

Completing her sound

➤ Jennie fills in on her musical artistry, showcasing her range in *Ruby*

ALBUM REVIEW

BY JOHN TAN

WHEN Jennie first rose to fame, the world knew her as a member of Blackpink. The 29-year-old South Korean was among the four members of the popular group, acting as its rapper and vocalist.

Together, the band has achieved remarkable success, becoming one of the best-selling girl groups globally. But throughout their peak, we never got to know Jennie beyond the confines of K-pop. That is until now as her debut record *Ruby* hit shelves globally.

Marking her first solo release since departing YG Entertainment, the record sees Jennie in the front seat creatively. Throughout the 15 tracks, the artiste delves into her relationships, influence and success, letting fans in for the first time.

Making it her own

Individuality and creative control are among the benefits of going solo. Whenever an artiste ventures outside their musical group, they are presented with the opportunity to express their artistry freely.

Jennie certainly utilised this period of her career, showcasing herself like never before in *Ruby*.

"Blackpink Jennie will always be a part of me, but you will also get to experience this new side," said the artiste when speaking about the record.

As she had wanted, the record provided a holistic view of herself and her musical capabilities. She not only leaned towards her expertise as a rapper but also experimented with different sounds to establish herself outside of Blackpink.

While she raps in *Like Jennie* and *Mantra*, she pushes herself vocally in vulnerable ballads such as *Handlebars*, *FTS* and *Twin*. This sonic evolution proves she is capable of being more than just a rapper.



The standard album cover for *Ruby*.

Made for air waves

The best part of Jennie's evolution thus far is that it all feels authentic. No aspect of it feels forced or manufactured — be it the genre experimentation or her wide range of collaborators such as Doechii and Dua Lipa.

Each venture has been a sincere reflection of her current artistic state. It also helps almost all of the tracks on the album have strong production value.

Most of them are earworms and could also serve as the album's singles. Some of the memorable offerings include *Like Jennie*, *Start a War*, *Handlebars*, *Mantra*, *Starlight* and *Twin*.

Like Jennie, *Start a War* and *Mantra* is an evolution of the tough girl sound she developed during her time in Blackpink. It capitalises on her familiar sound but its production and lyrics have a more ambitious aspect to it.

Handlebars, *Starlight* and *Twin*, on the other hand, tap more into her vulnerable side as an



Most of her songs are in English.
— PICS FROM INSTAGRAM @JENNIE

artiste. Its emotional nature balances out the rest of the album's nonchalant approach.

The music videos are worthy of praise too as they complement the singles well. Each video has cinematic and entertainment values to it, enriching the experience of the chosen tracks.

Adjustment required

Seeing that Jennie spent over nine years in K-pop, it is fair for fans to expect her to sing and rap in Korean. Apart from her verses in *Like Jennie* and the prelude in *Starlight*, however, she mostly sings or raps in English.

According to the rapper, it is her way of re-introducing herself to the public. Longtime fans of Blackpink who were expecting Korean songs may need a while to adjust to this.

But who knows, if the record exceeds expectations she may just release a deluxe edition of *Ruby* with Korean songs. This may be a strong possibility considering its impressive first-week sales. Within its first week, the album has sold over one million copies worldwide.

Regardless, *Ruby* is an exciting listen, necessary for Jennie and her fans. Its cohesive and well-thought-out production is a testament to Jennie's artistry, proving she can stand on her own musically without her members. Jennie's future in music is certainly bright and promising.

StayC releases new fifth single album



The girl group is set to go on a world tour.

SIX-MEMBER girl group StayC is entering its new musical era, releasing its fifth single album *[S]* after a five-month break.

Accompanied by a more edgy sound, *[S]* serves as a bridge to connecting the group with diverse audiences, encapsulating the ideals of "sensual, sophisticated and self-esteem".

The title track *Bebe*, a funky house number embodies this new direction by merging a striking visual and bold typography reminiscent of high-fashion editorials.

Its catchy hook delivers the message of defying stereotypes and embracing one's true self, inviting fans to be authentic.

Pipe Down embodies a similar sound, featuring catchy brass sounds highlighting a more robust vocal style previously unseen by the K-pop group.

With a witty nod to the idea of a mute button, the song reinforces the group's commitment to reinventing its musical identity.

Consisting of members Sumin, Sieun, Isa, Seeun, Yoon and J, the group made its debut back in 2020 with its single album *Star to a Young Culture*.

The girls followed it up with three EPs before releasing its debut album *Metamorphic* in July last year.

Fans can look forward to experiencing StayC's new era soon as the girls embark on their 2025 world tour Stay Tuned.



The album is inspired by William Shakespeare's 1599 play *As You Like It*.