

Wake Up Mr. West!

Cocky & Corny or Fresh & Message Filled?

Justin R. Reed
A&E Editor

Its official Kanye West may be the best rapper alive. After beating fellow rapper 50 Cent in first week sales a couple of months ago, Kanye has solidified his position at the top. As if being Mr. Louis Vuitton wasn't enough, Mr. West has another credit to his name. Tracking the differences in sales, Kanye's Graduation (Def Jam) sold an astounding 999,000 copies in its first week, topping 50 Cent's Curtis (Interscope), which sold only 683,458 units.

50 Cent went as far as saying he would retire from the game if he lost to Mr. West. Rumor has it, 50 has been putting in hard work and plans to release a G-Unit compilation later on this year as well as another solo project. Now back to Mr. West.

His crybaby attitude has been the object of many Internet parody's and blogs. Britney Spears was "awarded" the opening performance spot at last years MTV Video Music Awards, a spot that was originally set for Mr. West. Even so, he still seems to be living the Good Life.

On a serious note, Mr. West experienced tragedy late last year. Kanye's mother passed away after an unsuccessful plastic surgery attempt. Many of West's songs were dedicated to his mother.

Kanye then proved that he was indeed Stronger than most MC's by performing a couple of days later in front of thousands of roaring fans in Paris, France. The question is still at hand.

Is Kanye West cocky and corny or fresh and message filled? It's apparent that West is extremely cocky, but maybe it's for a good reason. In a terrible year for album sales, West proved that fans actually still do in fact buy albums rather than simply resorting to illegally downloading from the Internet.

With soaring album sales, West definitely deserves to be somewhat of a cocky MC. Corny? Well, as a lyricist he has been listed among many great MC's.

Touching on such issues as neglect and the negative disadvantages of stardom, to lighter topics such as breast implants and Louis Vuitton bags, West certainly reaches all audiences, both grown and young. Fresh?

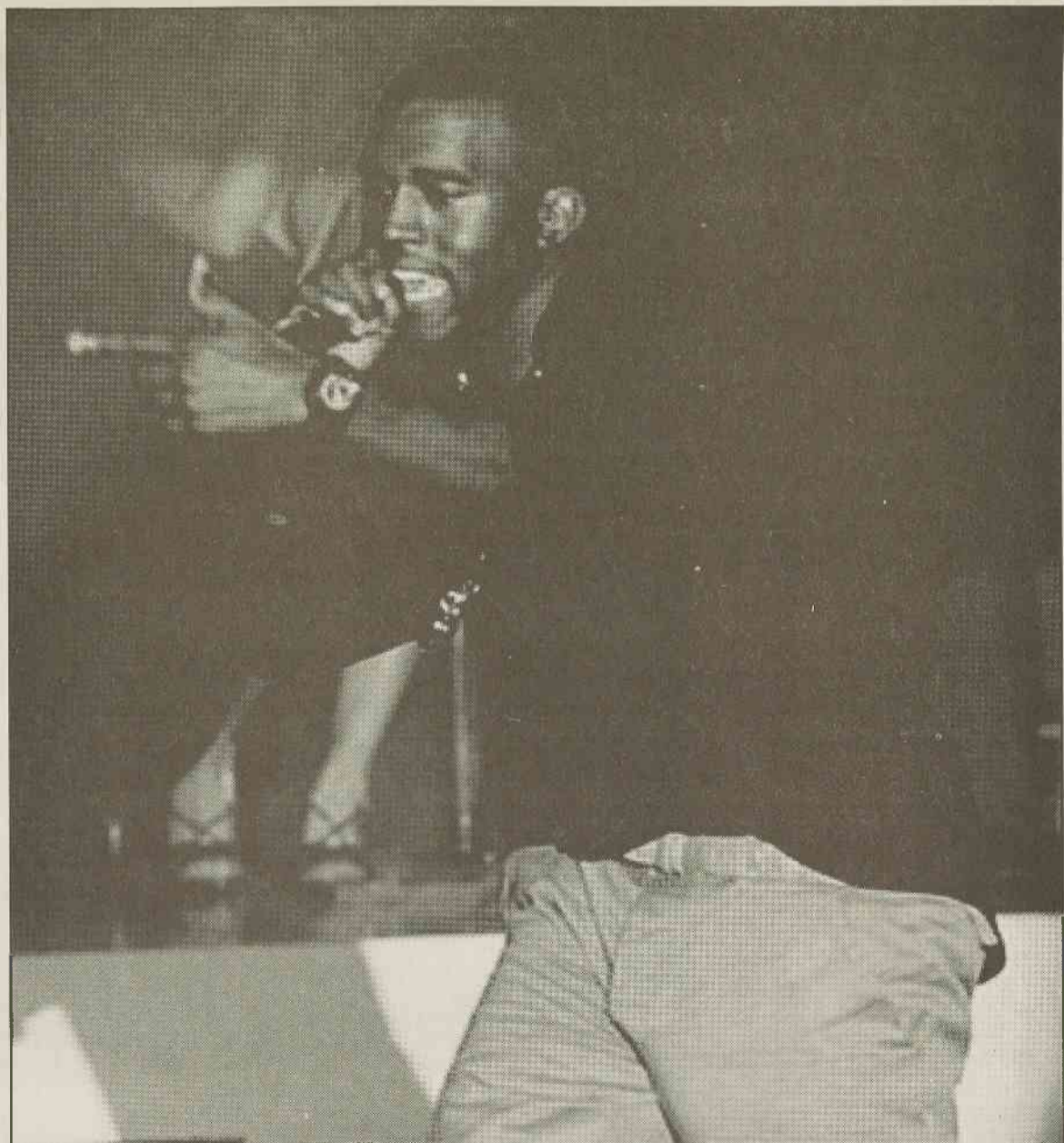
Mr. West can have the title. Baggy jeans, white tank tops, and fitted caps were the major looks in Hip-Hop up until Kanye West entered the rap scene. Now, major designers are all over the game. Dolce & Gabbana shades, Gucci duffle bag boys, Red Monkey jeans, and retro Air Force 1's are the new fashion fair of Hip-Hop.

Kanye said it best; "Ralph Lauren was boring before I wore him." Mr. West is pretty fresh, but what about message filled? Kanye is known for being a rather deep lyricist. A mixture of Common and "Big Brother" himself, Jay-Z, West delivers controversial rhymes.

His ability to rhyme non-rhyming words can also be credited to his elaborate resumé. Among other attributes, West is also a writer and a producer. His many credits include Common, Janet Jackson, Jay-Z, Slum Village, and John Legend among others.

Whether Kanye West is cocky and corny or fresh and message filled is debatable. However, attempting to hate on Mr. West proved unattainable after doing constructive research for this article. With a career on fire, and tragedy behind him, West will be sure to contribute many number one singles to radio airplay in the up incoming months.

Production and guest spots on other artist's LP's will also keep West in the spotlight. The only thing left for West to fulfill will be adapting his life into a feature film for national release. We'll keep our fingers crossed.



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Model Behavior: Meet Chanel Iman

Shante' D. Elliot
Staff Writer

Move aside Naomi Campbell; someone is here to take your spot! Born Chanel Iman Robinson, this Korean/American/African American model is taking the fashion industry by storm at the young age of 18.

Robinson was born in Atlanta, Georgia but later moved to California where she adopted the name Chanel Iman. California is also where she started her modeling career. Robinson first graced the runway during the 2006 fall/winter season for designers Custo Barcelona and DKNY.

Like all models, Robinson has her own signature trademark, which is a flirtatious eyewink that she gives while walking to the end of the runway. In her few years of modeling, Chanel Iman has already been featured on the cover of US Vogue and Teen Vogue and has also appeared on the Tyra Banks Show.

With the name of a fabulous designer, her eclectic looks, her flirtatious wink, and her graceful walk on the runway, it is easy to see why Robinson has been able to model for designers such as Valentino, Ralph



Lauren, Dolce & Gabbana, Mark Jacobs, and Vera Wang.

It is no surprise why Tyra Banks has crowned Chanel Iman Robinson the future of the modeling world.

Music Veterans Take The Back Seat

Justin R. Reed
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With recent album push backs, including such music industry veterans as Mya, Mario, Ja Rule, and Nas, newcomers to the music scene are leaving strong lasting impressions on music fans and enthusiast. Album release dates, which are based around publicity and single releases, are never truly set in stone.

This previous summer, many artist became victims to the dreadful album push back. Rapper 50 Cent, who released his third major label LP Curtis (Interscope), was the subject to two album push back dates. Curtis, which was originally slated to be released on June 26th, 2007, was first pushed back to an August release date, and then finally released on September 11th 2007, as the opponent to Kanye West's Graduation (Def Jam). Similar to 50 Cent, R&B crooner Chris Brown struggled to gain support for his sophomore LP Exclusive (Jive/Zomba). Brown took the cake with a total of three album push backs. Exclusive which was initially scheduled to be released on August 31st, 2007 was pushed back to September 4th, 2007.

With the lead single "Wall to Wall" having minimal chart success, the album was pushed back again to October, 30th 2007. "Wall to Wall" failed to break into the Billboard Hot 100's top 10. Executives at Jive Records decided to move forward and release "Kiss, Kiss", the T-Pain filled addictive up-tempo, which garnished more success for Brown. With "Kiss, Kiss" gaining the number one spot on Billboard's Hot 100, Exclusive was then finally released on November 6th 2007, selling roughly only 295,000 units. It is clear that single success is a major determining factor for record labels when calculating album release dates. Songstress Mya, who has released multiple singles back-to-back with no album, is now only one of the many veterans who have recently become a statistic. "Lock U Down" which featured Louisiana native Lil' Wayne received minimal success in the summer of 2007.

Mya then released "Ridin'", which actually did gain success on Billboard's Hip-Hop & R&B charts. After multiple push backs, Mya's Liberation (Motown) was never released due to her departure from her record label Motown Records. Many popular artists have faced push backs for different reasons as well. Rapper Nas experienced album title issues, which became the overall reason for his push back. R&B

singer Mario experienced push backs on his album Go! (J Records / Arista) due to an early Internet leak. Rapper Ja Rule failed to promote his singles "Uh Oh" and "Body", which in turn lead to the push back of The Mirror (Murder INC).

Surprisingly, factors that should be considered ass negative have positive affects on album sales. With the release of Blackout (Jive), Britney Spears sold 290,000 units in her first week, closely similar to the squeaky clean Brown. "Gimme More" also placed in the top 10 on Billboard's Radio Airplay charts. Based on the recent successes of Kerrie Underwood, Mary J. Blige and Alicia Keys, clearly it would be wise for record labels to pick one release date and to stick with that date. Underwood, who faced no album push backs, sold an astounding 527,000 units in its first week of sales. Blige, a veteran who has openly accepted the title of the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul, sold 629,000 copies of her latest LP Growing Pains (Geffen). Alicia Keys' As I Am (J Records), brought in the New Year with a bang selling 724,000 copies in its first week and was also the subject to no push backs. Although this is true of these artists, it is obvious that with minimal single success, an entire album for the most part will flop. With strong publicity, quality music and production, music videos, ample concerts, and radio airplay, artist can easily experience success in album sales avoiding album push backs. Supporting artists is equally viable. Buying albums and avoiding downloading will result in you favorite artists not disappearing into music's history books.

