

TOWER TRIBUNE

A Sista's Naughty Nature: Queen Latifah is the hard-core matron of rap

Queen Latifah's first album for Tommy Boy last year, *All Hail the Queen*, was a serious arrival. With its major-league cameos, like KRS-ONE and De La Soul, and powerful videos—one of which portrayed Latifah in khaki knocking models of white men off a chessboard and replacing them with black power fists—even the most insensate observers knew something was up. Her image alone was revolutionary: regal, Afrocentric, a balance of pride and beauty, she was definitely not your MTV sex kitten. Her debut was a complex amalgam of rap, jazz, soul, house and reggae, and featured the Queen singing as well as scatting and rapping.

Nature of a Sista has an experimental feel; an impromptu sensibility that sizzles while it explores the outer edges of dance music. "What I did basically was let my hair down," says Latifah. "When I made

the last album I wasn't known at all and I didn't want to go out and sing because I wasn't as confident. I was singing before I ever rapped, but I didn't want to go into r&b.

"For *Nature of a Sista*, I really wanted to just do the album and not think about what people expected of me, what people wanted of me, what people wanted for their damn selves, because people try to involve business into it and that stunts my creativity. First of all I tried to do this cut called 'That's the Way,' because the record company wanted this big pop hit. And it's not me, you know? I don't know how to make 'You Can't Touch This.' Let those people who know how to do that go ahead and do that; that's what they're good at. They can't make hard-core records."

But *Nature of a Sista* is already getting tons of daytime radio play, which true



Queen Latifah

hard-core hip-hop records traditionally do not receive.

"I tried to make a pop song for them [Tommy Boy] and it is not on the album. It got tossed. I wasn't satisfied with it, and the label wasn't satisfied with it, because it just wasn't me. For *Nature of a Sista*, I did whatever I wanted to do.

Nature, by its diversity, is a compen-

dium that satisfies your thirst for melody, dabbles in funk, and avoids monotony. And as a result, the hard-core material stands out, and sounds even tougher. "See, this is the whole key to Queen Latifah: I'm not satisfied doing one thing. I never have been, and never will be. I really like listening to music; maybe if I listened to hip-hop 24 hours a day, then I would make that kind of music all the time, but I don't. I've listened to all types of music since I was a kid, so when I think of music I don't just think of one thing."

-Dimitri Ehrlich

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