

Zero 7 - Yeah Ghost

by: Eric Loose

Zero 7 has a voice, and they are beckoning you to relax. Take a seat, zone out, and let some female fronted pop music sooth you weary ears. Grab a cool glass of Dr. Pepper, grab some shades, and lay out in the sun, because Yeah Ghost is one hell of a chill album, for the most part, that is. Yeah Ghost begins with “Count Me Out,” which gets you in the zone with some laid-back electronica, and sets a nice atmosphere.

Flash forward a minute now to “Mr. McGee.” After the startling “uh-oh-oh-oh’s” subside, the soulful voice of Zero 7 newcomer Eska Mtungwazi breaks onto the scene like a bolt of lightning reminiscent of the album art. I dare you to find a catchier hook than the one

that’ll be bouncing around your brain all day in the form of “Mr. McGee.” I feel safe saying that this dynamic, ebullient start to the album is the highlight of Yeah Ghost, and even Zero 7’s career. We’ve all heard danceable, catchy, pop songs before, but rarely have I come across one with such life, such soul. “Mr. McGee” leaves you a little worn out, but Zero 7 is well aware of this and decides to lower the energy level, ironically, with “Swing.” Martha Tilston coos you into a forced state of relaxation with some fitting bells, acoustic guitar, xylophone, and synth chimes. I can’t help but imagine her meandering slowly along a beach as she sings, “They can’t figure out how to get you doooowwwwwnnnnn,” to lucky fellow beach-goers. An upbeat ditty that would fit nicely on any of Zero 7’s previous releases, “Swing” is followed by “Everything Up (Zizzou),” the first single off of Yeah Ghost. On “(Zizzou),” co-founder of Zero 7, Henry Binns, lends his mediocre voice. I really wish he hadn’t, though, because he does a fantastic job of spoiling the great atmosphere being produced in the background. Nevertheless, the chillness remains, and Yeah Ghost advances in the same direction.

Don’t be discouraged by this down point, because Martha Tilston is back in “Pop



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Art Blue,” a subtle yet powerful song. With acoustic strumming and soft synths to back her up, Tilston’s distinct voice resonates well and lulls you deep into relaxation with her coy lines like, “I cut myself on barbed wire, getting wood for that fire.” Unfortunately, this is where I am forced to stop lauding Yeah Ghost. The first five tracks may have lulled you into a nice state, but your Dr. Pepper is running out, the sun is getting a little bothersome, and it might be a better decision to go to sleep than to listen to the rest of Yeah Ghost. The best is over, as is proven by disasters like “The Road,” a gospel hymn gone wrong. Boring and stale, the song fails to impress and ambles aimlessly without purpose or value. It’s hard to find particular downsides to many of the others, but “Medicine Man,” “Ghost Man,” and the rest all felt unnecessary.

It’s like Zero 7 lost all the ambition and desire they crafted so well earlier in the album. Perhaps there simply wasn’t enough to go around? Either way you’re better off falling asleep than bearing the last half of Yeah Ghost, as I assure you, you will be disappointed. It’s a shame Zero 7 couldn’t maintain the momentum, because Yeah Ghost could very well have been a solid album with the first few superb songs. I could find little wrong with these formerly mentioned songs except for the fact that they feel disjointed. Jumping from bouncy rock songs to whispered, slow-burners is a recipe for disarray. On Yeah Ghost, Zero 7 retains their soulful, atmospheric identity on some choosers, yet decide to expand into more pop territory on others. An experiment for sure, Yeah Ghost is a great learning experience, a stepping stone perhaps. That being said, Zero 7 began a successful jump across the genre gully into pop territory with Yeah Ghost- if only they hadn’t fallen short and fell to demise after 5 songs.

Recommended Tracks:

Mr. McGee

Swing

Everything Up (Zizou)

Overall Grade: 65% D