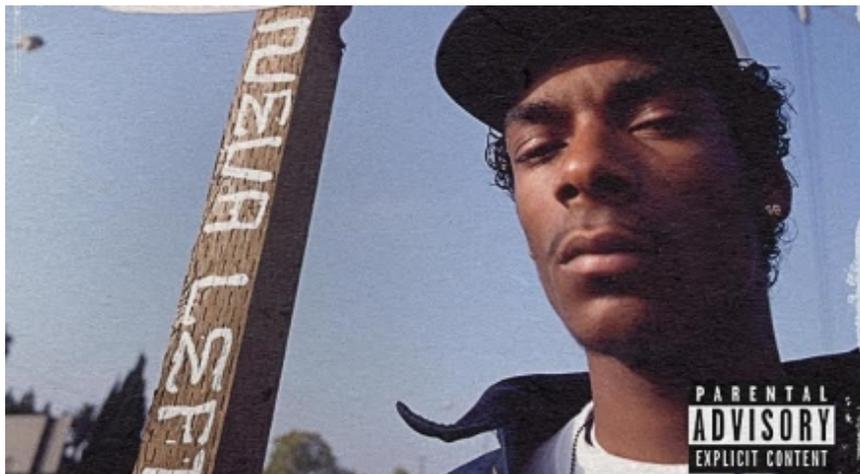


# Snoop Dogg: Neva Left

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Snoop's earned the right to be nostalgic—partially because he's one of rap's most hardened vets but mostly because he's never been content to coast on that fact. Like Neil Young, Snoop's fully aware that as the game's weird great-uncle, he can do essentially whatever the fuck he wants. In the last half-decade alone, he's made not one but two funk albums, a reggae album and spat over a goddamn Gary Numan track on what was supposed to be his return to rapping. It's not too worrying that he's looking backwards on his new album, *Neva Left*; his next could be an acid-folk album with Van Dyke Parks orchestrations for all we know.

He pulls plenty of tricks here, too. The album opens with him rapping over the same extremely recognizable sample that's on Wu-Tang's "Tearz." At first, it seems like a naked play for nostalgia. Then you realize: *wait, wrong coast.*

The L.A.-godfather angle's really a feint. He visits the Bay twice, partnering with hyphy god Rick Rock on "Moment I Feared" and the godfather-and-punk pairing of Too \$hort and Nef the Pharaoh on "Toss It." "Go On" is a disco number; "Trash Bags" is unmistakably Southern. *Neva Left* isn't as willfully bizarre as we're used to from middle-aged Snoop, but it's still full of surprises. Even the weed song, "420 (Blaze It)," is unusually pretty and psychedelic, its undulating guitar line bringing to mind none other than Mac DeMarco.

Where Snoop really connects to his roots is in reasserting—as he does on his first line on the album—" *I gangbang to the fullest.*" Don't make the mistake of thinking Snoop is a nice guy just because he talks soft and makes sweet little funk-pop albums with Pharrell and smokes boatsful of weed. His threats and shit-talk are as cold as they are funny: " *Your homies at your funeral plottin' on some get-back/but you can't get back, 'cuz nigga, you dead!*" (It doesn't quite beat KRS-One's zinger from "Let Us Begin": " *brrr, brrr, now your brrrother's deceased!*")

Snoop doesn't rap about beating up women anymore, but he's not above hitting on a girl who could be his daughter on "Toss It," or emasculating the new crop of feminine MCs on "Promise You This"—the only real get-off-my-lawn track here, and the only one where Snoop sounds unlikable. Though he's so beloved he's essentially Teflon, he's still a problematic fave, and *Neva Left* serves as a reminder of this fact.

Still, this his strongest album in some time—perhaps even edging out 2012's wonderful *7 Days of Funk* with Dam-Funk. It's just so fun and quotable, and even at 16 tracks spanning an hour, it speeds by quickly. Though Snoop's later career has been admirable in its willingness to take risks and get weird, he still hasn't delivered a grade-A Snoop Dogg album. *Bush* was cheesy, *Coolaid* wore out its oddness over its interminable length. *Neva Left* is about as good as a capital-R rap album from Snoop Dogg can probably be at this point, and as few rap veterans are going this strong in their mid-40s, that's nothing to cough at.

- Label:  
Doggystyle/Empire
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