

Music Review: Jean Grae - Jeanius



Jean Grae's terse expressions supplemented by 9th Wonder's narcotizing beats is the blissfully compatible pairing that is Jeanius. After vexed threats of retirement, previous leaks of the album on the net and obstacles getting samples cleared Jeanius finally received an official release. Grae's Blacksmith label owner Talib Kweli did what the west coast has done for years by hiring musicians to play the parts he couldn't officially borrow. The genius of Jeanius is uninjured and showcases the femcee's frustrated flow venting angry swipes at the industry, bragging and philosophically scooping up some her life's toughest moments for observation. An introduction worthy of any roller rink and disco ball light show follows thin string synth lifted from wax and Grae's sardonic wit. Her voice can threaten or be reflective but her tone never changes whether she is making a wicked boast about murder or fretting about past abortions and God in the autobiographical "My Story." Ninth Wonder's soul samples reverberate and ring at pace with the process of inebriation. Sluggish beats off the snares of Ashford and Simpson's "Solid" form a woozy ambience and Phonte makes a guest appearance for "The Time Is Now." "2 32's" finds Grae rapping with the immediacy of an anchorwoman reporting on the extinction of the above ground female emcee. Her daunting wordiness is relentless and almost breathless until "Love Thirst" deflects her battle axe style with sensual synthetic horns and a tamer delivery. It is the North Carolina producer's subtle handling of soul loops that elevates her singularity of tone into an accepted quirk. The tipsy effects of his sound with Grae's almost staid but lyrically potent diction creates a rapturous listening zone.

