

Aaron Carter: LØVĚ

SC spectrumculture.com/2018/02/27/aaron-carter-love-review

Daniel Bromfield

February 27, 2018

LØVĚ is where Aaron Carter grows up, reckons with himself and his emotions, starts swearing and singing about sex, dyes his hair Joker-green and trades in featherweight pop-rap for lumbering EDM behemoths a tech bro could feel okay liking. We've seen all this before.

What's different is that it's 15 years after the fact. Carter debuted in 1997, aged 10, as a maybe-a-little-too upbeat child pop star. He had a good run and seemed to retire after 2002's *Another Earthquake!*, after which he became the proverbial child star gone south; he got in trouble with the law, went into treatment, briefly went bankrupt, tweeted and retracted an endorsement for Donald Trump. At a discomfiting 2013 performance at Eugene, OR's 600-capacity W.O.W Hall, he was glassy-eyed, throwing roses at the crowd and paying no attention to where they landed.



He seems to be doing better now, and *LØVĚ* may actually have a chance of bringing him back into the spotlight; it feels like the beginning of Phase Two rather than a negligible milestone in a career abyss. The Aaron Carter brand expired as soon as he hit puberty, so *LØVĚ* is smart to cast him as a middle-of-the-road male pop star. His target audience may, in fact, be too young to know who he is, so the customary cynicism surrounding former child stars could be mitigated, and new fans will be happy to find new padding between Chainsmokers songs on their playlists.

The LP is modeled, like so much masculine post-EDM pop, on Justin Bieber's *Purpose*. The distant Mowgli whoops Diplo made ubiquitous are present in spades. Drops scream and splinter as fake tropical-house marimbas twinkle like Christmas lights. Its few interesting diversions—the straight-up reggae “Hard to LøVĚ,” the gorgeous chord progression of “Seattle Tidez,” Carter’s own surprisingly honeyed voice—don’t elevate it above the pack. It scans as a safe financial decision rather than visionary pop, but it’s likely the most foolproof way to get back in the game.

Its only trainwreck is by no coincidence its most interesting song. “Champion” is a tribute to Carter’s dad Bob and it opens with a sample of the man’s voice. He doesn’t sound in a good way (“*I ain’t got nobody to talk to now/ What the hell is going on/ Call me buddy*”), which raises questions the song doesn’t answer. The hook is a sample of a young Aaron going, “*I love you,*

Dad’ over a drop that seems inappropriately bombastic until you realize how jockish the language Aaron uses to pay tribute to his dad is: “*You gave me the strength to be a man,*” “*Always run the race, always had to chase/ Leave ‘em in the dust when they wave that flag.*”

In its naked confessionalism and questionable presentation, it evokes nothing less than Farrah Abraham’s *My Teenage Dream Ended*, the *Teen Mom* star’s harrowing account of her husband’s death that’s taken on currency as a post-ironic artifact of “outsider music.” But to desire *more* of this from Carter would be tantamount to wishing harm on the poor guy. Let’s be glad he’s doing alright, even if we could live without ever hearing any of his music on the airwaves.

- Label:
- Release Date: