



Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (33 1/3)

By Kirk Walker Graves

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In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Kanye West created the most compelling body of pop music by an American artist during the period. Having risen from obscurity as a precocious producer through the ranks of Jay Z's Roc-A-Fella records, by the time he released *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* (*MBDTF*) in late 2010, West had evolved into a master collagist, an alchemist capable of transfiguring semi-obscure soul samples and indelible beats into a brash and vulnerable new art form.

A look at the arc of his career, from the heady chipmunk soul exuberance of *The College Dropout* (2004) to the operatic narcissism of *MBDTF*, tells us about the march of pop music into the digital age and, by extension, the contradictions that define our cultural epoch. In a cloud-based and on-demand culture - a place of increasing virtualization, loneliness, and hyper-connectivity - West straddles this critical moment as what David Samuels of *The Atlantic* calls "the first true genius of the iPhone era, the Mozart of contemporary American music." In the land of taking a selfie, honing a personal brand, and publicly melting down online, Kanye West is the undisputed king.

Swallowing the chaos wrought by his public persona and digesting it as a grandiose allegory of self-redemption, Kanye sublimates his narcissism to paint masterstroke after masterstroke on *MBDTF*, a 69-minute hymn to egotistical excess. Sampling and ventriloquizing the pop music past to tell the story of its future - very much a tale of our culture's wish for unfettered digital ubiquity - *MBDTF* is the album of its time, an aesthetic self-acquittal and spiritual autobiography of our era's most dynamic artist.

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Editorial Review

Review

“In Graves' book, he not only breaks down each track on the record, but he also effectively lays out the context of the album's release, explaining why Kanye is deserving of an investigative book like this one (and hopefully soon, others), and what about Mr. West makes him the biggest and most off-putting rock star on the planet.” ?*Dan Buyanovsky, Revolt TV*

“Kanye West is the millennial generation incarnate, or at least that’s what Kirk Walker Graves would have us all think. Throughout the 150 or so pages of this book, Graves unpacks the enigma that is Kanye West’s personality and art. This book isn’t so much about the musical qualities of *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* as it is about how Kanye’s ego and public persona can be used to explain modern 20-somethings. Graves finds meaning in West’s music that I never would have picked out on my own. His fandom is clear, but he never steps into hyperbole in his praise of the music. Though, at times, it feels like his discussion of this album can get a bit too academic, I appreciate the thought that he has put into his analysis of Kanye’s work. This book is some serious next-level music criticism?I never realized how much Kanye’s Gucci line meant to my life before this guy told me about it.” ?*SLUG Magazine*

“West may be divisive enough to not win over his detractors, but Graves' mix of fanboy marvel and critical detachment is persuasive enough to convince even detractors to give *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* a close listen. At the end of its 132 pages, Graves makes a convincing argument that this four-year-old deserves a spot in the 33 1/3 series. But perhaps more important, he does something that great criticism should do: he makes you want to listen to the album.” ?*Sean McCarthy, PopMatters*

“Kanye West's fifth album is only a few years old, but that didn't stop Kirk Walker Graves from writing a book proclaiming it an instant classic that perfectly captures the spirit of its era. Graves unpacks the cultural meaning and significance of West's famous ego and chaotic public persona, and examines the music both in the context of the rapper's brilliant body of work, and how it fits into the social media era.” ?*"14 Books From 2014 Every Music Lover Needs To Read", Buzzfeed*

“Listed on NYLON's 'Best Music Books to Read This Summer’” ?*NYLON*

About the Author

Kirk Walker Graves is a writer from Tennessee at work on his first novel. A graduate of Princeton University, he lives with his wife and son in Nashville.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alan Levin:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive at this point, people have do something to make them survives, being in the middle of often the crowded place

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Deidra Hird:

People live in this new morning of lifestyle always try to and must have the free time or they will get lot of stress from both way of life and work. So , if we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not just a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer will certainly unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, the book you have read is definitely Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (33 1/3).

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