

Travis Scott & Quavo: Huncho Jack, Jack Huncho

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Huncho Jack, Jack Huncho came on strong before it even came out. This collaborative record represents Travis Scott's first album since 2016 and Quavo's first "solo" album ever, which is exciting as he's long been pegged as the breakout Migo. Though it seemed at first like one of those fictions rappers spin on a whim—seriously, where's Kanye's Bowie cover album?—it felt scarily real once they shared the spiky sleeve design from Hunter S. Thompson's favorite pen devil Ralph Steadman.



From the start, the album hits you in the face. First comes an Otis Redding sample that exists only to prove that the rappers can afford it (see Jay-Z and Kanye, "Otis"). Then, one of the best opening lines on a rap album since Vince Staples' *Summertime '06*. But as "Modern Slavery" trudges on, it becomes apparent that this isn't going to be a stadium spectacle but a low-stakes one-off.

Scott is rap's high priest of camp. He's great at hiding in the staging, and on his records and at his shows he erects gothic constructions around himself to give his music the illusion of importance. But he has nowhere to hide on *Huncho Jack*.

It's not that he drops clunkers—he doesn't try hard enough for those. Instead, every bar is depressingly generic. A typical lyric: "Take that bar, no 3G/...X-rated, no PG," from "Saint Laurent Mask." The Chicago dirty rapper CupcakKe used almost the same "PG" lyric on "Spoiled Milk Titties" from this year's *Ephorize*. But while she used it as filler in a breathless narrative, the same line ends up being one of the most memorable things Scott says on this entire album.

Scott and Quavo might sound similar to an untrained ear, trading off a lot of the same Auto-Tune effects as they do. Here's a test: if you hear something clever, it's Quavo. He's almost OutKast-like in his zest for absurdity ("Save your salt for slugs," he grouses at a bitter rival at one point). But he's not at home here, and Scott's relentless, mechanical ad-libs ("It's lit!") push up aggressively against Quavo's lyrics rather than complementing them like his fellow Migos do.

The album's saving grace is its beats, the best money can buy from Atlanta's formidable stock. They're mostly by the usual suspects—Wheezy, 808 Mafia, Murda Beatz. There's a cloud-rap bent to a lot of them, and "How U Feel" even cribs from the same obscure Japanese synth

song as Mac DeMarco's "Chamber of Reflection." It's pretty but restrained; one wishes the beatmakers would try to drown the MCs a bit more, struggling as they do on their own.

Travis Scott and Quavo are no doubt great friends, appearing on each other's music for some years now. They probably had fun making this, and that's comforting. These bars would go over just fine in a stoned freestyle session, but they don't add up to much of an album.

- Label:
Quality Control Music
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