

# Kanye Delivers but 50 Falters

Contributed by Ural Garrett - Black College Wire  
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## MCs in simultaneous releases

The overly cocky and outspoken Kanye West had a lot to prove with his third major release, "Graduation," and to a certain degree, he delivers.

Some things Kanye gets off the bat -- getting rid of those horrible skits from his last two releases, "College Dropout" and "Late Registration," and second, cutting the album to only 13 tracks. Because of that, there is a focus that hasn't been seen since mentor Jay-Z's "Black Album."

Kanye's production comes second to none, which in part comes from his ability to take an off-the-wall sample and make it his own, from 1970s rock band Steely Dan's classic "Kid Charlemagne" for his anthem "Champion" to "Harder, Better, Stronger" by Paris electronic masters Daft Punk for his club hit "Stronger." It seems as though Kanye has his own warehouse dedicated to housing vinyl records from every music genre.

The lyrical delivery keeps "Graduation" from being a masterpiece. Kanye's rhymes throughout the album are indicative of his typical cocky attitude and self-awareness, yet surprisingly lack his cool blatant social commentary. "Can't Tell Me Nothing" is evidence of his self-aware cockiness, while "Big Brother" indicates humility toward Jay-Z. The much-anticipated track "Barry Bonds," featuring Lil' Wayne, shows that though he can go toe-to-toe with the best lyricists out there, he still has a way to go.

Surprise highlights of the album include the ridiculously funny "Drunk and Hot Girls" featuring Mos Def and the potential club hit "Flashing Lights" featuring Dwele.

While not as great and groundbreaking as his debut and sophomore releases, "Graduation" is a solid effort from the Chicago MC/producer.

## 50 Cent's "Curtis"

The multiple endorsements, investments in flavored water, movie roles and more have taken Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson from felon to pop icon. With the release of his third major release, "Curtis," it seems as though his skills as a Queens, N.Y., MC have gone by the wayside.

While the album kicks off to a fierce start after the typical intro, with tracks "My Gun" and "Man Down," afterward there is an odd inconsistency.

He is on fire as a hard-up super gangsta, with tracks like "Fully Loaded Clip" and lyrics like "While Jay-Z and Beyonce were in the mmm kissen, I was cooking one thousand grams in my kitchen." The album falls when he does his soft romantic and pop tracks, like "Ayo Technology" featuring Justin Timberlake, and "Follow My Lead" featuring Robin Thicke.

At the end of the day, lyrically and musically, "Curtis" isn't as much a step backward as a step sideways.

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