



Plastic Little  
She's Mature  
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Rating: 7.4

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There aren't a lot of funny guys in rap. Funny things are often said and done, but few rappers are the sort you want telling a story when everyone at a party shuts up and listens to just one person. It wasn't always this way (see: Redman, Biz Markie, N.O.R.E., and De La Soul). But Plastic Little are the asshole wiseguys you *want* telling those stories. Simultaneously too full of themselves and astoundingly self-aware, all Plastic Little do is piss on rap's conventions, sniping at tropes (Black Power rap, crowded-club "bangers," Wu-Tang wannabes, gangsta muzik) on their debut full-length. They want to amuse each other while infuriating everyone else, something they do over impressive approximations of all the sounds they're mocking.

*She's Mature* is sonically similar to Spank Rock's debut full-length, *YoYoYoYoYo*, another accomplished musical work bogged down by is-it-or-isn't-it-coy MCing. PL feature no such ambiguity. Both groups practice a style Pitchfork contributor Zach Baron has dubbed Gallery Rap, and are part of a Philly-BMore-NYC collective I once too-snarkily called the Hollertronix Quadrant. That was probably too small a geometric shape to contain the varying levels of talent that dribble out of this vortex. Plastic Little are, at their best, the cleverest kids in the sandbox. But when they're bad, they're self-satisfied and puerile.

Comprised of de facto leader Jayson Musson, aka PackofRats, producer Michael Stern, aka SQUID, Kurt Hunte, aka No Body's Child (NBC), and Jon Folmar, aka Jon Thousand, the Philly-based crew has crafted a funky, confounding debut. The Gallery Rap tag is appropriate for Musson, a brilliant posterist whose book, *Too Black For BET*, features some of the sharpest, nastiest satire I've seen in a long time. Sometimes *She's Mature's* satire cuts deep, too. On "Creative Differences", they skewer conscious dead prez-style hip-hop by self-reflexively dissing Plastic Little's debut EP *Thug Paradise 2.1*. The song spirals into a pro-Nubian anthem, sampling KRS-One and dp's "I'm an African", with a hook that goes "Grab your shank/ Pull it out/ Kill a cracker." Bear in mind there are two white people in this quartet.

"5th Chamber" is a strange, spot-on homage to Wu-Tang that lies somewhere between adoration and obsession. Later, Wu member Ghostface actually shows up in a coup of inexplicable proportions to perform a guest verse on "Crambodia". The change-up on the beat during his verse signals a chop-and-creep job (think Biggie at the end of "Mo Money, Mo Problems"), but he sounds as sprightly as ever against the likes of Amanda Blank-- an intriguing if lurid member of the collective-- and the P.L. boys. And "The Jumpoff" is one the year's truly hilarious parodies ("Your Dad's in the Russian mafia? That's the jumpoff!")

But "1-800-GRUSTLIN" is too cute for its own good, flipping 70s dance craze single "The Hustle". Not funny. And "Beef Resolved" is as dumb as skits get, even if they're trying to mock the whole process. Elsewhere, the springy "Rap O'Clock" (great title), bulging with references to Slytherin and Gondor, sounds like the work of MFA nerds in crescent-moon wizard hats. And sometimes there's too much of the showy culture-referencing they're so in love with. It's not built to last, even if it that's beside the point.

It's worth noting that for all their love/hate toggling over rap, Plastic Little have got an album cover that pays tribute to the Smiths' "This Charming Man" sleeve, and songs that sample "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now" and PJ Harvey's "Down By the Water" (on the surprisingly aching Diplo-produced "Now I Hollar"). So there's more to them than simple hip-hop snickering. They're art school kids exposed to the banality of indie culture, but in love with it, too. They're also guys who seemingly watch a lot of porn and enjoy rapping about it. To hear self-loathing on a rap record that has nothing to do with regrets about the street life is a welcome change-up. If Plastic Little can ever find the balance between incisive and acerbic, they're bound to hit on some sort of Spinal Rap masterpiece. Until then, at least all the beats are banging.

-[Sean Fennessey](#), January 03, 2007