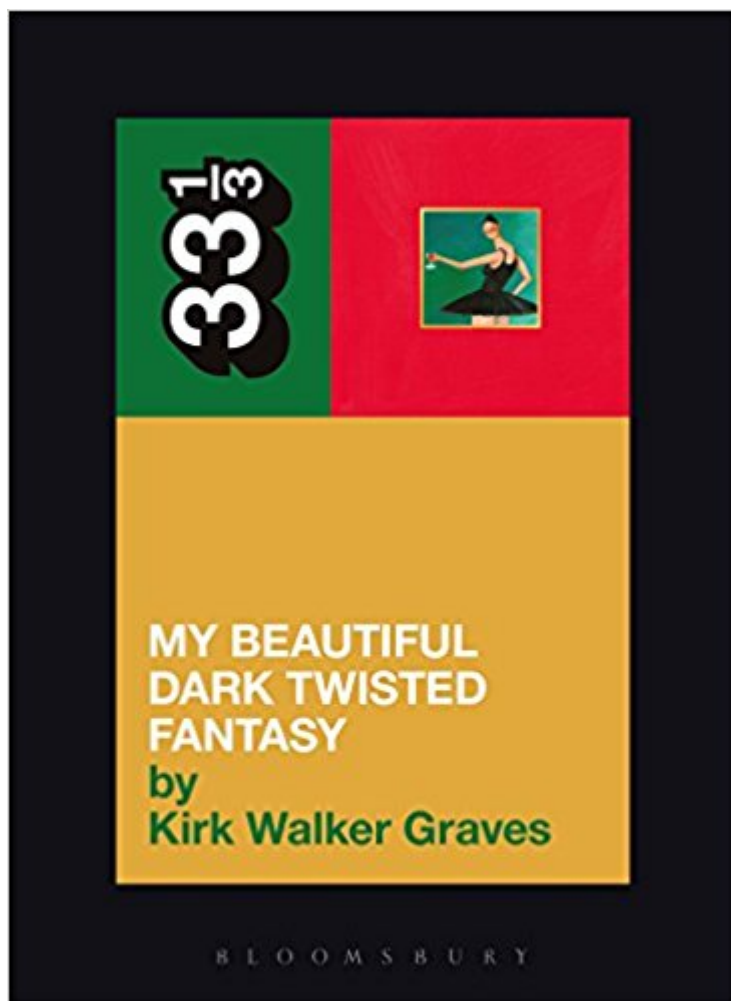


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Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (33 1/3)



Synopsis

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 masterpiece after masterpiece 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Our culture is already bored with meta-commentary about the potential effects of the digital revolution. It's here, it's everywhere, it's the water flowing over the gills of the millennial and nourishing an isolated global community of social mavens, prepared to Google-as-a-verb the meaning of the word "maven" at a moment's notice from a smartphone, tablet, netbook, and eyeglasses. It is no surprise, then, that possibly the most influential musician of the 21st century personifies and embraces the identity-crafting realm of the real-time and connected. It's important that any book about this musician understands the world we live in. Kirk Walker Graves, author of the 33 1/3 entry for Kanye West's album "My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy", assumed the burden of dissecting the eponymous album for this very reason. Why focus an intellectual analysis on an album only four years old, nearly devoid of historical context? The author sends the message that MBDTF is the first album that wraps its tendrils directly into the psyche of a society that treats socializing as preparation for personal celebrity, desiring all things immediately not just due to impatience, but because soon now will be irrelevant. Much like the album and our pop culture, the importance of Graves' analysis cannot be understated, or delayed. Graves shows a level of enthusiasm for his work comparable to a toddler with a leaf blower in a realm of endless cotton candy. The book begins by giving one of the best explanations of Kanye, the artist and the human, that I have yet read. It helps the reader place him within the digital culture now pervading the world that I previously mentioned.

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