Well Mannered Frivolity

Artist: Jean Tonique
Non-Airable Tracks: 2
Label: TONIQUE Records - Grand Musique Management

Look out, French house! There is a brand new artist in town, and his name is Jean Tonique. On his debut album, the oxymoronically titled Well Mannered Frivolity, Tonique pushes the previously mentioned genre to its limits by taking different approaches to crafting his sound, and blending in other genres along the way. The result is a record that is enjoyable, and conveys a good deal of emotion.

For the first half of the album, Tonique gets his party started with a series of light dance songs that lean more towards nu-disco. After the calming intro of “Welcome to Paris”, comes “This Feeling”. This track uses fairly minimal instrumentation, comprised of bells and bass, accompanied by vocals from Ciscero, who impressively delivers rapid-fire lyrics (including a nod to Panic! At The Disco). “Something to Talk About” pays a nice tribute to the original disco sound, and featured singer Keyone Starr’s delivery sounds delightfully similar to Caron Wheeler (who has done work with Soul II Soul). Another strong point on the first half of the album comes from “The Party”. This song sounds like it could pass for one of Daft Punk’s latest efforts, especially on 2013’s Random Access Memories. Funky basslines and comfortably auto-tuned vocals make the track a real treat.

One weakness that the first part of the album has, however, is that some of the songs revolve around a similar sound. The robotic vocals that appear on two, maybe three, tracks may be an acquired taste for some listeners.

The second half of the LP, starting after the interlude, seems to go on longer than the first half. However, the tracks in the second half do showcase more diverse sounds and directions for the French house genre. “Take Control” is an easy-going song with vocals that are pleasantly auto-tuned, not to hell and back, accompanied by light piano arpeggios, calming guitar plucks, and jazzy drums. On the following track, “Radio Tuning”, Tonique teams up with French house veteran Étienne de Crécy, to create a track that commands the dance floor. With heavy bass plucks and bright synths, “Radio Tuning” definitely sticks out from the rest of the tracks, grabbing and retaining your attention. The song’s pacing is also very well-timed, making up for its five-and-a-half minute length.

Overall, Well Mannered Frivolity is a great debut for newcomer Jean Tonique. For the most part, each song is thoughtfully composed and features high-quality production. The robotic vocals that can be found on several of the tracks may be a bit iffy, especially if there are listeners out there who do not normally listen to artists that use this technique. Other than that, I think that Jean Tonique is on the path to making a name for himself in the French house and nu-disco genres.

(4/5)

Sounds Like: Daft Punk
Sounds Like: Justice
Recommended Tracks:
This Feeling (feat. Ciscero): Minimal instruments accompanied by vocals from both Jean Tonique and Ciscero. (4/5)
Something to Talk About (feat. Keyone Starr): A masterful tribute to the original disco sound, elevated even more by Starr’s vocals. (5/5)
The Party (with Dabeu11): A funky, soulful mix of bass and synths accompanied by Daft Punk-esque vocals. (5/5)
Take Control: A jazzy, tasteful array of guitars and piano layered underneath lightly auto-tuned vocals. (5/5)

Name: Nick Ramos
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- French house
- Nu-Disco
- RPM