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Taylor Swift

“Look What You Made Me Do”

The most important tool for navigating the world of being disgustingly famous is the ability to listen to criticism, learn from it, and carry on with your awesome life. If you don't, sometimes, as the parlance goes, you get owned. On “Look What You Made Me Do”—a half-rapped, half-assed airing of grievances that seems to be aimed at, among others, the Kardashian Wests—Taylor Swift continues to insist she is definitely not owned.

And so Swift's first solo single since 1989—co-written with Jack Antonoff, with a bizarre interpolation of Right Said Fred's “I'm Too Sexy”—is an attempt at weaponizing a long-held grudge that aims for menace but feels more like a salty “Fergalicious.” Presumably, the aim here was death-march drums and static-y undercurrents of industrial grind that announce that one means business. Instead, “Look What You Made Me Do” reminds me more than anything of that endearingly hot-mess period of nominally alternative “not like other girls” pop circa 2004. (Although, its outdated vibe could begin to explain why Zombie Swift appears to be the only millennial still using a landline.) In her past work, Swift has flexed a real talent for molding real-life experiences into clue-filled allegories,

at once personal and universal. Here, she’s uncharacteristically un-nuanced, and when she slips in hilariously artless digs like “I don’t like your tilted stage,” it sounds like the part of a break-up when you start hurling all the banal insults you’ve got left.

Ultimately, there is something undeniably sus in Swift’s petty glee at dragging a mostly-forgotten beef into a dramatic album rollout a year later, despite still not having found the time to address any of 2017’s more urgent sociopolitical issues to her 85.4 million Twitter followers. Mostly, “Look What You Made Me Do” feels like a sad and, one would imagine, ultimately successful, attempt to inoculate herself from any real criticism, as though even the most valid attempts would’ve made a dent in her Teflon brand.



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