

critical breakdown

Expect nothing basic.

LLOYD BANKS

Hunger For More

G-UNIT/INTERSCOPE

S M L XL XXL

There must be an unwritten rule that every rapper must put their peeps on as soon as they blow. For the most part, this act of benevolence results in substantial units sold, but once the training wheels come off the sidekicks usually fall on their own. Lloyd Banks looks to be an exception to the prototypical ending with his debut, *Hunger For More*.

Picking up where *Get Rich Or Die Tryin'* left off, Banks' LP takes listeners through his world of poppin' bottles, shots and coochies, via his top-notch lyricism and some heavyweight production. On the ultra-catchy "Just Another Day" Lloyd breaks down the many pleasures of his lifestyle, before using the club inferno supplied by Em on "On Fire" to brag about having "a diamond as clear as water." And if there's still any doubt about his paper weight, the contagious chorus on "I'm So Fly" helps. Over Nottz's beautiful medley of Caribbean drums, saloon piano keys and horn hits, Lloyd harmonizes, "I'm so fly/I got money, so that's enough reason to buy the things I buy."

But love is one thing Banks can't seem to afford. While he continuously talks about the models he's bagged, records like "Die One Day" display the Queens MC's growing weariness with groupie love. Backed by Baby Grand's powerful soul sample, an unapologetic Lloyd says, "Don't blame me/Blame my mom and pop for breedin' this/The game needed this/Lloyd Banks a.k.a. Mr. Don't-Feed-A-Bitch."

The tough-guy exterior falters a bit as Banks breaks down his ideal woman on sing-songy cuts like the Fabolous-featured "Perfect Match" and "Karma," where he spits pillow talk over Jinx's bedroom ballad track: "You got my temperature risin'/From your legs and your thighs/And the color of your eyes could brighten up a horizon."

Though Banks is attentive to the ladies throughout *Hunger For More*, he never forgets what he does best—drop unabashed lyrical darts. On "Work Nigga" Lloyd proves why he's a mixtape king, with graphic bars like, "I have niggas peel the skin off ya face with the thing they use for the potatoes." He also digs deeper into the street with his semi-autobiographical "Southside Story" and the cryptic "Till the End." But it's the J-Ben-produced "Take A Good Look" that reveals what's really on this 22-year-old's mind: "I'm America's nightmare/Young, Black and chipped up/Plan to put more than one plaque up."

Banks shouldn't have trouble reaching that goal. The only problem is *Hunger For More* doesn't stretch far from the multi-platinum blueprint 50 laid down last year. In fact, Lloyd's "I Get High," complete with Snoop verse, could easily pass for the 2K4 "P.I.M.P. (Remix)," and "If Ya So Gangsta" covers the same sucker MC territory as "Wanksta." Hopefully, now that Banks has removed his training wheels, he'll learn to ride down his own path.—ANSLEM SAMUEL

