

Music Review: Erykah Badu-New Amerykah 4th World War



Erykah Badu's Texas-bred urban mystic R&B returns with an album of music lead by its own momentum eschewing past tendencies to deliver neat songs preferring to go wherever her concepts steer her. New Amerykah is an artistic statement that only heeds convention on the slippery funk synth of the 9th Wonder produced single "Honey." The rest of the album is an immersion into all of Badu's muses at once, a musical environment dedicated to moods and ideas not hits or immediate hooks. "New Amerykhan Promise" starts itself with a dark narrator mocking the American dream in the background as Badu sings over Roy Ayers standard soul horn arrangement with a vibe from the grooviest soul cinema this side of Curtis Mayfield.

Clearly making Badu the heroine of her own blaxploitation flick. Badu's love of invoking the muses and messengers of classic Black pop and the new finds Ayers' cozy ambient production criss-crossing with Badu's bohemian ambition. Her choice of producers recognizes her love of classic R&B sounds as well as her need to continue launching new stuff. Madlib makes hip-hop an arcane matter by layering a bit of sitar, an incandescent chime and a basic head-nodding beat as Badu delicately lyricizes about the spiritual practicum of the boom-bap on "The Healer." Since the laidback summery Worldwide Underground Badu has seen an America that needs changing and this CD is her sight into a dark kleidoscope of sounds inspired by the Bush-controlled stronghold on the country.

The problem of addiction models some of the best moments in Meshell Ndegeocello's post hip-hop funk soul at the hands of

Shafiq Husayn's production of "The Cell." Phrasing her lyrics of "Weee're not well you can telllll" like Sly Stone's gospel-inflected funk chants, fervent jazz bass and sheer guitar are her state of the union address and sequel to [America Eats Its Young](#). The scenario brightens when the grind of survival dominating the lyrics of "That Hump" break into a snapshot of [Switch's](#) old school R & B mindful of the fact that love is the survivalist weapon of Part One 4th World War. Her love for J.Dilla is the anecdotal "Telephone" that sonorously gives place to a communication device between earth and the afterlife. Sirens, somber flutes and keyboards back Erykah's goodbye to the Detroit producer who laid down the blueprint of Mama's Gun. Stones Throw soulster Georgia Anne Muldrow and Bilal guest on the P-funk pushed "Master Teacher" managing to creatively mimic the funk mob and George Clinton's singsong anti-establishment sloganeering. The gray but pleasurable textures of this first part of her planned trilogy this year is curious Badu work that makes you wonder what the next album offers but most people are just happy that Erykah is back.