

Lil Pump: Harverd Dropout

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Whether or not Lil Pump actually dropped out of Harvard is rather hard to confirm, thanks in no small part to his fans. A Quora thread earnestly asking if the face-tatted 18-year-old from South Florida actually attended America's most prestigious institution of higher education is choked with fans facetiously claiming he dropped out of Harvard to "save the rap game." If Pump's spinning a fiction, it's a telling one: to him, education, parents or anyone else that tells him what to do is lumped into a Big Bad.

His second album *Harverd Dropout* is a celebration of the Bart Simpson school of arrested development: rebelling against your parents long after there's anything to rebel against, reveling in the same impulsive dismissal of authority figures that leads right-wingers to cry "freedom of speech" whenever someone calls them on their shit (of course "I Love It" ended up on this thing). For Pump, dropping out of school to get rich is the ultimate fantasy, and when he chuckles "stay in school, kids" on almost-title-track "Drop Out," it's with the same smirking facetiousness that "The Simpsons" used to use on their "Treehouse of Horror" disclaimers.

To Pump, nothing is cooler than being a “drug addict.” Does he know what a drug addict is? Rap has always celebrated chemical consumption, but his use of “addict” suggests he’s borrowing from the damaged-boy bullshit in which emo-rap is mired even as he tells us repeatedly on the record how great his life is. That there’s been far less outrage about the non-black Pump’s use of the n-word and Smokepurpp’s line about “*getting money like a Jew*” than similar transgressions by trap artists Nav and 21 Savage suggests listeners are content to let the new sound of the youth sink into its own obnoxiousness.

Pump’s obviously not a great lyricist, which was easy to ignore on his exponentially superior 2017 self-titled debut. The lyrics offer cliché after cliché, none delivered with any of the wit, escapist detail or look-what-I-can-get-away-with mischief that defines great luxury rap. Ice! Cars! Xanax! Some of his boasts make no sense. Richer than your mom? Richer than your dad? Richer than your professor? Does this guy know what the fuck he’s talking about? It’s as if he assumes those entities are rich because any authority figure must have money when the only person who *should* have money is him.

It’d be nice to give him the benefit of the doubt. Maybe he knows your professor isn’t likely to be that rich and that “*richer than your professor*” is as low a bar as smelling fresher than Hobo Johnson. But that would betray a wit he offers no evidence of having and a self-deprecating streak that would be anathema to an ego such as his. Lil Wayne’s marathon verse on “Be Like Me,” buried deep in the album, could only be a public service. If Pump can’t bother to be clever and funny, Weezy will.

With that said, there are things to admire about *Harverd Dropout*. Its leanness is admirable: 16 songs in 40 minutes. It does its best to maintain a fever-pitch of energy, and it’s remarkably assured of its sound, with no dippy ballads or urbano facsimiles or shoehorned collaborations with artists like Juice WRLD that have nothing to do with Pump’s music and everything to do with his handlers’ pockets. *Harverd Dropout* works as a party album, but beware any party where it’s playing—its real target audience is middle-schoolers listening under their moms’ nose. It’s the best argument for a moral panic since the Tide Pod Challenge.



<https://youtu.be/1SvLXaTXj70>