

Bad Gyal: Worldwide Angel

SC spectrumculture.com/2018/03/14/bad-gyal-worldwide-angel-review

Daniel Bromfield

March 14, 2018

It's no secret that the Catalan singer Alba Farelo models her Bad Gyal persona after Rihanna. Her breakthrough single "Pai" was a remix of "Work," and even on her second tape *Worldwide Angel* there's a song called "Tra," whose title means "work" and whose hook is no less ingratiating. The music industry is chock-full of fake Rihannas, of course, but what made Bad Gyal and her fantastic *Slow Wine Mixtape* from 2016 stand out was how well she inhabited the conversational ease of her idol. Her lyrics—sung in English, Catalan, and Spanish—were mostly about smoking weed and getting paid. But there was a mischief in her voice that made it clear she was in on the joke, just like Rihanna on her genre pieces like "Bitch Better Have My Money."



Worldwide Angel, unfortunately, lands a little closer to "Diamonds" territory. These songs are anthems, built for arenas rather than the decadent, weed- and vodka-fueled journeys between them. It's hard to ignore how much "Internationally" sounds like the Chainsmokers' "Closer," and though it has a production credit from post-club patron saint Jam City, it sounds like pop rather than avant-pop; hackneyed chord progressions played on weird synth sounds haven't been cutting-edge since about 2014. And amid all the bluster, Bad Gyal's personality is lost in the mix.

On the *Slow Wine Mixtape*, her voice dominated all, teasing us from the center of the stereo field. Here, she's a speck on the wind. She's lower in the mix than before, and the hooks are relentless repetitions of single words, as if she'd rather rely on malignant catchiness than write good songs (or maybe she's in unhealthily in love with "Work," which is understandable). The instinct to build around her voice makes sense. No one would mistake her for a great singer, and it's hard to even tell what her voice sounds like given her reliance on Auto-Tune. But it's her attitude that counts, and it's easily lost as she scrambles to stay atop these stairways to heaven.

The best tracks are the ones where the pop pomp is turned down. "Blink" is far from restrained, swarming as it is with airhorns, stately house chords, and that breaking-glass effect so beloved by post-club producers. But there's enough space between these sounds for Farelo's voice to slither and writhe. "Tu Moto" is stunning, the only track here that's really on par with "Jacaranda" or "Mercadona" from *Slow Wine*; the lyrics are a classic Bonnie-and-

Clyde fantasy about riding motorcycles with her lover, and Anticon beatmaker D33J's barely-there beat wisely chooses to evoke the ecstatic drift of being madly in love rather than the roar of a motorcycle at full throttle.

It's hard to say why *Worldwide Angel* is such a disappointment compared to the revelation of the *Slow Wine Mixtape*, but the packaging points to a possible clue. On the cover, Farelo is shot from below, and she towers over the camera, looking down at it imperiously. She looks like a Goliath, too untouchable and huge to really be human, and the title itself seems to sell her as something more than a mortal. (It's no coincidence that Charli XCX gave her own excursion into post-human aesthetics a similar title, *Number 1 Angel*). Granted, the cover of *Slow Wine* showed her as a CGI character, but it seemed like a joke at the expense of how hedonistic the lifestyle was that she portrayed in her songs. On *Worldwide Angel*, she actually seems virtual.

- Label:
- Release Date: