

We The Kings - Strange Love (2015)

Written by bluelover

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1 Love Again 2:49 2 Howl At The Moon 4:20 3 Completely 3:58 4 Heaven So Close 4:06 5 XO (Featuring – Elena Coats) 3:15 6 From Here To Mars 3:51 7 All The Way 2:41 8 Jenny's Song 3:43 9 She 3:37 10 Runaway 4:03 11 She (A Capella Mix) 3:36 12 XO (Original Mix) 3:17 We The Kings is: Travis Clark, Danny Duncan, Coley O'Toole, Hunter Thomsen, and Charles Trippy

Having broken out with Check Yes Juliet when jubilant pop-punk was at its absolute peak will always be a reminder of what could've been for We The Kings. Instead they proceeded to follow up that song and their debut full-length with a stream of forgettable (and, ultimately, forgotten) albums. Quite why they've chosen now to make a comeback is a mystery, but it's safe to say that Strange Love probably won't be the album to thrust them back to those heady heights.

As has become an increasingly popular path to take, We The King's fifth full-length sees them making the leap from pop-punk to full on pop. But whereas the likes of Fall Out Boy and Simple Plan – other bands who have taken such a shift onboard – have managed to find stable ground for them to achieve something decent at the very least, Strange Love is far more wishy-washy. The synthetic, lolling beats of XO are far too overwrought to get much enjoyment out of (though guest vocalist Elena Coats is a bit of a saving grace) while Jenny's Song is a slippery, dull acoustic song that blatantly lifts the guitar line from Extreme's More Than Words but just breezes by without making any sort of impression. Meanwhile, From Here To Mars not only goes full-on EDM but throws a laughable hair-metal guitar solo into the mix in one of the most flagrantly cheesy songs to sit itself under the 'alternative' umbrella in some time.

That begs a question actually – is Strange Love really alternative? The answer is a firm 'no' – this could easily be Travis Clark's solo project, such is the extent of the absence of pretty much any of the rest of the band. But that's not why this is a bad album; the reason for that is because

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any sort of minuscule edge that We The Kings have ever had – the edge that has been gradually sanded down more and more with each passing release – is essentially nonexistent here. What we're left with is an album that makes no bones about being the overtly glossy, soulless product it is, and while there are catchy moments (most of the album, to be perfectly honest), there's a looming feeling that it would have been so much more satisfying if it actually felt like We The Kings, not just the name.

To its credit though, there are a couple of highlights on Strange Love, made all the more easy to spot thanks to those that surround them. Opener Love Again has a dance-style drop and plunking bassline that has real charm to it, while there's a pleasant swell and bombast to She, and Completely is a solid little power-pop jam. But even what would be classed as highlights here only seem great in the context of the rest of the album – they'd be passable, sure, but certainly not great.

And that pretty much sums up what Strange Love is. It's an attempt at reinvention that's not without merit but largely comes across as an album that doesn't have a lot going for it to begin with, and doesn't really do much with the assets it does have. It's an interesting experiment that We The Kings have carried out, and one that might be worth persevering with if they can find a better tactic for execution. But for now, it's another lacklustre album from a band to whom the law of diminishing returns continues to take its toll. --- thesoundboardreviews.com

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