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Emma & Bill's Album Review: Adele's Five Star "30" Too Well Deserved To Explain

Emma:

There is a reason Adele makes us wait years and years for her to release every amazing body of work she has blessed us with. "30" has received a five-star rating from Rolling Stone. They called it her best album yet, and cohesively, I might agree. Even though her older tracks on "19" and "21" are timeless and iconic, the intimacy communicated about all the aspects of her relationships in "30" is unmatched. The relationship with herself, her ex-husband, her son, her future and past selves, her family. All of it. She had also received five stars for "25" from Rolling Stone, now becoming the first female artist this century to receive two five star awarded albums from the magazine. Those stars are well deserved. This album clearly doesn't warrant any critique from me or anyone, really. I think if you don't like Adele, you have objectively bad taste and are a hater.

5/5

Bill: If you don't like Adele, don't listen to this because, one, what do you expect? And two, who doesn't like Adele? "30" is another cathartic release from one of the most reliable singer-songwriters working today. Though the album explores the same themes of heartbreak present in her previous work, the songs and vocal performances on "30" are as potent as ever. Its strong flow and genre variety make this Adele's most ambitious project yet, even if some of the risks don't pan out.

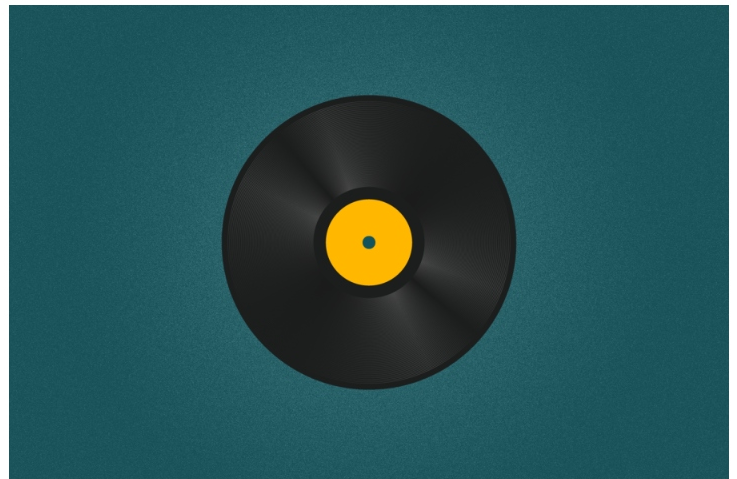
4/5

Strangers By Nature:

Emma: Really great album intro. Actually, Adele can be thanked for Spotify removing the shuffle button as the default for playing albums so they are now played in order when you press play—as they should. This track preps you for the emotional turmoil, support, overwhelm and comfort that are all simultaneously felt throughout.

Bill: "Strangers by Nature" establishes the album's sound and concept very well. Adele's writing and singing are as powerful as ever, but the instrumental really stands out to me. It has a very jazzy sound that complements the bittersweet lyrics and sets a very dark mood.

Easy On Me:



Andrew Mori

Emma: This is definitely what I would expect the single to be now that I've heard the whole album—in other words, the most “Adele” sound on the record. It is the most “expected” Adele song when I listened to the album first, but in such an updated and relevant way. So good, great cry potential, also continues to prime you for the rest of the album while introducing you to a new way she talks about love and loss on her own terms.

Bill: This is definitely an Adele single. No complaints here!

My Little Love:

Emma: Now I'm no mother and even with the most lacking of maternal instincts, this song brings out some big love and big feelings. In one interview, Adele said that it has actually moved the men she's played it for more than women in her experience. An ode to her son Anthony, this beautiful song and the snips of their conversations together really bring the audience closer to her life, even as she remains so private in her healing process.

Bill: This is tough because it could have been one of the best songs on the album. The reverb-soaked instrumental is like a Grammy-safe version of “The Wilhelm Scream” by James Blake. The background vocals go so well with Adele's voice, and her lyrics depict such an interesting situation. Then the voice memos start. It's a risk that could have paid off, but they take up way too much space on this track and they never come back through the rest of the album.

TLDR: Show don't tell.

Cry Your Heart Out:

Emma: What a Lauren Hill tribute! The backup vocals on this track and the upbeat jazzy feeling is so perfect. She talks about feeling invisible, which is pretty unbelievable when you think of Adele walking into a room, but it is a generally relatable feeling. “When will I begin to feel like me again/I'm hanging by a thread” is such a touching line in this one, and even though, again, she's dealing with huge internal themes, the delivery sounds so cheery and fun.

Bill: Banger. This hook will get stuck in your head for days. I think it's the most radio-friendly song, and her lyrics about depression and substance abuse juxtapose very well with the upbeat instrumental.

Oh My God:

Emma: One of the contenders for my favorite song for sure, but really, that's impossible to narrow down on this album. Genius! This is a pop anthem, and a ballad, and everything else all at the same time. The kick drum really charges this song and the strength of the chorus is amazing.

Bill: She pulls off a great performance with a pretty catchy hook, but I'm not a fan of these F-150 advertisement type beats.

Can I Get It:

Emma: Pop anthem with amazing back ups. It's important to note that ALL of these backup tracks are completely done by her. The whistles in this are addicting and remind me of something I would have heard on the radio in the 2010s, but not in a dated way. Adele has the power to put really moving, somewhat sad vocals into what sounds like pump up songs.

Bill: By a strong margin, this is the worst song on the album, and maybe the worst production she has ever had. What were they thinking? The guitar strumming and beat are dime-a-dozen, and the breakdown and whistling are dated, a word I would never use to describe Adele's music.

I Drink Wine:

Emma: If Adele ever had a Vegas residency, this would be either the first or last song in the set. “So we can love each other for free. Everybody wants something, you just want me.” This song is so sweet and kind sounding, all around amazing.

Bill: After two misses, "I Drink Wine" steers the album away from disaster. It's a big, soulful ballad with a powerhouse vocal performance and classy instrumentals. I was worried about the title, but in the end, it brings some levity to this very emotional track. Like Adele's best songs, it sounds like it's always existed.

All Night Parking (with Errol Garner) Interlude:

Emma: Another Lauryn Hill-type sound, the balance of the piano melody and background vocals (again, obviously) add the jazzy feel in the perfectly sweet, short interlude. And on the divorce album, this feels like a slight ode to a new love, balancing all the big big emotion delivered throughout.

Bill: I know I just said the best Adele songs sound timeless, but she should hop on more trap beats! The piano sample fits her voice and the album's sound perfectly. Adele's classic sound always works, but I'm glad she took such a big risk on this one.

Woman Like Me:

Emma:

"Woman Like Me" sounded like a track that evolved out of "25" in some ways. The percussion elements, I think, are reminiscent of some of her past work, but again, so current. Love this one too, really reflects on her own strength and power as a woman.

Bill: "Woman Like Me" is possibly the darkest song on the album, and it reminded me of Lauryn Hill with its sparse instrumental and anguished lyrics. Once again, the hook sinks in your head, which Adele acknowledges to her band at the end of the track. In the best way, it sounds like a song that could have fit on "21."

Hold On:

Emma: This song feels like a warm hug from yourself. Really great at the end of the album to be reminded that this is all a journey, to just "Hold On."

Bill: Another great soul ballad similar to "I Drink Wine." Even though it clocks in at six minutes, it never feels boring and does a great job of progressing to its climax.

To Be Loved:

Emma: If you have not screamed this song yet, you are clearly missing out. This one I actually cried hearing the first time it played through. It's a touching, almost album closer. Adele belts out one of her most powerful songs to date. She recorded the official music video on her computer too, such an intimate touch to one of the best Adele songs ever recorded.

Bill: Man, this one floored me. Adele does so much here with so little. The bare piano instrumental gives her room to deliver the album's most cathartic moment. She's clearly pushing her matchless vocals to the forefront, but it never comes off as showing off.

Love Is A Game:

Emma: And then we come to the last track to tie it all together in an emotional, touching, complete bow of perfect Adele-ness. She somehow manages to pick up the pieces she left us in after "To Be Loved" and leave us hopeful.

Bill: Through all the heartbreak of the "30," "Love Is a Game" creates an optimistic atmosphere that wraps up the album perfectly.