

Lil Yachty: Lil Boat 2

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Lil Yachty doesn't consider himself a rapper, and maybe it's time we stopped thinking of him as one. After all, most of his appeal comes from somewhere else: his flippant punk attitude towards the rap canon; the way he wraps himself in a candy-colored glow and then says the most disgusting shit; his self-marketing as a patron saint to marginalized groups (more believable if you ignore the execrable things he says about women and his inability to resist a Migos feature); and the fact that his best songs are usually the ones where he sings.



It's disheartening, then, that Yachty has recently ditched most of what makes him great. His last album, *Teenage Emotions*, had some of his best songs, including the transcendent Stefflon Don collaboration "Better," but devoted an inordinate amount of time to freestyles and battle raps that found the typically breezy rapper scrambling to spit words out of his mouth. He sounded like he was trying to rap rather than actually rapping, and it negative and aggressive, at odds with the way he wryly contrasts threats and graphic sex narratives with an aesthetic summed up by a Target commercial where he catches Swedish fish off a boat.

Lil Boat 2 continues this tradition. It's named after a character he supposedly created as a darker-edged foil to the sweeter Yachty, which is hard to buy given the breezy nonchalance of the first *Lil Boat* tape. This album takes after the "SoundCloud rap" of such artists as Playboi Carti and Lil Pump: lots of short, high-energy songs with big-name features intermittently inserted. But while Carti blends into his atmospheric beats and Lil Pump's breathless physical presence drives his music to fever pitch, Yachty hangs in the middle of the mix, dumbly taking up space.

His ponderous, deadpan voice works great when he's singing. He sounds childish, innocent, unguarded. But it doesn't work nearly as well when he's rapping; he just sounds dumb. The lyrics are no consolation. The most memorable image Yachty can muster up on the entire album is "yellow diamonds in my mouth like a bit a daisy," from YoungBoy NeverbrokeAgain collab "NBAYOUNGBOAT," and that's delivered in an eighth-note flow so robotic the line loses all its batshit appeal. Occasionally his Peter Pan personality makes itself known—"BOOM" is all gun threats conveyed with the least threatening onomatopoeia possible—but when it happens, it seems like an accident.

The guests don't sound like they're having much fun either, with the exception of 2 Chainz,

who can light up the room no matter what he's on. The only real consolation is the production, which is pearly and plangent at best—never more so than on the two-minute “Love Me Forever,” an R&B doodle with some of the same sun-baked *Spring Breakers* vibe as the album art. The album clocks in at 45 minutes, far shorter than the exhausting sprawl of *Teenage Emotions*. That's mostly a good thing, for a sad reason: it means *Lil Boat 2* is over that much faster.

- Label: