

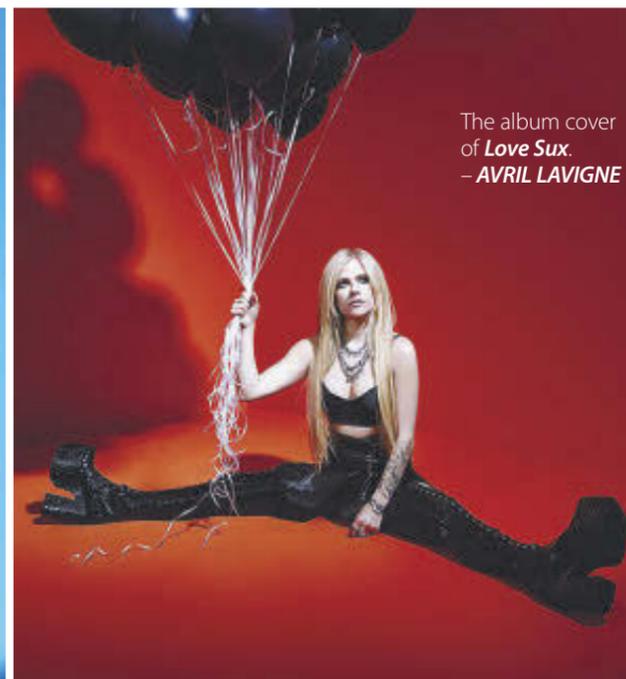
All hail the queen

► Avril Lavigne reclaims her throne as pop punk's undisputed queen with *Love Sux*

Lavigne has sold over 40 million albums to date worldwide.
— AVRIL LAVIGNE



Avril Lavigne pays tribute to her pop punk roots in the latest record, *Love Sux*.
— AVRIL LAVIGNE



The album cover of *Love Sux*.
— AVRIL LAVIGNE

BY JOHN TAN

AVRIL LAVIGNE has always stood out to me as an artiste for her distinct individuality. Even from the early years of her career, Lavigne demonstrated a strong sense of self. Whether it was her sound or public image, the Canadian songstress always pushed the envelope on her own terms.

And now having sold over 40 million albums worldwide, Lavigne returns to her throne as the 21st-century pop-punk queen with her latest record, *Love Sux*. Contrary to her previous one, *Head Above Water*, the new record sees her break away from the demons that she fought during her battle with Lyme disease.

In fact, this album represents a

new chapter for Lavigne. Not only is it her first under her new label, but also her first time working with several contemporary artistes like Blackbear and Machine Gun Kelly.

"We're all having so much fun. I really went back to what sounds I originally was influenced by at the beginning of my career," said Lavigne when asked about the album's production.

"To the core, I'm a kid from a

small town who listened to bands like Blink-182 and Green Day and NOFX in high school."

Classic Avril

Given that description, it made sense why Lavigne channelled the early sounds of her debut album, *Let Go*. And you hear that early on from the opening track, *Cannonball*, till the middle of the album. Hence, it definitely felt like a love letter as

someone who got to know her as a 17-year-old punk rebel.

My personal favourites are the title track, *Love Sux*, *Love It When You Hate Me* (featuring Blackbear), and *Dare to Love Me*. These tracks especially in the album capture the essence of Lavigne as an artiste. It beautifully served as a reminder of why we fell in love with her in the first place.

And considering the current

music landscape, the album easily stands out for its early 2000s pop-punk vibes. In fact, it is both refreshing and nostalgic to hear it on the radio and my Spotify playlist.

Impressive vocal chops

Apart from the album's production, Lavigne's vocals also deserve some applause. Despite her recent struggles, the singer has managed to maintain her impressive singing voice. Throughout the record, she delivers every note flawlessly. Her voice is not drowned out by the heavy guitar and drums.

Instead, the two work hand in hand which is not always the case in popular music. You also hear her properly articulate and pronounce very clearly. Even during her live performances for the album, Lavigne is capable of conveying the tunes without any missteps vocally.

Room for potential expansion

While I do appreciate Lavigne paying tribute to her roots in this record, I was also hoping to see her expand her sound sonically. Yes, though we see her experimenting a bit in *Dare to Love Me*, I was personally vouching for her to also go to different places musically.

For instance, maybe venturing into the adult contemporary music territory. Like she did previously with her previous tune, *Give You What You Like* from her fifth studio album, *Avril Lavigne*. With her voice, Lavigne could definitely go the distance!

Speaking of potential growth, the album does feel a bit imbalanced. Seeing how the tracks very much resemble one another, I felt it only captured one side of Lavigne's personality. Therefore, it would have been richer if there were a wider range of sounds - i.e. more soft ballads like *Dare to Love Me*.

A solid record

But regardless, there is no denying that *Love Sux* is a solid record. Its fun, uplifting, and exciting nature could not have come at a better time! For Black Stars (the term Lavigne uses to call her fans) like myself, the record was indeed a treat and a great escape from the current circumstances.

As for Lavigne, she did her discography a favour with *Love Sux*. The progressive record not only showcased her credibility as a remarkable artist but also reminded fans of what they were missing for the past three years.

Joe Flizzow and Snoop Dogg collaborate on 'PIONEERS'

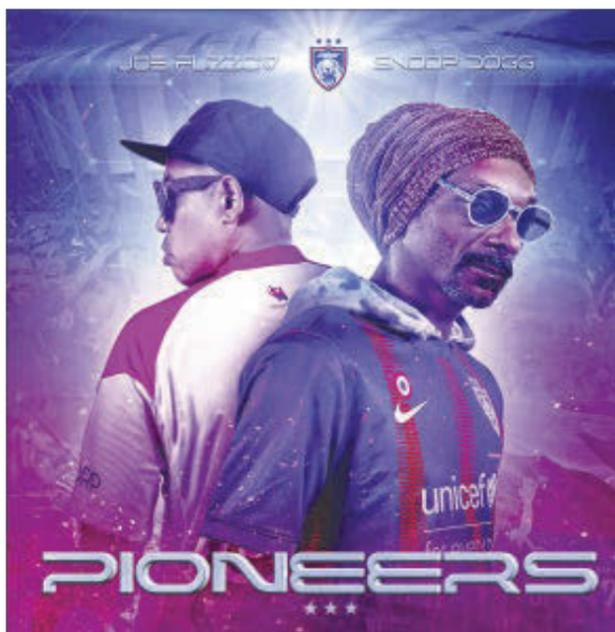
MALAYSIAN Super League champions Johor Darul Ta'zim Football Club (JDFTFC), recently announced a new strategic collaboration with Universal Music South East Asia (UM SEA) and Def Jam Recordings SEA for the release of *Pioneers*, the club's official 2022 theme song, created and performed by global hip-hop icon Snoop Dogg and Joe Flizzow, one of Malaysia's most popular and acclaimed rappers, who also serves as President, Def Jam Recordings SEA.

The track, forms part of JDFTFC's wider global branding strategy, developed in partnership with UM SEA.

HRH Major General Tunku Ismail Ibni Sultan Ibrahim, Crown Prince of

Johor and owner of JDFTFC, and Kim Lim, MD of Universal Music Malaysia signed the distribution agreement at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium, JDFTFC's 40,000 capacity home ground, symbolizing another historic milestone in JDFTFC's journey to become a global recognized football team with a growing international fanbase.

Pioneers is performed by Snoop Dogg and Joe Flizzow and produced by SonaOne with lyrics inspired by JDFTFC's tireless efforts in setting new football standards in Malaysia and the success that have come on and off the pitch since 2013. The vocals were recorded in Los Angeles and Kuala Lumpur, with mixing and mastering completed in Los Angeles.



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