

= Otis (song) =

" Otis " is a song by American hip hop artists Kanye West and Jay @-@ Z , from their first collaborative album Watch the Throne (2011) . The song posthumously features soul singer Otis Redding , whose version of " Try a Little Tenderness " is sampled in the song . The production was covered solely by West . The track was premiered by Funkmaster Flex 's Hot 97 radio show and was released onto the Internet the day afterward . Lyrically , the song has the two rappers sharing lines discussing wealth , decadence and fame . The track received highly positive reviews from music critics who praised the trading off of verses by the two rappers and the Redding @-@ sampled beat , which was compared to the style heard on West 's The College Dropout . Several publications placed the song amongst the best of the year .

The track was released as the second single from Watch the Throne on July 20 , 2011 . The song peaked at number 12 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and reached position 2 on both the Billboard Hot Rap Songs and Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs charts . The song has since been certified Platinum for sales exceeding 1 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 . The song received a music video directed by Spike Jonze on August 2011 . The video primarily shows West and Jay @-@ Z modifying a Maybach luxury car and then driving around in it with no doors or windows , while four girls are smiling in the backseat . After its release , the video was met with positive reception . The cover art was designed by Italian fashion designer Riccardo Tisci .

Jay and West performed the song at all the stops on their 2011 Watch the Throne Tour . It was also performed at the 2011 MTV Video Music Awards and at the 2012 Radio 1 's Big Weekend musical festival . At the 54th Grammy Awards in 2012 , " Otis " was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Rap Song and won a Grammy for Best Rap Performance .

= = Background and release = =

On July 7 , 2011 , " Otis " was previewed along with the other songs from Watch the Throne by Jay @-@ Z at a private listening session at the Mercer Hotel in New York City . A select group of reporters , music journalists , and contest winners were present at the listening session . After the listening session , it was confirmed that a song called " Otis " , would appear on the album . It was reported that the song would sample soul music singer Otis Redding 's version of " Try a Little Tenderness " . On July 20 , " Otis " was premiered on Funkmaster Flex 's Hot 97 radio show and subsequently was released for download to the Internet as a way to promote the upcoming album . On July 22 , the song was released to the iTunes Store and was a free download for those who pre @-@ ordered the album . It was sent by The Island Def Jam Music Group to rhythmic contemporary and urban contemporary radio on August 9 . The cover art for " Otis " was designed by Italian fashion designer Riccardo Tisci , who had previously designed the artwork for the " H ? A ? M " single cover and the Watch the Throne album cover . It features the American flag , both artists names and the name of the song and the album . The artwork was released onto the internet following the song 's release and could be downloaded along with the song .

Bu Thiam , Def Jam Vice @-@ President of A & R , was with West and Jay @-@ Z throughout the recording process and saw how the duo came up with several of the Watch the Throne tracks . He recalled the story of the song " Otis " : " [Kanye] was late for his flight , we were in the studio working all day and he was late for his flight . As we were leaving he was like , ' Yo hold on for a second . ' So he drops his bags and goes to the MPC (beat machine) and his assistant is rushing him and he 's just f---ing with [the beat] . What 's so crazy is the whole time he 's doing that Jay is writing his verses in his head . But Jay is watching the NBA playoffs , I think it was the championship ; Miami Heat & Dallas Mavericks . So Jay is watching the playoffs . I 'm not even thinking Jay is paying attention to what ' Ye is doing and by the time he is finished it 's like ' I invented swag ... ' And I 'm like , ' What the f--- just happened ? ' "

= = Composition = =

" Otis " is two minutes and fifty @-@ eight seconds long and is a mid @-@ tempo hip @-@ hop song . The song , which was produced by West , is built upon a sample of Try a Little Tenderness by Otis Redding . Jay @-@ Z and West promptly rap over the sample in style reminiscent to past Kanye productions . Pitchfork Media 's Tom Breihan summarized the composition , writing ... here 's Jay @-@ Z on the " Otis " intro : " It sounds so soulful ! Don 't you agree ? " Well , yeah . If you 're willing to plunk down enough money to sample " Try a Little Tenderness " , that 'll happen . But even if the sample works as a sort of audio money @-@ flaunt , it 's also a tough and hard chop from Kanye ? Otis Redding 's magnificent voice mostly limited to a couple of hellfire grunts , the song itself held to a sharp guitar stab . "

Alexis Petridis of The Guardian stated

the single Otis boldly samples Otis Redding 's Try a Little Tenderness , an idea that veers wildly from inspired ? at one point the ballad is manipulated into a propulsive sweaty grunt @-@ a @-@ thon ? to a clubfooted mess .

The song ends with sampled screaming . Some people believe the song also includes a part from Datsik 's " Swagga , " which is a dubstep track . The part is included when Jay @-@ Z says , " guess I got my swagga back . " This is a common misconception . Jay @-@ Z is making a reference to one of his earlier songs " All I Need " from The Blueprint which Datsik samples the line from .

= = Critical reception = =

The song received highly positive reviews from critics and the style has been compared to that of West 's The College Dropout album . Pitchfork Media 's Tom Breihan praised the song , saying " Jay and Kanye trade off verses and never pause for a chorus , each one building on whatever the last one said-- an old @-@ school rap @-@ collab style you almost never hear anymore . And since these guys are working loose and casual , it gives them chances to show how funny and clever they are without telegraphing their own importance . Simon Vozick @-@ Levinson of Rolling Stone gave the song a four stars rating out of five wrote that " West twists a few seconds of Otis Redding ? s " Try a Little Tenderness " into a Blueprint @-@ style barrage , setting the stage for some slick collar @-@ popping from Jay @-@ Z (" Photo shoot fresh , looking like wealth / I ? m about to call the paparazzi on myself ") . Jay ? s performance , in turn , inspires Ye to step up his wordplay (" Luxury rap , the Hermes of verses / Sophisticated ignorance , write my curses in cursive ") ; the younger star sounds like he pulled an all @-@ nighter trying to outdo his mentor ? s rhymes . " Frank Berg of NME gave the song a mostly positive review , stating that " What we have here are two titans of black music duetting with another from beyond the grave . For that reason , it 's unquestionably An Event " , though feeling " In all honesty , if this winds up being the highlight of Watch the Throne we 'll all be a bit disappointed . "

Seattle Weekly 's Joe Williams enjoyed the song , writing " even with the slow , bubbling beat and energetic keyboards , topped with top @-@ notch delivery by Jay and Kay , it 's Redding in the background that gives the single its true life and flair . " Josiah Hughes of Exclaim ! magazine commented that " if the over @-@ the @-@ top aggression of " H ? A ? M " had you worried that this would be a Waka Flocka ripoff , fear not , as " Otis " makes the most of its Otis Redding sample with some soulful feel @-@ good boom @-@ bap . " Sam Gould ' ' ' The Independent ' ' ' remarked " having seen oddball rap collective Odd Future become the talking point of the blogosphere , Eminem and old partner @-@ in @-@ crime Royce da 5 ' 9 " start work on their own bruising collaborative effort , and hazy vibe rappers Wiz Khalifa and Curren \$ y take steps in the same direction , Jay and Ye have recognised the throne is far from unchallenged , and have come together in the most remarkable dual alliance since André 3000 and Big Boi became Outkast . " ' ' ' The New York Observer ' ' ' writer Foster Kamer mused , " remember early Kanye ? These guys finally do . ' Otis ' is the perfect anti @-@ single for this album , because it 's a reminder that what we always loved about these two collaborating is still very much there . Not only do they not need hooks , neither of them need to remind us that they don 't . There was that first line of ' ' ' My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy ' ' ' , ' I fantasized ' bout this back in Chicago , ' and then , the relief after it , where you didn 't have to worry about the rest of that album " , and Billboard claimed " Otis

gets better with each play " .

However , Chicago Tribune writer Greg Kot was less enthusiastic about the track , musing that " the references to luxury cars and private jets quickly lose their escapist luster , grossly out of step with a summer in which joblessness and foreclosure are becoming all too common for many Americans " and that " just as disappointing is that the Redding sample ? a thrilling burst of agitated vocals , classic Memphis horns , organ and drums ? never goes anywhere . " In an interview with Redding 's widow , Zelma Redding , Us Weekly reported that Mrs. Redding approved the song , saying " We are proud that Otis ' legacy continues to inspire some of today 's popular artists . We like ' Otis ' and thank Kanye and Jay @-@ Z for honoring our Otis through their music . "

Pitchfork Media named the song the 42nd best song of 2011 . XXL named the song the fifth best of the year , and Spin named the song the 17th . Time 's Claire Suddath placed the song at number four on her best of the year list , writing " the lead single off Watch the Throne mixes and loops Otis Redding 's passionate shouts and screams from " Try a Little Tenderness , " paying homage to his soulful style while mixing it up by adding heavy beats and chopping up the original track 's piano tune . " Complex named the song the 100th best Jay @-@ Z song of all time . At the 54th Grammy Awards in 2012 , " Otis " was nominated for Best Rap Song and Best Rap Performance , winning the latter .

= = Personnel = =

Produced by Kanye West

Recorded by Noah Goldstein

Mixed by Anthony Kilhoffer

Mixed and recorded at The Mercer Hotel

= = Remixes = =

Papoose remixed the song and performed a freestyle over it . Papoose released a music video of his version of the song . Rappers Tinie Tempah , Chipmunk , Wretch 32 , and Jadakiss with Styles P of The LOX also released a remix and freestyle . Rapper The Game used some of this song 's content to record a diss track named " Uncle Otis " , referring to Otis Redding 's vocal sample on the track . He insulted Jay @-@ Z and Kanye West along with musicians Big Sean , Kreayshawn amongst others . The Game however has gone on record , saying that " It ? s poking jokes and taking shots , but that ? s what I do " and that song wasn 't serious in nature . Writing about the song , Pop Crush commented that " an obvious attempt to get some promotion for his upcoming disc , The R.E.D. Album . Later Game used the " Otis " instrumental for a twenty @-@ minute freestyle entitled " Daytona 500 (500 Bars) . " Cassidy did his . Rappers DMX and Busta Rhymes also made a collaborative " Otis " remix . Singer Ne @-@ Yo also recorded a freestyle rap over " Otis " for a mixtape . Teen singer Justin Bieber also rapped a written verse over the track during a live radio show . YG and Reem Riches collaborated for their version of the song along with a music video . Angel Haze and Iggy Azalea also remixed the track for a live show .

= = Music video = =

The music video was directed by Spike Jonze and was filmed in Downey , California , USA . Pitchfork Media reported that " Jay @-@ Z and Kanye West are doing something big for the video for Otis . " The video , featuring a cameo by Aziz Ansari , was released on Thursday , August 2011 on MTV and affiliated networks at 8 : 56 pm ET / PT with an encore showing at 11 : 00 pm ET / PT on MTV2 . The video was uploaded on music video site VEVO on the same day .

The video primarily shows West and Jay @-@ Z destroying and then customizing a Maybach 57 and then racing around an industrial lot in it (with no doors or windows) , while four models smile and laugh from the backseat . The " dynamic duo take a saber saw to a glistening new Maybach and turn it into a tricked @-@ out ' Thunderdome ' cruiser , then do doughnuts in a parking lot with a

gaggle of models packed in the back . " The video " eschews the narrative spazzouts and stoner @-@ boggling tricks of previous Jonze videos " preferring instead to " luxuriate in the icon status of its two principals . We get fireworks , fist bumps , a fast car , and general larger @-@ than @-@ life camaraderie rather than , say , guys on fire running in slow @-@ motion . It 's like The Expendables , if that movie only starred two guys , and both of them were rappers who didn 't do any onscreen fighting . " The car was put up for auction , and the proceeds donated toward the East African Drought Disaster .

Pitchfork Media named the video amongst the best of the year . As of January 2015 , Billboard named the video as one of the 20 best of the 2010s (so far) .

= = Live performances = =

On August 28 , 2011 , Jay @-@ Z & Kanye West performed the song for the first time at the 2011 MTV Video Music Awards . The two rappers marched down the runway with " flames erupting in the background . " The song was performed at all stops of their 2011 ? 12 Watch the Throne Tour , generally as one of the opening tracks . It was performed " with a Givenchy @-@ designed American flag flashing on the stage 's main screen . " During Jay @-@ Z 's setlist at the 2012 Radio 1 's Big Weekend festival , West joined Jay @-@ Z to perform " Otis " and other Watch the Throne hits like " Niggas in Paris " and " No Church in the Wild " .

= = Chart performance = =

" Otis " debuted at position 47 on the Billboard Hot 100 on the week ending August 6 , 2011 , after a partial week of sales and airplay in which it sold 44 @,@ 000 digital copies and received an audience of 22 million impressions on all radio formats . The following week , " Otis " jumped into the Hot Digital Songs top 10 at number 9 selling 113 @,@ 000 copies , and reached number 12 on the Hot 100 . The song also debuted at 15 on Billboard 's R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs and 13 on Billboard 's Hot Rap Songs . Following the same week , the song debuted at number 89 on the Canadian Hot 100 and rose to number 37 the next week . In the UK , the song debuted at 67 on the Singles Chart , and 26 on the R & B Chart .

= = Charts and certifications = =