

TRACKS

“Infrared”

Pusha T

2018



By Mehan Jayasuriya

GENRE: Rap

LABEL: G.O.O.D. Music / Def Jam

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Some things never change. Two decades into his career, Pusha-T is still reminiscing about his days spent hustling in Virginia Beach. And as he demonstrates on “Infrared,” the closing track from his lean new album Daytona, he’s still holding on to every last grudge like his life depends on it. “Infrared” makes no concessions to the current moment, pulling its sample from conceptual soul act 24-Carat Black’s lone album, a source of

breakbeats for everyone from Eric B & Rakim to Nas to JAY-Z. Over the skeletal beat, Pusha indulges in yet another classic rap trope: the end-of-album bloodletting.

Pusha has words for a lot of his peers on “Infrared,” both kind and barbed. He opens the track by offering a state of the game in the form of a Jay quote (“The game’s fucked up/Niggas beats is bangin’, nigga, ya hooks did it”) and names Kendrick and J. Cole as worthy equals. But his lines are sharpest when he’s throwing darts. Drake’s ghostwriting “scandal” may have been a tempest in a teapot three years ago, but Pusha isn’t letting it go, comparing the legitimacy of Drake’s reign to Donald Trump’s. When he turns his attention to the Cash Money camp, it’s clear that Pusha still hasn’t forgiven Lil Wayne for biting his style on the cover of *VIBE* a decade ago, though there’s also a hint of sympathy in his lines (“Flash without the fire/Another multi-platinum rapper trapped and can’t retire”). Does all this rehashing of old beefs make Pusha sound like a petty traditionalist? Of course. But here’s the thing: Pusha-T never sounds better than when he’s at his meanest.