

Breath From Another Esthero

by Lisa Louise Santonato

Breath From Another is a beautiful album that releases full, rolling, echoing melodies from Esthero's soft voice in a way that warmly reinvigorates the sound of trip hop. In this debut album produced by Doc, and co-produced by Esthero herself, this CD is full of deep bass beats and a whole orchestra full of sounds, making this album miles away from a ride on the bandwagon.

I was impressed and surprised to discover that after being signed to the Sony Music-affiliated Work Group label, several of the songs actually had the Toronto Symphony's string section added in to the mix. Not only is the CD's production quality really high, but there is actually some real integrity in the music. One of the nicest moments on this CD is during the beginning of "Half A World Away" when Esthero breathes Spanish poetry into the song. It's so soft and subtly layered into the music that after listening to the album twenty times or so, little nuances like that still stay pretty fresh.

ESTHERO: "I like to think of us as being unique. There is a sound, but we're not quite sure what the formula is. The formula is that there is no formula. I think I'm just kind of coming into myself, vocally, as far as – who I sound like – and then, sounding like me."

TAXI: "What was the first album you ever remember buying?"

ESTHERO: "There's a hippopotamus in my bathtub by Anne Murray. The first record I ever bought with my own money was Twisted Sister. I loved Twisted Sister. I still like Twisted Sister, I don't care what anybody else says."

TAXI: "Do you do any other kind of writing than songwriting?"

ESTHERO: "I write sex scenes. I caught myself writing a sex scene in my diary – and it was the perfect sexual experience – like what my perfect sexual fantasy would be. I wrote in my diary and then I read it and blushed. I tried to read it out loud to somebody on the phone. Because I was trying to write it, like actually write it, it just sounded like Harlequin Romance Trash. It was awful."

DOC: "I remember the first time I met you - you had lyrics written out like that, I was like, 'Holy, this girl's...Holy.'"

TAXI: "What was your first impression of him?"

ESTHERO: "He was really – black power..."

DOC: "I think we were both at that time searching for 'who am I really?' And I was like, "Fuck this white girl shit! How am I ever gonna run for the Black Panther party?" But it was just like stepping outside of the circle, you know, and the audience is there, it's just waiting to be had. It's just getting up the courage to step outside and go... you know what I mean? Once you go outside there, you're like, this is my shit, this is my planet! It's like the world is yours. And I think for both of us, we both made that leap of faith. I think that's part of the beauty of the record, it's like this exploration, it was like musical jungle fever, you know what I mean."

TAXI: "Tell me about that line on the last song of the album, the one that goes, "Music was the lamb that made a lion out of me."

ESTHERO: "It's my favourite song, vocally. If you have one thing in your life that is your passion, and that's like the fire in your belly and it's really keeps you alive and you know why you're here to do it, it's really hard to do it justice with words. I can say more by doing this (squeezes her vocal chords) than I ever could do with words."



And so to write about music and do it justice is really hard and I overcome a really big obstacle by writing that song, and I'm really proud of that, lyrically. And it's just about that. And I have that fire in my belly, and it keeps me going, and I don't need shit. And I say this all the time, cause you can take away – like this whole thing to me is kind of a joke, cause it's like, if you ever feel threatened by it, you know what I mean, that whole corporate thing, if you ever feel threatened by it, at the end of the day, I go home and you know what? They can take away my fucking house, they can take away all my clothes, and leave me fucking naked, and crying in the streets with nothing, no food, that's it. I have this. And they can't fuck with that. Ever. Ever! And that is so awesome to me, it makes me so happy to know that I have this. Nobody can ever take this away from me. And that's basically what this song's about. Music was the lamb, the purity, that gave me that gusto. And I don't need anything else."

TAXI: "How did you cross that point where you decided you were going to start using your voice. Or had you always started using your voice that way?"

ESTHERO: "I've never known a world without singing. There was never any conscious decision."

All I can say is, when I realized somebody scratched my copy of the album, so that it now skips over the words "in my belly" on the beginning of "Swallow Me", I just about died. My favourite song, ruined! I'm going to buy another album, and keep it safe this time. If you don't already have this album, I suggest you do too.

Check out Esthero on these websites:

www.workgroupnet.com

www.sony.com