Black Panther: The Album

Artist: Kendrick Lamar, SZA, Weekend, etc.
Non-Airable Tracks: ALL 1-14
Label: TDE

Black Panther hit theaters two weeks ago and amazed audiences everywhere. Not only do I think this is one of Marvel’s best movies to date, but the cast is incredible and really carries this powerful story about hardship, family, and fighting for what you believe in. I could write about this movie for hours, but that is not what this review is about. This is the review for Black Panther: The Album.

An incredibly powerful movie needs an equally powerful soundtrack fit for a king, and that’s exactly what Marvel and TDE created. The two companies teamed up together earlier this year to create one of the most unique rap albums that I have heard in recent years. Each track is different and has its own theme that is inspired by the movie. The roster for this album truly is fantastic and includes a very musically diverse group of vocalists, each one contributing something new and exciting to the soundtrack.

The first track on the album simply titled “Black Panther”, is a skit/rap done by Kendrick Lamar. The lyrics definitely have a strong connection to the movie and it flows pretty well. It definitely is a great intro to the album due to Kendrick’s pure passion. The next track, “All The Stars”, is really where this album takes off. Let me tell you, this song is something else. Who knew if you combined one of the best rappers to date (Kendrick Lamar) and one of the most musically talented R&B singer out there (SZA), that you get this masterpiece. The song opens up with a confused Kendrick rapping questions about love and romance. At first, the listener (me at least) is a bit confused where this song is going, but then SZA drops one of the catchiest hooks I have ever heard. SZA’s beautiful vocals mixed with Kendrick’s anger charged rap is nothing short of excellent. If you are not a rap fan, I highly recommend listening at least to this song.

As you continue through the album you hear the unique rap personas of School Boy Q and 2 Chainz in the song “X” and Khalid and Sway Lee in the song titled, “The Ways” which is your classic catchy R&B song. Finally, you hit one of my favorite Tracks on this album. I may be a bit biased, but “Opps” with Vince Staples and Yungen Blakrok is bad ass. This song premiered in one of Black Panthers TV spots and since then, I have been waiting to get my hands on it. The beat to this song is dark and gritty and features these simple tribal drum beats that sound amazing when mixed together. This song makes me want to drive my car as fast as I can down the ten (I don’t condone reckless driving, but this song is awesome).

For purposes of this review, I am going to skip over the song’s “I Am” and “Paramedic!” for sake of time. I mean they are still great songs, but they are a little too generic for me. Both are the weakest points of the album in my opinion. Track #8 “Bloody Water’s” with Anderson. Paak & James Blake is fairly good and features a beat that is very intriguing. It sounds like someone is playing some wood instruments and it symbolizes blood that is slowly trickling into water. The Next track “King’s Dead” is the pinnacle of modern day rap. It features Kendrick, Jay Rock, Future, and James Blake and is a fantastic song to play on full volume with a bass that is maxed out. Kendrick’s chorus is catchy and each of the rappers really bring their own style into the song. Near the end of the song the beat switches up and Kendrick goes absolutely crazy. This is where Kendrick is at his strongest in my opinion. Piss Kendrick off and put a microphone in front of him and I guarantee you will get some of the hardest raps you have ever heard.

Tracks 10-12 are all very good, but they are not really stand out in my humble opinion. Still check them out, but if you only have limited time to listen to this album, then I would recommend skipping them. Up next is the song “Big Shot”, which stars Travis Scott and Kendrick (Don’t know why I keep mentioning Kendrick, he is pretty much in every song). It’s
decent, but I would be lying if I said I didn’t like that little flute in the background. I’m a sucker for flutes. Last, but certainly not least, we have the song “Pray For Me”. This song is sung by The Weekend and Kendrick (did it again). The strength of this song is the beat and Kendrick’s part. Personally, I am not a fan of the Weekend and think that his part is very generic and sounds like all of his other songs. Part of me wishes they had Frank Ocean sing his part, but maybe in a different world. Overall, great song and a perfect way to tie up this album.

*Black Panther: The Album* is terrific and has a ton of heart poured into each and every song. Saying the album is great would be an understatement. This album is a movement, and an incredible one at that. TDE recruited some of the most talented musicians in the game to create something extraordinary. I cannot recommend this album enough. If you haven’t given it a listen yet, please do. You will not regret it.

Sounds Like:
Black Hippy
Sounds Like:
Frank Ocean
Recommended Tracks:
Track #2 “All The Stars”- SZA delivers an incredibly catchy hook that will get stuck in your head for days.
Track #5 “Opps”- Vince Staples is a fantastic rapper and it shows in this track. The beat is simple, yet it goes hard.
Track #4 “King’s Dead”- Pretty great trap music. Features some very talented rappers and the ending of the song has Kung-Fu Kenny going hard...could it get any better?

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