

Review: Young Thug, Beautiful Thugger Girls

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Beautiful Thugger Girls may underwhelm at first, if only because the forms it works in are so familiar. Young Thug cycles through a lot of styles here: lovebird R&B, sensitive acoustic folk, even country. But he doesn't terraform them to his whims so much as try them on for size, like a kid posing with a cowboy hat in the mirror. He loves a good reference as much as Tarantino, and listeners who measure Thug's progress by the difference between his albums might spend most of their listening time trying to spot them. This'd be a mistake. In fact, measuring Thug's career by its progress towards some goal—his long-promised studio debut *HiTunes*, which may never come, or an album where he makes good on his potential to transcend hip hop—is a fool's errand. Young Thug has arrived, he's given us more fantastic music in two years than most MCs dish up in a lifetime, and *Beautiful Thugger Girls* continues his great run with gusto.

So what makes *Beautiful Thugger Girls* worth listening to over *Slime Season* or *Barter 6* or *Tha Tour* or last year's brilliant *Jeffery*? The stylistic caprices are part of it, for sure. It's delightful to hear him throw himself headfirst into country with a literal yeehaw, or build a sensitive-guy ballad out of the *ur*-sensitive-guy ballad, Bright Eyes' "First Day of My Life". But those aren't what makes this album special. The overwhelming impression one gets from this album is a sense of benevolence. This might be one of the most heartwarming rap albums ever made.

Young Thug has always been lovable, never more so than here. Absent here is the ugly, macho possessiveness ubiquitous in R&B, where you fear the singer will throw a glass at you or take you off his phone plan if you don't give him good head every night. Thug is generous, caring, loving. The shrieks and rasps and yelps and moans of *Jeffery* have cooled down to a baby-talk coo just quiet enough for the bedroom. He sings a lot about sex—nasty, promiscuous, fluid-soaked sex—but with the gentleness of a committed monogamist. It's typical of this album that the chant "ride or die, ride 'til infinity" comes not long after he brags about having fifty bitches.

There's no fashionable nihilism or self-conscious sexism à la Drake, who executive-produced, or Future, who features. Even on "Relationships", with the aforementioned Future appearance, he bemoans the embarrassment of women in his life mostly because he's too nice to cut any of them off. No doubt they're nuts about him too. Who wouldn't be about a guy who buys you a \$10,000 dog from Germany *and* offers to babysit it? We want to be seduced by this dude.

Jeffery felt insular, its guests culled mostly from Gucci Mane's orbit. There are more voices on *Beautiful Thugger Girls*, including Snoop Dogg, who shows up with Lil Durk on a weed jam so archetypal it's called "Get High". (Weirdly, Snoop seems to diss Thug in the video for his new song "[Moment I Feared](#)".) A low coo runs through two songs, "Family Don't Matter" (that's the one with the yeehaw) and "Me or Us" (that's the one with the Bright Eyes sample). But the most notable new face is Millie Go Lightly, a London singer whose only credit so far is here. She sings lyrics Thugger writes for her, and it's obvious what a gifted writer he is when his words are filtered through a mouth less mushed than his own. "You be blowin' smoke clouds shaped like me/I be havin' nightmares shaped like you," she sings sweetly on "Family Don't Matter."

The main trait hurled by detractors against Thug—his unintelligibility—is actually part of why his work rewards repeat listening. It's a lot of fun knowing that any given tangle of gobbledygook could be a cold threat or a clever pun or a particularly sweet nothing. He still has a gift for spinning lyrics that technically make no sense even though you still know exactly what he's talking about. There's a great line I missed the first few times around on "You Said": "I lick on that puss on a pill, and I make her stand up like some bunny ears/I bite on her butt and I suck on her toes and her soul go outta here." *Her soul go outta here*. Ruminates on that for a second.

Though his vocal eccentricities are toned down this time around, he still finds ways to surprise, like the shiver in his voice on "Tomorrow 'Til Infinity" or the content little "mmm" he makes while he talks about his chains on "On Fire" (he compares them to Slick Rick's, in case you suspected this guy was somehow ignorant about rap history). On "Daddy's Birthday", he even manages to squeeze a separate verse in the spaces between lines of his main verse. As on *Jeffery*, the density of ad-libs approaches *There's A Riot Goin' On* territory, and you could spend an entire listen focusing on those alone and still not catch all of them. Thug tapes are made to tunnel into.

The more you listen, the more you're likely to find, and the more you find, the more you're likely to like *Beautiful Thugger Girls*. It's not quite as endlessly explorable as *Jeffery* and doesn't quite project the same confidence and swagger. This is not a tape that comes on particularly strong, and like *Barter 6* from 2015, it's a good litmus test for whether you like Thug for his art or just for his eccentricities. Thugger's a flamboyant character, but his music is an exercise in subtlety. **B PLUS**