of strong production choices and prove that Estelle is unlikely to claim anything more than a spot as the JV Bey. True Romance isn't going to help Estelle's quest to remove herself from the one-hit wonder category (and "American Boy" sure was a hit). In all likelihood, it will further separate her from the pop stardom she's seeking.

"Conqueror", the second track on the album, is being heralded as a triumphant female anthem but never quite differentiates itself from the most formulaic version of that trope, sounding like a track that could be the third single off a decent-at-best Jennifer Hudson album. There's clearly an effort to join the ranks of strong female role models in the music industry, but the song is too easy to ignore when so many better options are out there. The sexually drenched "Make Her Say (Beat It Up)" is roughly as nuanced as a Judd Apatow movie when it comes to sexuality. Women claiming their sexuality and owning it in any way they want is an important development, but the word "pussy" makes up something like 40 percent of the song's lyrics, and it's difficult to get all the way through without wanting to skip the track and take a shower.

There are moments on this album that provoke genuine optimism for where a song might go, but then Estelle starts singing lyrics so genuinely bland and awkward that all hope is lost. It's hard not to think that this album has been bungled, because despite the lackluster results, Estelle has talent. At some point, though, she has to get some better material to work with. Fans will surely still enjoy her work on this record, but those in search of a strong female voice in R&B

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