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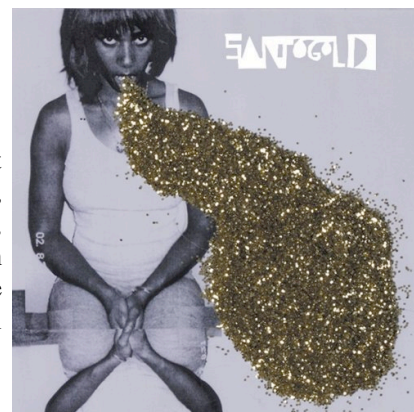


Santogold

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Santogold is the solo musical project of US singer, producer and multi instrumentalist Santi White, co-produced by John Hill. Former lead singer of punk rock band Stiffed, she's been around behind the scenes in the music business for years, working in A&R, writing albums for r'n'b singers and even co-writing 'Littlest Things' with Mark Ronson for Lily Allen's debut album. Compared lazily with Gwen Stefani and M.I.A., White creates an unusual sound that's all her own: epic electro-pop rock with a hint of Jamaican dancehall.



These are songs to sing and dance along to; infectious percussive melodies bounce around over tightly sprung basslines and a variety of synths and beats, topped off with atmospheric backing vocal countermelodies. 'L.E.S. Artistes' is the perfect opening track, an anti-scenester song that tells the story of White's shift to solo artisedom with searching, strident lyrics. Leaving her home to "disappear", she walks "down avenues that reek of time to kill", realises she's "an innovator" and decides she wants to make "something worth dreaming of". And how she does.

White's Jamaican heritage is evident in her (at times heavily) accented rhythmic delivery but she adds her own twist with the broken up production and pulsating electro underbelly. 'Shove It' grinds beautifully along with ghostly brass backing and a deliciously deadpan repeating chorus line: "We think you're a joke / Shove your hope where it don't shine", while the menacing 'Creator' opens with a squeaky meandering vocal loop and tribal drums before squelching in to Crystal Castles territory with spiralling analogue sounds.

The dazzling 'Starstruck' is a particular high point - slower and softer than previous tracks but just as futuristic. Mysterious lyrics are wrapped in sublime production effects and surrounded by a perfectly balanced array of blips and beats. The excellent Switch and Sinden remix of 'You'll Find A Way' is harder and more suspenseful than the original and is a really nice addition, bringing the focus squarely on to White's incredible character changes throughout the song.

Elsewhere, 'Lights Out' is pure indie pop, an unexpectedly soft and sweet moment in the album and the shy little sister of the soulful, Goldfrapp-esque 'I'm A Lady'. The range of styles on this album is most impressive for its cohesion; White managing to pull in all her influences and ideas and craft something real, vital and absolutely fascinating. Santogold blows most other artists out of the water; *Santogold* is an album for heavy rotation.

Santogold *Santogold* track listing:

1. L.E.S. Artistes
2. You'll Find A Way
3. Shove It (feat. Spank Rock)
4. Say Aha
5. Creator
6. My Superman
7. Lights Out
8. Starstruck
9. Unstoppable
10. I'm A Lady (feat. Trouble Andrew)
11. Anne
12. You'll Find A Way (Switch and Sinden Remix)

Try Santogold if you like: Goldfrapp, The Pixies, M.I.A., Crystal Castle

Review by *Laura Kidd*

