

Jacquees: 4275

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Jacquees is one of the biggest new signees to Cash Money, which is strange because his music is so niche. He'll be the first to tell you—and he has, on Genius—all the R&B singles he's interpolated into his music. On his debut *4275*, you'll find knowing nods to heavyweights like Usher and Ginuwine and also-rans like Avant. He's even brought a few of the voices he grew up with into the studio with him: turn-of-the-millennium quartet Jagged Edge show up to sing on "Special," while Donell Jones turns up simply to give the young singer a pep talk on "23." This is music for music nerds, a hyper-referential collection you'll dig more the more familiar you are with R&B from the '90s and early '00s.

But a record collection isn't much of a personality, and once we've spotted all the references there's not much left. He's got a good voice, to be sure: a high, husky croon that sounds just the tiniest bit like Tracy Chapman's. And though there's a refreshing purity in how completely he's an R&B singer, only rapping once in a blue moon, he won't say no to trap beats and features from the biggest young stars (Young Thug is predictably slobbery on "Studio"). But he

doesn't give us much reason to listen to *4275* over all the music it references, especially over 64 minutes that's good for evoking the bloat of the CD era but not great for keeping us awake through all these slow, slow jams.

4275 also brings up some of the uglier aspects of R&B, a genre which—like all genres that emphasize both machismo and sexual prowess—yields potential for the wrong kind of nastiness; features by Chris Brown and Trey Songz drive this home. “Beauty Doesn't Cry” aims for tenderness but ends up sounding possessive, the hook implying that she shouldn't cry because she looks gross doing it. On “London” he demands a regimen of satisfaction from his girlfriend, and though he promises “*I'll be damned if I don't have so much to give,*” he never says exactly what. For an artist who clearly paints himself as a great lover, Jacquees doesn't give us much reason why we should be so attracted to him.

Like most songwriters, he's best when he leans into specifics. He makes a point of being unwilling to enter a relationship (“*not when I'm 23*”), which doesn't make him much more of a hot ticket but at least adds dimension to his character. “Studio” is about fucking in the studio, which sounds pretty fun even though everything aside from the chorus could be about fucking anywhere else. “Red Light” is a bit more specific; it's about fucking at a red light while the car's stopped, and if you've heard a certain Dej Loaf song with Young Thug and Birdman, you understand why this would turn her on in particular. Her exuberance upstages Jacquees's, in spite of her wispy voice and less-than-inspired bars.

“*Jacquees, he got dreads, right?*” she sings at one point. Indeed he does, and this line brought to mind not some classic R&B single but “He's Large,” sung by Shelley Duvall's Olive Oyl in Harry Nilsson's underrated 1980 *Popeye* musical. As students of the Popeye mythos know, Olive Oyl is engaged to Bluto, a hulking brute who punches holes in the walls and expels steam from his ears. She's trying to figure out why she likes him enough to marry him. “He's large,” she muses. “He's got money...” She quickly runs out of adjectives. Jacquees, it seems, hasn't given Dej Loaf much more to work with. Nor us.