



6lack's Long Awaited Return with 'Since I Have A Lover'



Dark melodies, lyrical prowess and nonchalant delivery have been staples in the two-time GRAMMY-nominated 6lack's artistic identity. The dark knight of R&B returns after nearly five years with his third LP, 'Since I Have A Lover'. With features from Don Toliver, QUIN, Wale and Yebba, the nineteen-track project explores themes of identity, and relational complexities, showing a new side of 6lack that has never seen the light of day.

'Cold Feet' is the intro to SIHAL; it's a symbiotic fusion of all themes explored throughout the album. A fan voicemail in the background of a pulse synth-led production shows admiration for the tracks 6lack has released since his critically acclaimed 'East Atlanta Love Letter' in 2018. She pleads with him to release more. You hear 6lack speak with his son on his birthday. Moments flash in the form of musical intervals personifying recent memories, an answer to the reasoning behind the delay in sharing music – life.

'Inwood Hill Park' removes any sense of cold feet as the Atlanta virtuoso reminds himself and the listeners what he is capable of. 6lack goes on to deliver smooth lyrical depth on a cut-throat drum track that never seems to cease, examining his current circumstance whilst seemingly addressing a lover we are unable to see;

*'I had to learn bein' stubborn was a vice
// had to pick apart the trauma in my life'.*

His vocal delivery teeters on the edge of being drowned out by the thundering drums but never falls, roaming through an atmosphere of dark instability. 6lack stays steady in this vulnerable moment to prepare the way for the title track.

'Since I Have A Lover' allows a confident 6lack to wear his heart on his sleeve. Instead of being on edge, his vocal delivery exudes confidence and drives the track's momentum forward. A repeating guitar loop creates the scenic atmosphere needed for the beauty of the moment to be expressed:

*'Since I have a lover, no more lonely nights!
The type of love that you supply, can't televise'*

As SIHAL develops, a pattern in creative direction can be felt – a battle between light and dark ensues. Indicative of 6lack's current exploration of his artistic identity, he mentions in 'Inwood Hill Park';

*'I'm nothin' like I was when I first dropped/
'Cause I would hate to do the same thing twice'.*

Tracks such as 'Playin House' (Which features an outro by Yebba) and 'Fatal Attraction' are reminiscent of his 'FREE6lack' days, exploring themes of relational complexities, turmoil and sexual prowess accompanied with a brooding dark atmosphere through piano ballads and dark synth progressions.

'Preach', a recollection of 6lack's blockbuster rapping capability and versatility, picks back up the momentum. It sees the Atlanta native take on themes of accountability, responsibility and what he observes in the environment surrounding him.

This is then followed by arguably the strongest track on the project 'Tit For Tat', a song that brings back memories of the legendary '808s & Heartbreak', a dark melodic anthem on treating a present/past lover. Haunting harmonies in the background, a menacing otherworldly synth and persistent bass embody what makes 6lack in a league of his own.

Unfortunately, after this point in the album, the cohesive and immersive nature of the project ceased to exist. The other seven tracks in the latter half disappoint, especially since one of the tracks (Temporary) features Don Toliver. The momentum of piercing drum patterns, atmospheric synths and lyrical continuity seem to disappear into oblivion, and the listener is thrown into a completely different album.

It's as if 6lack eases on the pedal that was driving the identity of SIHAL forward, overshadowing the confidence from 'Tit For Tat', 'Preach' and 'Talkback'. Whether this was by design – perhaps to strip back and open the sonic field to a country-esque narrative genre-bending ending – the execution is flawed. It is a good album, and 6lack fans will be delighted that there is a new project for their earworms to feast on, it just lacks cohesion which has always been a staple in the artistically unreserved 6lack's repertoire.

Words by Ramy Abou-Setta
Posted On 27 March, 2023