



Paste

## Atmosphere When Life Gives You Lemons, You Paint That Shit Gold [Rhymesayers]

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*When Life Gives You Lemons, You Paint That Shit Gold* marks the sixth studio album from lyricist Slug and producer Ant. For the first time, the duo forgoes Ant's sampled beats in favor of live instrumentals to back Slug's rhymes, which results in a sound that's far more textured and intricate than their previous five efforts. The choice to employ live musicians enables Atmosphere to round up some uncharacteristic guest artists, including Tom Waits beat-boxing on "The Waitress" and TV on the Radio's Tunde Adebimpe singing backing vocals on "Your Glasshouse." Strange pairings, yes, but they work, particularly on "The Waitress," a song written from the point of view of a homeless man that has lyrics like those straight out of Waits' catalogue.

In another marked departure from Atmosphere's previous work, Slug, who has typically used his rhymes to date as a cathartic public diary to vent about his life and relationships, has made a concerted effort here to expand his lyrics beyond his own personal experiences and become a storyteller. As such, he threads a fatherhood theme through all 15 songs on *Lemons*. By and large this is a successful experiment, but the lyrical nadir on the album is "The Skinny," a song about cigarette smoking that plays on a vaguely unsophisticated metaphor. Slug's words on the track trip over the fine line he tends to tread between meaningful and trite, becoming, for lack of a better word, corny.

Fans of Atmosphere's older work might find *Lemons* a bit sour at first; the beats are a bit softer and slower and the lyrics a bit more dense throughout. Furthermore, first single "Shoulda Known" misleads slightly, since it easily could have appeared on any of the group's last five albums. But repeated listens unveil a deeper side of Atmosphere—a complexity in both its lyrics and beats only hinted at previously. Listen closely, and you might just discover the maturation of Slug and Ant.