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

By Kirk Walker Graves



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**Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (33 1/3)** By Kirk Walker Graves

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 Â? a place of increasing virtualization, loneliness, and hyper-connectivity Â? 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 Â? very much a tale of our culture's wish for unfettered digital ubiquity Â? *MBDTF* is the album of its era, an aesthetic self-acquittal and spiritual autobiography of our era's most dynamic artist.



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## Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (33 1/3) By Kirk Walker Graves Bibliography

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