

Lettuce - Crush (2015)

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1 -Lettuce *The Force* 3:41 2 -Lettuce *Get Greasy* 4:26 3 -Lettuce *Chief* 4:58 4 -Lettuce *Lude 1* 0:32 5 -Lettuce) *Phyllis* 6:50 6 -Lettuce, Nigel Hall *Sounds like a party* 3:32 7 -Lettuce) *The Lobbyist* 4:20 8 -Lettuce *Lude 2* 0:36 9 -Lettuce *Trilogy* 7:03 10 -Lettuce *Pocket Change* 4:15 11 -Lettuce *The New Reel* 5:44 12 -Lettuce *Lude 3* 0:45 13 -Lettuce, Alecia Chakour *He Made A Woman Out Of Me* 3:05 14 -Lettuce *Silverdom* 5:02 15 -Lettuce *Lude* 0:38 16 -Lettuce *Elephant Walk* 17 -Lettuce *Let Bobby* 18 -Lettuce *The Sun* Adam "Shmeeans" Smirnoff – Guitar Adam Deitch – Drums Erick "Jesus" Coomes – Bass Ryan Zoidis – Alto, Tenor and Bari Sax Eric Krasno – Guitar Neal Evans – Organ, Keyboards Eric Bloom – Trumpet

2015 was a banner year for funk outfit Lettuce, playing numerous club dates in addition to festivals such as Gathering of the Vibes, Catskill Chill, All Good and Electric Forest. Having already released three studio albums (*Fly*, *Rage* and *Outta Here*), fans were giddy with anticipation as to what the New York-based seven piece would come out with next. Released November 6th, *Crush* may be the band's best all-around record to date.

Blasting out of the gates with the appropriately titled "The Force," listeners can hear just how big Lettuce's sounds can come through. The horn section of Ryan Zoidis and Eric Bloom give the track a big band feel, one unmatched by any other funk groups on the scene. "Get Greasy" is driven by Adam Deitch's powerful backbeat, as he is in perfect sync with Jesus Coomes down and dirty bass line. The rhythm section here is truly special as neither one dominates the track, but it is evident that what they provide is crucial to the Lettuce groove.

This leads us to "Chief," a track that swings into the wheelhouse of keyboardist Neal Evans and guitarists Adam Smirnoff and Eric Krasno. Look for the mesmerizing guitar solo about halfway through that adds another layer of depth to the tune. One might be inclined to take a breather

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after three rip-roaring songs, which Lettuce provides with the 32-second “Lude 1” before setting up the first single off the record, “Phyllis.”

If you want to know what Lettuce sounds like in a nutshell, “Phyllis” is the track. A build-up of guitar leads to Deitch’s intro before the rest of the band comes in to finish the job. It is a slow-sweeping odyssey almost haunting to the ears, laced with horns and melodic guitar throughout. “Sounds Like a Party” features frequent Lettuce collaborator Nigel Hall on vocals, an always welcome addition to any Lettuce track. His smooth voice fits in flawlessly with the band’s sound, allowing for even more diversity on such a grand record.

Speaking of grand, “The Lobbyist” is a track any funk fan would want blasting as they enter the bar on a Friday night, smoke machines and neon lights in tow. Saying the first twenty seconds are big would be an understatement, as it is truly large. “Lude 2” takes us right into “Trilogy,” the dirtiest tune on the record packing the most sludge. Of all the sixteen recorded tracks, this is the one that would be most likely to give listeners whiplash from head banging deep into the night.

Rolling right into “Pocket Change,” one half-expects a 70’s talk show host to appear ready to deliver his opening monologue. For the amount of funk brought by Lettuce, “Pocket Change” is the most wholesome throwback to an earlier musical era. Not all the way back to the Wild West, however, which is the feel of “The New Reel.” The spacing of the horn section amongst floating guitar riffs and Deitch’s beat make this one of many can’t miss tracks on Crush.

“Lude 3” moves one right along to the final four tracks on the record. Alecia Chakour checks in on vocals during “He Made a Woman Out of Me,” and good heavens can she belt it out. One of the shorter songs on the record, she makes the most of her appearance with a gritty addition to the underlying instrumentals. Lettuce moves back to their boisterous nature with “Silverdome” before sliding through “Lude” and into “Let Bobby” to finish off the release.

Crush gives funk fans exactly what they want in a studio record: high-flying guitar riffs, chunky rhythms, massive-sounding horns and seamlessly intertwined keys. It seems that Lettuce is getting better with age, completely outdoing themselves and capping off a brilliant 2015 with a record that truly stands on its own. ---Foster Dunigan, sensiblereason.com

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