

X-rated

(Where Size Matters)

JUMP-OFF

KANYE WEST

My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy
(G.O.O.D. Music/Def Jam)



ALL OF KANYE WEST'S experiences over the past three years have led him to this moment. The untimely death of his mother, Donda West, in 2007; the critically questioned *808s & Heartbreak* LP in 2008; the now-infamous mic-snatching Taylor Swift incident during the 2009 VMAs; his subsequent self-imposed exile to Hawaii to record; 2010's G.O.O.D. Fridays music series, where he released 12 new tracks over the course of a dozen Fridays; the *Runaway* short film—everything has been leading up to this album, *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, a heterogeneous mix of bits and pieces from 'Ye's discography and life. Following a tumultuous few years, the clean-cut rapper/producer uses his pain, scrutiny and controversy as fuel for his creative fire. Most mortals would buckle under the pressure, but with his fifth effort, Kanye resurrects his tarnished image with, well, G.O.O.D. music.

While the Auto-Tune-enhanced vocals of *808s* are not completely absent, the Chicago native is back in rugged rap form, as he was on his 2004 debut, *The College Dropout*. Lyrical wit abounds on the inaugural track, "Dark Fantasy," co-produced by RZA and No I.D., as well as the invigorating posse cut with Rick Ross, Jay-Z and a diabolic Nicki Minaj, "Monster," but it's the deceptively titled Kid Cudi- and Raekwon-guested "Gorgeous" that finds the MC flexing his lyrical chops the hardest. "I thought I chose a field where they couldn't stop me/If a nigga ain't shootin' the jump shot, runnin' a track meet/ But this pimp is at the top of Mount Olympus/Ready for the world games, this is my Olympics/We make 'em say 'ho,' 'cause the game's so pimpish/ Choke a *South Park* writer with a fish stick."

The cocksure lead single, "Power," follows a similar path, as Kanye fires off another barrage of verbal insults, this time at the cast of *Saturday Night Live*, for the show's televised attack of him last year ("Fuck SNL and the whole cast/ Tell 'em Yeezy said they can kiss my whole ass"). Once he's had a chance to vent his frustrations, 'Ye pokes fun at himself, toasting to the assholes of the world, on the chorus of the piano-powered "Runaway," featuring G.O.O.D. Music artist Pusha T. Sonically and lyrically, Yeezy is off to a great start, with





INNOVATE YOUR STYLE

Presented By

THE ALL-NEW Nissan JUKE™



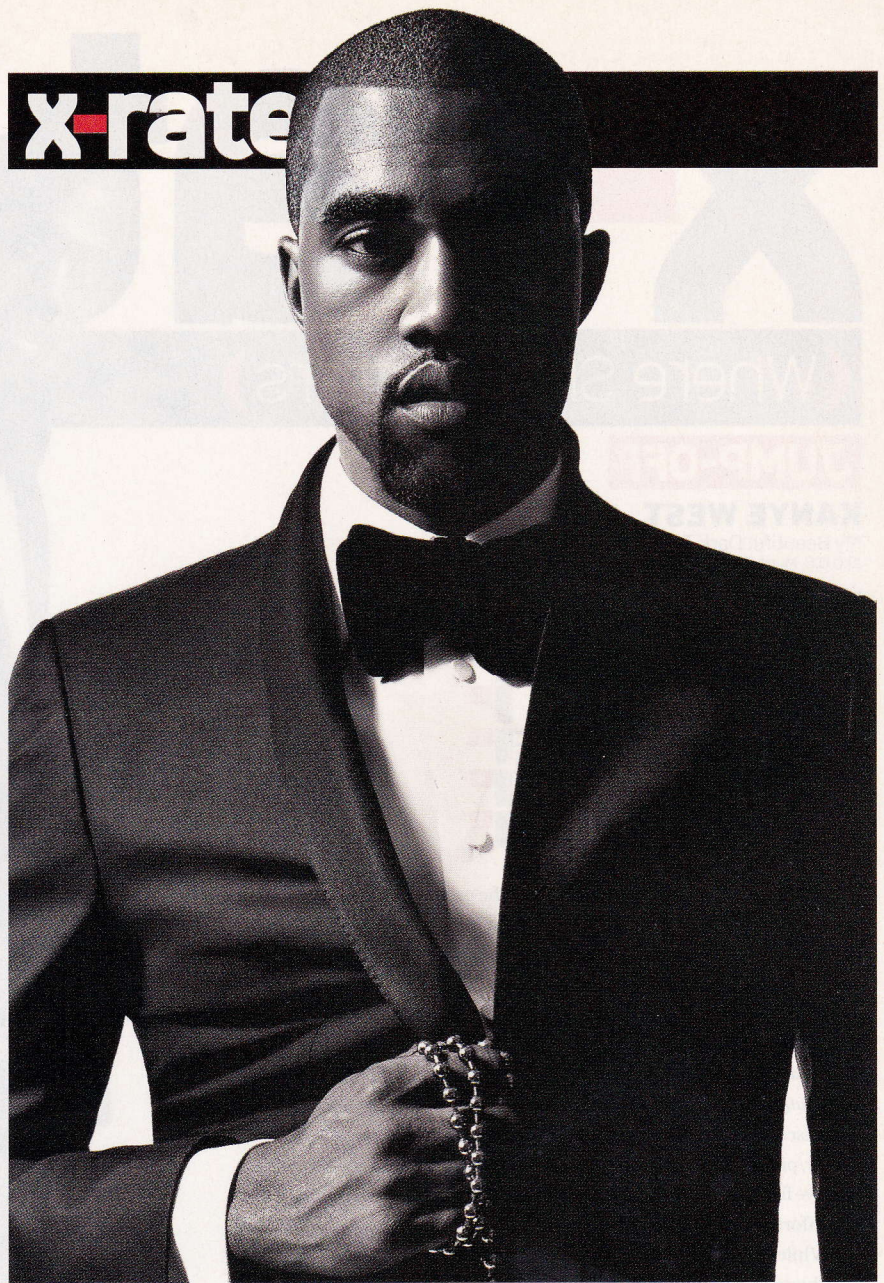
INNOVATION UNLEASHED

GO TO XXLMAG.COM
FOR YOUR CHANCE
TO WIN THE
ULTIMATE
STYLE & TECHNOLOGY
PRIZE
PACKAGE!

- Flat Screen TV
- Apple iPad
- Beats by Dre Earphones
- \$500 Shopping Spree to Upgrade Your Wardrobe

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN THIS SWEEPSTAKES. Only open and offered to legal residents of the U.S. who are at least 18 years of age or older at the time of entry. To enter, log onto XXLMag.com/nissan and follow the registration instructions therein. All federal, state and local taxes are the responsibility of prize winner. No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. Contest begins at 12:01 am EST on 11/22/10 and ends at 11:59pm EST on 2/31/11. Complete official rules are available at XXLMag.com/nissan

x-rate



intricately constructed tracks framing his heartfelt outbursts and honest inner reflections.

Unapologetically, a fearless Kanye continues to bare his soul and express his advanced musicality throughout *MBDTF*. The Auto-Tuned "Lost in the World" starts off as a somber chorus of voices—including the likes of Alicia Keys, Charlie Wilson, Bon Iver, La Roux, Kay Fox and Tony Williams—before quickly morphing into one of the stronger tracks on the album, due to its rapid-fire drums, reminiscent of *808s*' "Love Lockdown," and choirlike orchestration. Similarly, the epic "All of the Lights" features a star-studded array of vocalists (Elton John, Drake, Fergie and Rihanna, to name just a few) backing 'Ye as he paints another passionate portrait of pain. Then there's the hypnotic "Blame Game," which finds John Legend's soothing yet aggressive vocals paired with Mike Dean's

melodic keyboard work and Chris "Hitchcock" Chorney's steady cello strums, as Kanye's paranoia runs wild ("And you ain't finna see a mogul get emotional/Every time I hear about other niggas is strokin' you/Lyin', say I hit you, they sittin' there consoling you/Runnin' my name through the mud, who's provoking you?").

From a straight-up musical standpoint, *MBDTF* is pure genius and another great addition to Kanye's classic catalog. Following the experimental *808s*, this was the album where rap fans expected Yeezy to take it back to his boom-bap roots. Instead, he delivered something better, a collection of masterfully crafted records that defy conventional genre distinction. The end result is a body of work that pushes hip-hop in a bold new direction and puts Mr. West back at the forefront of the culture once again, leaving nothing more to be said, other than G.O.O.D.-ass job, Kanye. —ANSLEM SAMUEL