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Kendrick and Drake diss each other multiple times in one weekend, A.I. shenanigans, shots fired at and from Future, Metro Boomin, Rick Ross, Weeknd, and more in a new chapter in rap geopolitics.

**By Frazier Tharpe**

May 5, 2024

There's the back-to-back effect, and then there's the unrestrained chaos of dropping long diss tracks, densely loaded with viciously personal power punches, within an hour of each other. On the first weekend in May, Drake commandeered everyone's Friday night to turn up the heat in his beef with Kendrick Lamar with a three-part reply and accompanying music video—only for Kendrick to hit right back with what may be one of the most scathing diss tracks in rap history. This Cold War is firmly and decidedly thawed all the way out—and the [Maybach] gloves are off.

To paraphrase prime Jigga-era Jay-Z, the summer just got hotter. Read on for a full account of 2024's most constantly-evolving rap beef.

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### **The Drake/Kendrick Lamar Beef Has a Winner. Where Do We Go From Here?**

The low blows thrown during this weekend's volley of diss songs have changed hip-hop's rules of engagement forever—and may have shifted both Drake and Kendrick's legacies in the bargain.

**By Lawrence Burney**

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### **March 29: Kendrick Lamar declares war, on an album that may be wholly dedicated to dissing Drake.**

Future and Metro Boomin's decade-in-the-making new album *We Don't Trust You* was



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## Future, Metro Boomin, Kendrick Lamar - Like That (Official Audio)



Kendrick sets the tone early, declaring that he's "choosing violence" and it's time for an opponent to "prove that he's a problem." And though no names are officially named, a reference to Drake's song "**First Person Shooter**" and the album it lives on, *For All the Dogs*, means we have to consider this something more than a subliminal. On "FPS" Drake brags about taking Michael Jackson's mantle for having the most Billboard Hot 100 No. 1 songs, going as far as to hit the "Beat It" steps with a sequined glove in the video. Here, Kendrick finally, formally casts himself as direct opposition, ending his verse with a haymaker referencing MJ's own longtime Cold War enemy: "Prince outlived Mike Jack." Sheesh.

Kendrick and Drake have a complicated history, with over 10 years' worth of static. As fanfare around Kendrick Lamar grew, Drake was quick to embrace him, giving Kendrick his own interlude on his 2011 album *Take Care* and bringing him along for the subsequent Club Paradise tour (which also included J. Cole, A\$AP Rocky, Meek Mill, 2



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## Kendrick Lamar - Poetic Justice (Explicit) ft. Drake



Nevertheless they linked up for the excellent “Poetic Justice” on Kendrick’s seminal *good kid, M.a.a.d. City* album—but the collaborative vibes stopped a year later, after Drake was one of the many peers Kendrick named in his timeline-stopping, call-to-arms verse on Big Sean’s “Control.” A month or two after that moment, Drake dropped *Nothing Was the Same*, and in an interview with Elliott Wilson, slickly managed to give Kendrick his props while dismissing the verse at the same time. Fast forward a month, to a cypher at the 2013 BET Hip-Hop Awards where Kendrick Lamar rapped “Nothing’s been the same since they dropped ‘Control’/and tucked the sensitive rapper back in his pajama clothes.” Two months later: Drake hops on a remix to Future’s titanic “Sh!t” and ends his verse with “Fuckn-ggas, gon be fuckn-ggas/that’s why we never gave a fuck/when a fuckn-gga switched up.”



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taken as warning shots but easily disavowed as harmless if either artist was asked. A spicy allusion to rappers using ghostwriters just months before that whole scandal broke out [here](#). A charged “I put him on MY tour” reminder [there](#). “[The Language](#),” “[Element](#),” “[Deep Water](#),” “[100](#)”—all reasonably diss canon but never made official. (To say nothing of Kendrick and his cousin Baby Keem’s “[The Hillbillies](#)” conspicuously aping Drake’s “[Sticky](#)” flow, or Drake [saying](#) he can't be like “one of those guys” who only drops albums every three to five years when announcing *For All the Dogs*.) NFL star Marcellus Wiley [once claimed](#) he bore witness to one of the rappers taking it there when asked about the situation during an ESPN *SportsNation* interview, but cooler heads prevailed, the rapper's team had the interview buried and to this day we don't know which of the two it was.

### April 5-7: J. Cole enters the fray—and immediately exits it.

In the midst of playing United States vs. Soviet Union, though, both rappers maintained a close relationship with Germany, i.e. J. Cole. Kendrick and Cole have yet to make a rap forum dream a reality with their long-alluded-to collab album (we'll always [have this](#), though) but stayed in communication on wax in other ways, like Kendrick handling hook duty on Cole's “Under the Sun” or that time they did a beat swap and freestyle over each other's songs on [Black Friday](#). Cole and Drake, meanwhile, have always been upfront about maintaining a real friendship outside of rap, but finally doubled down on that on wax with not one [but two](#) collaborations last year (their first songs together in 10 years) and Cole joining Drake's nationwide tour for several dates.

In [another interview](#) with Wilson, this time alongside Brian “B.Dot” Miller at the tail end of the last decade, Drake mused that the next 10 years would be the time for him, Kendrick and Cole really show and prove who's built to last. Cole made the subtext plain on a [2021 freestyle](#) over Drake's then-new song “Pipe Down,” rapping “Some people say that I'm running third, they throw the bronze at me/Behind Drake and Dot, yeh, them



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On “Like That,” Kendrick is feeling a lot less kumbaya, rapping “Motherfuck the Big Three, it’s just Big Me.” Between that and dismissively observing that “n-ggas cliquin up” earlier in the verse, some could argue that the song also functions as a J. Cole diss as well as Drake. But you could just as easily say the same about Cole’s recent statements that he’s out to prove he’s the best, as he preps his long-awaited album *The Fall Off*, a *Black Album*-esque manifesto he’s crafting to ostensibly end all debate. After all, that Big Three line on “First Person Shooter” does end with Cole declaring himself Muhammed Ali, a sentiment he’s been doubling down on in one stellar verse after another for the last few years. He clarified in an interview with Lil Yachty that he never once awarded himself the bronze medal, just merely acknowledged that it was a rampant perception. So in theory, the new Kendrick lines could be received by Cole as the same spirit of competition that he’s been preaching.

Cole would go on to respond to Kendrick with “7 Minute Drill,” a diss track more notable for Cole admitting on it that he doesn’t want to really go there with his onetime friend than any especially vicious jabs. As the internet spent the weekend debating if J. Cole’s heart was really in it, by Sunday he would go onstage at his own Dreamville Festival to confirm just that. He publicly retracted his diss, apologized to and bigged up Lamar, *and* even vowed to stay out of it even if Kendrick should respond to “Drill.”

### **So why do Future and Metro Boomin suddenly have issues with Drake after doing dozens of collaborations with him?**

We’ve gone hundreds of words without returning to the duo who delivered this moment: Future, the fourth face on that 2010s Rap Mount Rushmore, and Metro Boomin, the superproducer he’s made some of his most potent music with. There’s a deeper layer to Kendrick choosing a Future and Metro album as the stage to finally go at Drake: Metro has seemingly had his own problems with the 6ix God. Late last year he posted and



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fam.” Despite trading a few more subliminal potshots **across Twitter and IG**, Metro downplayed any beef, saying that the issue was “**not deep at all.**”

Still, when eagle-eyed fans took note of Metro unfollowing Drake on Instagram—the definitive 21st century signpost of an un-amicable split—ahead of the album’s release, it didn’t take a hip-hop scholar to assume that, as Kendrick would declare, “it’s up.” And for those wondering how a producer-rapper beef would even reasonably play out, Metro makes it clear by serving up a new creative peak on “Like That,” with an obscenely screwface-inducing beat sampling 80s rap duo Rodney O and Joe Cooley’s classic “Everlasting Bass,” (which was famously earlier sampled on Three 6 Mafia’s “Who the Crunkest”), alongside **Eazy-E’s classic “Eazy Duz It”** as well as a splash of “**Ridin Spinners.**” In effect Kendrick and Metro are following playbooks beloved by the likes of Jay-Z before them, or even Drake with “Back to Back,” in dissing your opponent on a song that’s an undeniable banger whether people know the context or not.

But why would Future, who has approximately 30 (*thirty*) collaborations with Drake, including the 2015 collab album *What a Time to Be Alive* and two fairly recent tracks on Future’s last solo album, cede airtime on his new project to a noted Drake enemy? No one knows for sure at press time, but it’s possible they have issues of their own. Despite their prolific collaborations, their relationship has had its rough moments from day one. Recall 2011, when an ascendant Future got an assist from Drake remixing the former’s “Tony Montana,” only to publicly bemoan **Drake refusing to do a video**. And while they toured together in 2016, who can forget **that time in 2013** when Future was briefly, allegedly booted off of Drake’s tour for less-than-flattering comments about his music in an interview.

Factor in the name of the album, and Future’s rap on the intro about someone who’s his number one fan despite sneak dissing him on the side, and you don’t need that big of a tinfoil hat to make the leap. Any opinions on the current status of Future and Drake’s



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project with space reserved for direct shots at him. (That would be like 21 Savage letting Pusha T hop on a track.)

It'll be interesting to see how this all unfolds, but, one thing we shouldn't lose sight of is that *We Don't Trust You* is, quite simply, incredible. Sure, beef is cool but so is Future reverting to some of his most historically depraved peaks earlier on the track—do *not* listen closely if you don't want to hear specifics of the X-rated scenario that may absolve him of one of his 20 carat rings. He's blacking out mostly everywhere else on the album even harder; 2022's *I Never Liked You* is a great album, but *We Don't Trust You* arrives immediately battling for an even higher spot in his storied discography. The same can be said for Metro's beats; I yelled just as loudly as I did at Kendrick on "Like That" later on at the surprise Rick Ross verse as he glides on the soulful, escalating beat for "Everyday Hustle"... only for the beat to morph a third time as Future returns to take the reins. Metro's been talking this album up for the better part of a year, directly acknowledging the high standard set by his and Future's past work as a unit. They've cleared that bar and then some, shaking the rap game up in the process, securing a top slot for a summer outside and any Best Of lists. Silencing all doubters with the music, casting oneself as a step ahead of the competition: it's energy the late, great Mobb Deep rapper Prodigy would appreciate, which is perhaps why the album is peppered with gripping soundbites from some of his past interviews.

Metro and Future would later spin it back with a second album, *We Still Don't Trust You*, which while more R&B-influenced, still had time to get in a couple more Drake shots albeit sans Kendrick. (You can read the [breakdown on those here](#).)

### **April 13: Drake hits back at Kendrick—and everyone else—with "Push Ups"**

Three weeks later, we finally got a Drake response. Early Saturday morning a song leaked



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For about four minutes, over a dark and brooding beat that apparently originally sampled Junior Mafia's "Get Money," Drake fires off shots, disses and rebuttals to all the artists who have been coming at him since "Like That" dropped: "What the hell is this, a 20 v 1, n-gga?"

Drake, blessedly, doesn't resort to any sneak disses that rely on fans to connect the dots; names are named. He chides Rick Ross for jumping in when "every song that made it on the chart he got from Drizzy," alleges The Weeknd's **right-hand-man Cash** is "spending all his bread out here trickin" and he tells Metro to "shut your bitch ass up and make some drums." He even appears to send a stray at Ja Morant for **weighing in**, rapping "Shout out to the hooper that be **busting out the griddy**/I know why you mad, I ain't even tripping." Curiously, Future does not get called out by name but Drake does respond directly to a bar on the "We Don't Trust You" title track, saying "I can never be another n-gga No. 1 fan/Your first No. 1 I had to put it in your hands." (There's also a line referencing the Rolling Loud stage where Metro and Future first teased "Like That," where Drake says shit might change "if your BM kiss and tell." He doesn't go further but do remember the other person on that stage with them for that moment was none other than Travis Scott, who has two kids with Kylie Jenner...)

But the majority of the track's ire is reserved for Kendrick Lamar. Drake has several sophomoric bars attacking his smaller stature, calling him a "pipsqueak" that he had to "hike down to" to for this reply, and a so-called big stepper that "wears size 7 mens." The main angle Drake takes though is on Kendrick's business relationship with his former label TDE and its founder Top Dawg, alleging that Top took a lion's share of Kendrick's profits and made him do lame pop collabs for money: "Maroon 5 **need a verse** you better make it witty/Then we need a verse for the **Swifties**/Top say 'drop,' you better drop and give him 50." (The push-up theme plays off the jokes fans have been making about Kendrick being war ready because **he posts workouts** on Instagram.)



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**Dreamville Festival last weekend:** “I don't care what Cole think, that Dot shit was weak as fuck.”

Drake ends the original version of the song daring Kendrick to drop the nuclear diss he's reportedly sitting on or “shut your mouth,” alleging that Kendrick has had one for “four years” and still hasn't pushed the button. As direct as this Drake song is, the last few bars imply it's just a move to get Kendrick to reply, at which point Drake has more information ready to weaponize.

But the blink-and-you'll-miss-it reference to **Kendrick's partner Whitney** (“I'll be with some bodyguards like Whitney”) suggests Drake may not be considering the way his last high profile beef turned out. In 2018 when **he rapped to Pusha T** that his crew would “let it ring on him like Virginia Williams,” Pusha took the name-drop of his then fiancé as an excuse to take the gloves off and reveal intimate details about Drake's own family. Is Drake intentionally baiting Kendrick to take it to a similar level so he can hit back even harder, or is he once again underestimating his opponent?

**April 19: Drake drops “Taylor Made,” an A.I. troll-stunt taunting Kendrick to reply to “Push Ups”**



Not found

<https://twitter.com/Drake/status/1781536244071358886>

You've got to hand it to Drake: he has a wicked sense of humor. In the week since “Push Ups” impacted, the diss climate has been clouded by a new, decidedly 2024 problem: A.I.



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six days imitating both Drake and Kendrick. Or were they real leaks that both camps found it more advantageous not to claim?

The biggest debate stirred up over a partial Kendrick “leak” that hit Monday April 15, with lyrics that were less-than-biting and an unimpressive beat. While Daylyt, a rapper affiliated with Kendrick, immediately called it out as being A.I., Drake's longtime OVO affiliate Hush fanned conspiracy flames by imploring Kendrick fans to keep the same energy about it being underwhelming when they “find out it's real.” (Drake responded to Hush's post, laughing.)

The rapper behind the fake song eventually came forward with a video revealing how he made it and a subsequent interview with *Complex*. Even with that officially debunked, Drake continued to taunt Kendrick with social media antics like repeatedly posting pictures Ant Saleh, one of Kendrick's managers, on his Instagram story, daring the pgLang team to drop their response to “Push Ups.”

On Friday night April 19, Drake finally got tired of waiting and dropped another track—sort of. This isn't quite a “Back to Back” situation, and this new song hardly “counts” as another official diss, but it does apply pressure. Drake leans right into the whole A.I. debate with “Taylor Made,” a track that employs artificially-created verses from the late 2Pac and Snoop Dogg, clearly written by Drake before Drake tags in himself at the end with some new taunts for Kendrick.

There's levels to this: obviously it's funny and witty on Drake's part to flip the annoying “is it A.I.?” debate that's raged all week. Kendrick has been vocal about his idolatry of 2Pac—*To Pimp a Butterfly* even ends with Kendrick staging a “conversation” with Pac via interview audio that Afeni Shakur granted him permission to use. And Snoop is a west coast rap forefather to Kendrick, one of several legends who formally passed Kendrick the torch at a seminal House of Blues LA show. Drake's zombie-Snoop verse makes note of



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deference to his pop collaborations, alleging that Taylor Swift is “his new Top Dawg” and she’s making him sit this weekend out to let her new album roll out uncontested. Via “2Pac,” he directly responds to Kendrick’s “Like That” line about “snatching chains and burning tattoos,” warning Kendrick that “All that shit bout burning tattoos, he is not amused/That’s jail talk for real thugs, you gotta be you.”

Drake even uses a bit of the B-Rabbit, 8 Mile play—getting ahead of jokes your opponent might make about you by saying them first—by using “Pac” to say “Call him a bitch for me/Talk about him likin young girls, that’s a gift from me/Heard it on the Budden Podcast, it’s gotta be true.” The question of Drake, 37, dating girls in their young 20s is a topic that has come up frequently in the past and more recently as this beef started on The Joe Budden Podcast—Drake’s issue with the titular host is deep and layered enough to power its own explainer post.

So Drake gets to seemingly take the wind out of one of Kendrick’s potential diss angles, and get a little chin check in on his mortal enemy Joe Budden. Reaction to the track is wildly divisive, with some calling it corny, others taking Drake to task for encouraging more A.I.shenanigans to come, and others saying the pressure is on Kendrick now more than ever to move the ball forward on a fight that he technically initiated.

**April 30: Kendrick crowns himself “The Biggest Hater” with “Euphoria,” a six-minute Drake diss track**



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euphoria



“Just say his name and I promise that you'll see Candyman.” After trying to **apply pressure** to Kendrick **to respond** following his “Push Ups” leak a little over two weeks ago, Drake can reset the Dot Clock to zero. On an unassuming morning on the most boring day of the week, Kendrick came in compelled by the spirit of 2024 Hater of the Year Katt Williams with a six-minute diss track, officially kicking this back-and-forth into high gear.

First things first: anyone blanching at the runtime is not a real rap fan, or at the very least, a real fan and student of this beef shit. Six minutes is nothing—if you weren't outside for say, The Game **lighting into 50 Cent for 15 minutes** and something like five different beat changes, that's OK... just say that and move on.

While “Like That” continues to top the charts and run the clubs and “Push Ups” has a bounce to it not much more distinguishable than any other Drake banger, “Euphoria” is



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Jadakiss and Beanie's back-and-forth has never stopped me from running those back on my own time often enough.

All of that is to say, the first thing that jumps out about “Euphoria” is that it's genuinely pretty funny. Drake and Kendrick represent two polar opposites of hip-hop values, stardom and appeal (so much so that their being at odds with each other is **practically inevitable**), so they often get lumped into extremes and generalizations. Most would assume Kendrick, the Pulitzer-winning master lyricist with dense album themes would lack the ability for something as deceptively simple and outwardly hilarious as say, “Metro shut your ho ass up and make some drums.” Drake even poked fun at this idea on “Taylor Made,” challenging Kendrick to hit him with a complex “quintuple entendre.” But while Kendrick does put his pen to work here, he also sounds like he's having a lot of fun in the booth, mocking Drake's Toronto slang (“**Crodie!**”) or ending the track with a sing-songy kiss-off challenging Drake's Blackness. To paraphrase Kiss, Dot **does not sound mad**.

But let's start from the top. The layers get interesting right off the rip when you check the production credits: “Euphoria” is co-produced by Cardo, quietly one of **contemporary rap's most reliable hitmakers**. He's been a go-to for Kendrick and TDE since 2016 (including on “untitled 07,” which was alleged to have Drake subs) but he notably helmed one of Drake's biggest songs ever with the diamond-certified “God's Plan.” (And some solid album cuts afterward too, word to “**Landed.**”) Metro and Future set this whole thing off under a narrative about choosing sides; if that's true then Cardo producing Kendrick's reply may be him firmly planting his flag on on Team Kendrick.

“Euphoria” is constructed like a full song, complete with a one-minute smooth Teddy Pendergrass intro to warm things up before Cardo's thunderous beat comes crashing in, *and* another beat change around the four-minute mark where things get even more apocalyptic. (Every Kendrick fan no-doubt did **this Denzel gif** when the untitled



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Kendrick calls any family angle Drake may use—like say, name-dropping his wife on “Push Ups”—as a moot point since he aired a lot of personal business out already on his *Mr. Morale* album. And as for those Drake allegations, Kendrick slickly alludes that he isn't letting them go regardless when he says “You make music that pacify ‘em/I can double down on that line, but spare you this time.” (Get it, *pacify* em, pacifier?) Even the track's title, “Euphoria,” can read as one big allusion to that whole angle of attack since Drake is a co-producer on the notorious HBO series revolving around the lives of unruly teenagers.

The whole song has an air of Kendrick holding back on firing his biggest guns, playing his biggest jokers—much like “Push Ups,” there are plenty of “Takeover”-esque “you-know-who did you-know-what, let's leave that between me and you, for now” lines. (The most interesting tease: “I know some shit about n-ggas that would make **Gunna Wunna**”—who is currently ostracized in some corners of the rap community for appearing to cooperate with prosecutors in the Young Thug/YSL trial—“look like a saint.”)

With that said, Kendrick still manages to get a lot off even if he's saving his biggest punches. He adds his own theatrical flair and venom to a lot of the more consistent anti-Drake narratives. He shouts out Top Dawg and turns the “Push Ups” thesis of profit splits back on him. He goes at the ghostwriter allegations, cleverly flipping Drake's “20-v-1” crack to this being a “1-v-20” since Drake has an army of helpers—and he calls two out by name, BEAM (a writer-producer with credits on *Her Loss*) and more directly Lil Yachty, whose work towards helping Drake attack new rap styles was clear even before “someone” leaked **an alleged reference track** for Drake's “Jumbotron Poppin” two weeks ago that has Yachty basically rapping the song word-for-word. (For what it's worth, Yachty has always been credited on that song and several others across Drake's last two or three projects.)



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## Drake - Jumbotron Shit Poppin



Kendrick also attacks Drake's Blackness, or rather, Drake's insecurities about his racial identity, an attack Rick Ross has been diving at headfirst and Pusha T deconstructed on his seminal “Story of Adidon.” (He also, like Push and Ross before him, alleges Drake has surgically augmented abs.) Kendrick also calls Drake out for dissing Pharrell and Pusha last year on “Meltdown” and in his “Jumbotron” video, pointing out that Drake never even formally responded to “Adidon.” On that song Pusha accused Drake of being a “deadbeat” dad, and to hear Kendrick tell it, six years later despite the **courtside seats** and **concert cameos**, he isn't doing much better.

But the real fun lies in Kendrick admitting that while all of these are worthy reasons to get at someone, he just plain dislikes Drake: the way he walks, talks, dresses... even the women he chooses to sleep with (a patently hilariously unreasonable reason to dislike someone, that also may open things up for Drake to double back on his *Mr. Morale* family angle though.) And it's for that reason why Drake and Kendrick's songs



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Melly is, of course, the Florida rapper whose rising career came to a screeching halt thanks to a **still ongoing murder trial** accusing Melly of the premeditated murders of two YNW associates—ostensibly, two close friends. (Second best line: using Haley Joel Osment's IMDb for a two-for-one A.I. and ghostwriters reference.)

With lines referencing Puff Daddy **notoriously slapping Drake** and calling out Drake's right-hand enforcer Chubbs by name, Kendrick's threatening to “take it there,” but for now it remains a fun war of words and one that doesn't seem likely to end anytime soon, much less in an anticlimax like the Drake-Pusha T beef. Drake can only have been desperate for Kendrick to respond because he has a fully loaded clip waiting to shoot, and Kendrick for his part here, promises “headshots all year, you better walk around like Daft Punk.” Summer's heating up.

### **May 3: Kendrick goes back-to-back with “6:16 in LA”**



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6:08 AM · May 3, 2024



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location tracks that he's been doing since the start of his career. Those songs are usually barfests where Drake unleashes some of his best rapping and shit-talking (at least three of them have subliminals for one-time Drake foes like Diddy, Tyga or Kanye). But where “Euphoria” is thunderous and full of body jabs, “6:16” is the opposite. It runs about half as long and true to its time stamp, the Sounwave and Jack Antonoff beat is decidedly smooth and laid back. Kendrick doesn't even really get to direct Drake bars until about halfway in, but when he does, things get delicious.

Whereas “Euphoria” laid out that things “ain't that deep” and Kendrick just plain dislikes Drake, here on “6:16” Kendrick puts his Littlefinger hat on and starts sowing seeds of paranoia and distrust. You won't find any bars about fake abs on this one, but “have you ever considered OVO is working for me?” is maybe, stealthily, an even more vicious body blow.

“Euphoria” is full of taunts, expertly worded but technically nothing that Drake hasn't heard before—especially from Rick Ross—in the last three weeks. But on “6:16,” Kendrick wants Drake standing around the OVO supper table asking which one of his crodies will soon betray him.

On one of Future and Metro's tracks, Weeknd sang about Drake having “leaks” in his operation, and Kendrick picks up on that thread, teasing Drake that he's no closer to finding **the Matt Damon**. It's not Cash, Weeknd's manager who Drake dissed on “Push Ups”—and for that matter, Kendrick isn't amused by Drake bringing his own manager Ant into it with IG stories either.

Instead, to hear Dot tell it, Drake should be focusing on his own squad: “If you were street smart, then you would've caught that your entourage is only to hustle you/A hundred n-ggas that you got on salary, and 20 of em want you as a casualty/And one of them is actually next to you.” Do remember: Pusha T alleged the information he used



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Drake can safely assume DJ Akademiks and Zack Bia aren't implicated, those are not people he should be proud to have associations with.

And although the track actually dropped at 6:16 Pacific Time, theories are **already running rampant** about what else the title, and the cover art—a Maybach driving glove—could allude to. Perhaps an OJ Simpson reference—whose charges for double homicide were submitted on June 16? Which is also Tupac Shakur's birthday? Which is also the date Father's Day lands on this year, a date Kendrick alleges Drake doesn't deserve to be celebrated for?

We have entered the psychological warfare chapter of this beef, ladies and gentlemen. Kendrick is rapping like he has a real-time wire in the OVO headquarters, and while this track doesn't match the theatrical highs of “Euphoria,” it's intriguing nonetheless. In the weeks between “Push Ups” and “Euphoria,” Drake pushed a narrative that Kendrick's heart isn't in this beef stuff—and here's Kendrick challenging that idea. He insinuates that Drake is the one ruining the fun, trying to buy dirt on Kendrick that doesn't exist —“I'm sorry I live a boring life”—but if Drake wants to stoop to that level, he's ready to go.

Even amidst the chill vibes of Al Green, Kendrick sounds like Jigsaw on the track, returning to his wanting to play a game of “have-you-ever” motif that originated on “Euphoria.” Is Drake finally ready to play?

### **May 3: Drake takes the gloves off with “Family Matters”**



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## DRAKE - FAMILY MATTERS



On “Push Ups,” Drake rapped that all this beef directed his way had him feeling like the King of Conflict, 50 Cent, so it's only right that he opens his Kendrick response video with a G-Unit spinner.

True to the teases he's been seeding through various streamers, podcasters and other affiliates all week, Drake comes to the battle with a fully loaded clip: “Family Matters” is essentially three songs in one, on three different beats—and that's not counting the separate verse he used to announce the video's release on YouTube. On [his Instagram](#), Drake raps over the “Buried Alive” instrumental—the Kendrick interlude that appears on his seminal *Take Care* album—mocking Kendrick's flow, calling him jealous and pointing out that he brought him and “that other ho” (read: A\$AP Rocky) along on his Club Paradise tour as their first big look.

That's all just a cold open for the main event on “Family Matters,” a seven-and-a-half-



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song(s) at worst. (Hilariously, Drake opts to completely ignore Ye's attempts to shoehorn himself in last week with a “Like That” remix, save for a stray play-on-words around Kim Kardashian's Skims brand.)

Most of the Sinister Six shots are on the second song, which accompanies images of a hearse in the video. Drake regurgitates jokes about Rick Ross's alleged past as a corrections officer and drops a clunker about Weeknd's music “being played in the spots where boys got a little more pride.” He also implies Abel's issue with him is over an unnamed woman.

We know which woman is at the center of Drake and Rocky's beef, and Drake calls her out by name, although the average fan wouldn't catch it on first listen. Drake warns Rocky that even “Fring” would advise Rocky to leave Drake alone; Fring is **Drake's nickname for Rihanna**, a reference to her **putting him on to *Breaking Bad*** during the height of their romance. The nickname even inspired the name of his **now-closed restaurant** in Toronto. (Interestingly enough, Drake seems too genuinely hurt by Future's part in all of this to say more than a bar communicating just that.)

But Kendrick versus Drake is the main card in this battle and Drake gets right to it, with a visual of the Duckworth family van from the cover of *good kid, m.a.a.d. city* being driven to an impound lot and crushed as Drake goes in over the beat he teased at the end of “Push Ups.” Drake raps that he was trying to keep things “PG,” a reference to pgLang, the company Kendrick cofounded with his creative partner and longtime friend Dave Free. The allusions stop being thinly veiled there, though, when Drake comes right out and alleges that Dave is secretly the father to at least one of Kendrick's children with his partner and high school sweetheart Whitney Alford. So, yeah, gloves off.

It gets darker from there later in the third song, where Drake returns to the idea of Kendrick and Whitney being in a strained relationship, and even alleges domestic abuse



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That third track is where Drake focuses on Kendrick the most, opening that portion of the video at New Ho King—the same restaurant Drake was robbed outside of in 2009, which Kendrick alluded to on “Euphoria.” The message is, to paraphrase a classic Drake line, “Don't talk to me like I'm that Drake from [15] years ago, I'm at a higher place.” The “Euphoria” rebuttals don't stop there, with Drake inserting shots of the Tupac ring Kendrick said he'd outbid him for, and a shot of someone swaglessly rocking all of Pharrell's classic jewelry pieces Drake bought at his auction. (Between the Tupac ring, Pharrell's jewelry, and the G-Unit chain, Drake is becoming something of a nefarious hip-hop ice archivist.)

The last shot of the visual is Drake holding up what appears to be an engagement ring, not long after he points out that Kendrick never actually married Whitney, before declaring that anyone calling this beef objectively would have to conclude Kendrick is “dead.”

### **May 3: Kendrick responds immediately, with bars at Drake's whole family—including an alleged daughter**

meet the grahams



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the one Pusha T set for him six years ago: baiting him to drop a diss that would justify a nuclear response that made going at family fair game. It seems safe to assume that Kendrick already had this track ready to go well in advance—perhaps not thanks to some mysterious OVO mole, but because, as he says in the opening lines of “Euphoria,” he could predict the angle Drake would take and planned accordingly.

It's all part of a larger strategy; the “Meet the Grahams” artwork is the full picture that Kendrick teased earlier on “6.16 in LA.” It shows those same pair of Maybach gloves along with a shirt, receipts and prescription bottles, including one for Ozempic prescribed to Drake.

So to recap, on “Family Matters,” Drake accused Kendrick of: rampant infidelity, being too interested in living as a bachelor in New York to spend time or even post pictures with his family, and putting hands on the mother of his children, who may only be the mother to one of his children because the other was fathered by his close friend.

And somehow Kendrick manages to go 10 times darker, out spooky-ing Mr. Scary Hours with a bone-chilling, whispery delivery over a sinister beat courtesy of The Alchemist (who allegedly **did not realize** he was scoring a Drake diss track) on a song that addresses all the members of Drake's family: his son Adonis, mother Sandi, father Dennis and...an alleged 11-year-old daughter. Cue up the George Bush memes: To hear Kendrick tell it, there is a second hidden child.

Rap fans who had been growing impatient that Drake and Kendrick were merely jabbing and not letting haymakers fly can rest easy. Kendrick takes it to the Point of No Return, musing that he wishes Dennis Graham wore a condom the night Drake was conceived and telling both Drake's parents that they raised a man whose house is due to be raided any day now on Harvey Weinstein-level allegations. Kendrick alleges Drake keeps company with **sex offenders** (the same shooter Weeknd sang about on Future's album),



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only delivered straightforwardly with the maniacal glee toned all the way down and the emphasis on cutting, personal attacks turned all the way up. Pusha may have dropped blackhearted lines like “Ask Steve Jobs: wealth don't buy health,” but that's not quite the same as Kendrick straight up telling Drake he “should die,” after accusing him of being a predator on par with the likes of R. Kelly. (Some fans have been calling hypocrisy in Kendrick's taking this stance but featuring Kodak Black, who has sex offender allegations of his own, prominently on his last album.)

Things are getting very ugly on both sides; it's unclear how it will progress (or rather, devolve) from here. At press time, Drake has **taken to Instagram** to address only the claim that he has a second child, posting a picture of himself with the caption “Can someone find my hidden daughter and send her to me pls...these guys are in shambles.”

#### May 4: Kendrick spins the block *again* with “Not Like Us”

Not Like Us



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“Not Like Us” is an impressive strategic feat on several fronts. Most obviously, it applies back-to-back pressure on Drake—turning the tide in Kendrick's favor, suffocating all of the oxygen before “Family Matters” even had a chance to breathe, and aggressively putting the ball in Drake's court to hit back. But perhaps more crucially, it's a much-needed exhale after “Meet the Grahams” that also showcases Kendrick's range.

Rap fans spent the last month asking Drake and Kendrick to skip the round 1 dancing stage and get to the actual haymakers, and when they actually delivered last night, it was a case of “be careful what you wish for” for some. Kendrick's track is the more outright uncomfortable listen, but Drake harmonizing that Kendrick “beats his queen” is just as ugly. Still, even Pusha T mocking Drake's friend's poor health was an easier pill to swallow because of his delivery; “Meet the Grahams” is just joyless.

Just as Kendrick was in danger of losing the audience, and being that kid at the lunch table who takes things too far, he invites everyone to a good ol' fashioned LA block party with “Not Like Us,” which finds him dancing over a Mustard beat that both sets can **hit their walks to**.

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### **Pulling Weeds With Chris Black**

Columnist Chris Black weighs in on hot topics in culture, with the occasional rant about life as a person who had fun in his twenties.

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compelling listen than “Grahams.” This song won't travel as far up the charts as “Like That,” but it's built to work in the same functions, down to the call-and-response “O-v-Ho” refrain.

And even more so than “Euphoria,” Kendrick reasserts that for all the conscious-minded, poet laureate narratives that surround him, he can crack a good sophomoric joke with the best of them. Take your pick between the likes of “tryin to strike a chord, and it's probably A minor,” bastardizing Drake's album title to call OVO “certified pedophiles,” or flipping the 6ix God moniker to “69 God” because he's into “freaky shit.” With an opening line that references the viral classic “call the amberlamps,” Kendrick makes it clear from the outset that the content of his disses, notwithstanding, this one will at least have some levity.

Although the track is quintessentially LA, Kendrick carves out time for a whole verse dedicated to Atlanta. Specifically, the argument that Drake is a “colonizer” vamping on other cities for their style and swag, methodically listing out the various rappers he's gotten close to for street credibility, from Future and 21 Savage to Young Thug and 2 Chainz.

While The Alchemist seemingly didn't know he was producing a diss track, Mustard **posted** on social media that he'll “never turn his back on his city—and I'm fully loaded.” That's yet another big-time producer who has past collaborations with Drake but is by all accounts siding with Kendrick. The support is extending outside of music even—Kendrick's line here about Drake keeping his ex-flame Serena Williams out of his raps earned the song **a retweet** from her husband, Alexis Ohanian (whom Drake dismissed **as a groupie** on his 2022 track “Middle of the Ocean”).

Drake laughed off “Meet the Grahams” as being a sign that team PG is desperate and “in shambles,” not long after it impacted. But with “Not Like Us,” Kendrick is proving that



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## May 5: Drake hits back with “The Heart Part 6”

### THE HEART PART 6 - DRAKE



The most productive weekend in the history of rap beef continues, with Drake saying fuck all to the **Sunday Truce** and doing exactly what **Joe Budden advised**: to hit back at Kendrick's onslaught with a record in the vein of his time-stamp series, straight bars over a hard beat. Only, Kendrick already beat him to a time-stamp title last week with “6:16 in LA,” so Drake counters by co-opting one of Kendrick's recurring series: “The Heart.” (The last official entry, “**The Heart Part 5**,” heralded Kendrick's *Mr. Morale and The Big Steppers* album. Surely you remember **the music video**, where Kendrick applies deepfake technology to take on the visages of everyone from Kanye and Nipsey Hussle to OJ.) Drake even takes a page out of Kendrick's diss manual and applies some classic soul to the proceedings, countering Kendrick's Teddy Pendergrass and Al Green samples (on “Euphoria” and “6:16,” respectively) with an Aretha Franklin sample here. Aretha sings “Let me see you *proooooove* it,” setting the tone for Drake's angle here that



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vacation somewhere than holed up in cold Toronto writing diss tracks.) Drake, buddy, domestic abuse and pedophilia accusations are in the air—we've been pitch black for the last few songs already.

You would think Drake would sound a little more celebratory than he does to start the song, where he takes a victory lap for allegedly going full **Sydney Bristow** and triple-crossing Kendrick into leaping on Fake Child Intel. “We plotted for a week and then we fed you the information...we thought about giving a fake name or a destination/but you so thirsty, you not concerned with investigation.” Who's lying or who was fooled? Only the Pusha T Investigative Team can solve this.

Drake doesn't dwell there, though, instead moving on to Kendrick's family, doubling down on the two angles that formed the basis of “Family Matters”: that Kendrick has beaten his partner Whitney in the past, he's estranged from their family, and one of his two kids is actually fathered by his friend and creative partner Dave Free. To drive this last point home, “The Heart Part 6” artwork is an Instagram screenshot of Dave leaving heart emojis under, presumably, a picture Whitney posted.

Continuing his through line of using Kendrick's confessional raps on *Mr. Morale* as ammo, Drake refers back to “**Mother I Sober**,” the track where Kendrick unpacks his mother's sexual abuse and how it informed an incident in his childhood where his mother was worried he was being abused by a family member even though Kendrick says he wasn't. Dr. Drake's read: He actually was molested, and that's why he's so hell-bent on calling OVO “certified pedophiles.”

To hear Drake tell it, he's “only fuckin with Whitneys, not **Millie Bobby Browns**, I'd never look twice at no teenager.” Elsewhere on the song, he says: “If I was fucking young girls, I promise I'd have been arrested/ I'm way too famous for this shit you just suggested.” Drake goes on to parrot a sentiment that's been gaining popularity on social



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Drake ends the track with one last sick joke: “Whitney you can hit me if you need a favor/And when I say I'll hit ya back, it's a lot safer” before going full Mob boss mode on the outro with some tough talk. Most crucially, he tries to take the wind out of Kendrick's inevitable response, wisecracking that Kendrick probably has “10 more records to drop.” Any minute now...

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