

## Slime Language

Young Thug

Young Stoner Life

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In the latest iteration of the rap name game, where albums can be albums or EPs or mixtapes or playlists depending on the size of the ideas rather than the size of the work, Young Thug's decided to call his new album *Slime Language* a compilation. That's true insofar as it compiles artists from his new Young Stoner Life vanity label, but the boss is on every track, and it's his bars that make *Slime Language* more than just a booster shot to 2018's summer banger canon. He's at the center of a specific commercial space in rap, and *Slime Language* visualizes this geography, positioning him as an exemplar for his understudies, or perhaps a mother tiger teaching her cubs how to hunt.



Usual weed-carriers Gunna and Duke are there. His sisters Dora and Dolly (who quietly dropped a mixtape, *Family Ties*, in 2016) show up. His on-and-off fiancée Jerrika Karlae makes a convincing case for herself as a Travis Scott-style Auto-Tune cyber-star, castigating weak underlings on "U Ain't Slime Enough" in-between steely ad-libs. (If you think this album is somehow meant to uplift women, wait until Thug justifies making a girl get an abortion by claiming "she ain't nothing but a thotty" on "Slimed In;" his post-gender philosophy still seems to apply mostly to his wardrobe.) A strong turn comes from the veteran, shuttled-around rapper Strick, who makes one of the funnier "I'm a racist" jokes that have become popular post-Charlottesville. And Lil Uzi Vert, who appears on "It's a Slime", can always be counted on with his Weezy Joe Armstrong antics.

But it's Thug who delivers all the most memorable moments: bragging about the toilet in his car on "Scoliosis" (is that a real thing?), using the word "Audemar" as a catapult for his flow on the song of the same name. His songs find a middle point between the meat-and-potatoes party music on his *Super Slimey* tape with Future and the sensitive-guy balladry of *Beautiful Thugger Girls*. There's a curious little shiver in his voice as if he never left Siberia after his infamous trip on "Nigeria". He once again surrounds himself with guitars; "Oh Yeah" (not to be confused with the exquisite childhood fantasia of the same name on *Thugger Girls*) almost sounds like Modern English's "I Melt With You".

*Slime Language* doesn't tell us anything new about the 27-year-old but zeroes in on his skill at

making great pop songs, which is really what we commonly call "bangers" are. The hooks of "Tsunami" and "[Chanel \(Go Get It\)](#)" are instantly memorable, even if "aviator keys" means nothing to you. "[Scoliosis](#)" is the most interesting song here, its beat seemingly composed of leftover chords from a long-abandoned trance drop that seems to build endlessly while hovering in dead space; it's as surreal as a staircase leading into a wall. "Slimed In" gives up much of its runtime to new face Nechie (whom I first became aware of on Poo Bear's *Bearthday Music*) before the master jumps in, building off his student's flow and teaching him how it's done.

*Slime Language* might be seen as insubstantial in the larger scheme of Thug's career, and perhaps that's true. But this is just a refinement rather than an envelope-pushing statement, a reminder that Thug is great at making this kind of music even when he's not rousing the rabble over his flamboyant fashion or his abstract starchild gibberish. If he upstages his friends, that comes with the territory; Thugger is the coolest guy in most rooms, and his curatorial eye means none of the features are really bad. Even less-accomplished rappers seem ecstatic to spit on such a large stage. Like the listener, they are guests at the bonkers feather-boa party Thugger throws every time he steps into the booth.

Rating:

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