

ALBUMS

LUV vs. The World 2

Lil Uzi Vert

2020



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The Philly rapper's *Eternal Atake* victory lap feels like a collection of outtakes, but the high points are thrilling.

It would have been crazy to expect more of Lil Uzi Vert after *Eternal Atake*. Uzi's long-awaited third album didn't just deliver an hour of new music, it felt like the best possible record he could have made, a dizzying showcase for his technique, charisma, and style. And yet, one week later, he's already returned with *Eternal Atake (Deluxe)*—*LUV vs. The*

World 2, which gives us 14 new tracks and more than 40 additional minutes from the endless *Atake* sessions. Despite its length and billing as the sequel to Uzi's breakout 2016 mixtape *Lil Uzi Vert vs. the World*, the album hews to the standard "deluxe edition" blueprint: This is a cobbled-together collection of B-sides—good ones, but B-sides nonetheless. In many cases, it's clear why these songs didn't make the cut.

That said, the high points are as thrilling as you'd expect from an artist who just hit his peak. *LUV vs. The World 2*'s crown jewel is "Bean (Kobe)," a Chief Keef collaboration that already enjoys legendary status in fan circles. The two rappers have been teasing the track on social media since 2017, and with good reason: the woozy song zeroes in on the sweet spot between Keef's hard-charging flows and Uzi's impressionistic yelps. Over a Pi'erre Bourne instrumental whose smeared synths recall the producer's work with Playboi Carti, the rappers stretch out: Uzi makes a Tony! Toni! Toné! joke while Keef uses the Swahili word for "blood." The chorus is just Uzi breathlessly shouting the names of high-end Swiss watch brands over and over. It sounds incredible.

There are a few other songs on *LUV vs. The World 2* that approach this level, even if they are lesser executions of *Eternal Atake* ideas. "Lotus" resembles a transmission from a distant planet thanks to an Oogie Mane beat that sounds programmed on a haunted Game Boy. Uzi flexes the exhilarating acrobatic flows of *Atake*'s first half on "Myron." And on the bubbly-trap rave of "Got the Guap," Young Thug and Uzi melt their voices into a delightfully gooey mess (we also get to hear Thug rap, "I put a fish on the wrist"). Uzi has always been a chameleon, but hearing him go toe-to-toe with rap's most flamboyant stylist underscores just how versatile he's become.

Unfortunately, some of *LUV vs. The World 2*'s collaborations sounded better on paper. "Wassup" features a perfectly competent verse from Future in full HNDRXX crooner mode, but Uzi's chorus feels unfinished and inert. Despite a surreal title and the combined efforts of Uzi, Young Thug, and Gunna, "Strawberry Peels" never gets off the ground. Uzi manages to elevate Nav's soulless flexing on "Leaders," but the song still feels like the result of Nav calling in a favor, not the other way around. The solo tracks that fill

the record's midsection—"Moon Relate," "Come This Way"—feel half-baked.

Still, even when the songs don't click, you can't help but marvel at all the expensive materials littering the cutting-room floor. Most rappers would kill for these features, or these producers. But Lil Uzi Vert isn't most rappers. *Eternal Atake* maintains its momentum with just a single feature and a set of instrumentals that were largely sourced from one production collective; It's the rare hour-long record that feels like the product of focus and restraint. The songs here reveal the very different record that *Atake* could have been: a label-friendly, guest-filled grab bag that probably still would have done massive numbers on streaming. Even if it isn't equal in quality to *Eternal Atake*, *LUV vs. The World 2* speaks to the strength of Uzi's vision all the same: sometimes, what you take out is as important as what you leave in.