

Kan, the Chart-Topping Don(da)

BY KYLE BAKER

Ye's "Donda" proves to be worth the wait.

YE, THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN as Kanye West, reminds everybody that he still has the rap game in a death grip with his album "Donda." The album is dedicated to his late mother Donda, and has hit number one on countless charts. So, is the album worth all the hype? While it may not be Ye's pièce de résistance, it serves a much greater purpose.

Calling Ye an enigma would be an understatement. He has built a billion-dollar sneaker empire, ran for president, moved to Wyoming, and made very... unique comments about slavery during a now infamous bipolar breakdown on TMZ. Given his past antics, it should not surprise anyone that Ye held listening parties that sold out entire stadiums on three different occasions for the album. Oh, and he hadn't completed the album before the performances.

Moving onto the album, to put it bluntly, "Donda" is not Ye's best work. As previously stated, the album needs tweaking and sounds like it was released prematurely. Ye delivers head-scratching lyrics at times, as in the song "New Again." Ye shares, "If I hit you with a 'W-Y-D?' You better not hit me with a 'H-E-Y' It better be like 'Hiii' with a bunch of I's Or 'Heyyy' with a bunch of Y's." That is not exactly Shakespearean.

Although "Donda" lacks in certain areas, it exceeds even the loftiest of expectations in others. The genius of

Ye is his eccentric style. On paper, the concept of "Donda" sounds like a train wreck. An album that attempts to combine a clean, Sunday-service feel with the grittiness of Hip Hop doesn't sound like a winning recipe. However, this has become Ye's forte. After honing his craft with the same style on his past album "Jesus is King," he pulls it off effortlessly. Ye also manages to make every track his own despite featuring almost everyone of notoriety in the rap industry.

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Ye attacks many different issues throughout the album's 27 tracks. One example is social justice in "Jesus Lord." On the track, Ye features Larry Hoover Jr., son of the co-founder of the street gang The Gangster Disciples. Towards the end of the song, Jr. pleads for the release of his father. Larry Hoover Sr. is currently facing six life sentences for his involvement with the gang and other crimes committed. Ye is very vocal in his support for the release of Larry Hoover Sr.; the spot for his son on the

album was merely a blip of his efforts. In addition, Ye tackles drug use, the anxiety of life, hypocrisies in today's world, the struggles of success, and the grief and guilt of his mother's passing.

Ye also showcases some of the most heart-wrenching, tear-jerking lyrics he has ever produced. In the aforementioned "Jesus Lord," Ye raps, "Mama, you was the life of the party. I swear you brought life to the party. When you lost your life, it took the life out the party." The amount of pain and anguish in Ye's voice is almost unbearable to hear. It all but forces the listener to feel for him. "Donda" is as much music for the ears as it is for the soul.

The album may not be Grammy-worthy, but that was never the goal. "Donda" transcends rap. It doesn't pretend to be on the level of his more commercially successful albums like "My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy" or "Graduation." "Donda" is about storytelling. It's about strength, perseverance, faith, grieving, and healing. "Donda" is not simply a rapper making an album; "Donda" is a ticket to experience what happens when an artist puts their heart, soul, and every fiber of their being into a creation.