

= 808s & Heartbreak =

808s & Heartbreak is the fourth studio album by American recording artist Kanye West , released on November 24 , 2008 , by Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella Records . It was recorded during September and October 2008 at Glenwood Studios in Burbank , California and Avex Recording Studio in Honolulu , Hawaii , with the help of producers No I.D. , Jeff Bhasker and others .

Conceived in the wake of a series of distressing personal events , 808s & Heartbreak marked a major musical departure for West from his previous rap records , instead featuring a sparse , electronic sound and West singing through an Auto @-@ Tune vocal processor . His lyrics explored themes of loss , alienated fame , and heartache , while the album 's production abandoned conventional hip hop sounds in favor of a minimalist sonic palette , which included prominent use of the titular Roland TR @-@ 808 drum machine . Despite varying responses from audiences , the album received positive reviews from most critics and was named one of 2008 's best records in several year @-@ end lists .

808s & Heartbreak debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 , selling 450 @,@ 145 copies in its first week . By 2013 , it had sold 1 @.@ 7 million copies in the United States . Four singles were released to promote the record , including the hit singles " Love Lockdown " and " Heartless " . In the years since its release , 808s & Heartbreak has been cited as a prominent influence on subsequent hip hop , pop , and R & B music , as a new wave of rappers , singers , and producers came to adopt aspects of its style and thematic content . In 2014 , Rolling Stone named it one of the 40 most groundbreaking albums of all time .

= = Background = =

Following the release of his third studio album Graduation , the remainder of 2007 and the following year featured events that profoundly affected Kanye West . On November 10 , 2007 , West 's mother Donda West died due to complications arising from cosmetic surgery involving a tummy tuck and breast reduction procedure . Months later , West and fiancée Alexis Phifer ended their engagement and their long @-@ term intermittent relationship , which had begun in 2002 . At the same time , West struggled to adapt to his newfound pop star status he had once striven to achieve , often becoming the subject of media scrutiny . The loss , loneliness and longing for companionship and a sense of normality served to inspire 808s & Heartbreak . West stated that " This album was therapeutic ? it 's lonely at the top . " A photograph taken by Danny Clinch of West kissing his mother on the cheek was included in the album 's booklet liner notes .

West felt that his emotions could not be fully expressed simply through rapping , which he said had limitations . There were " melodies that were in me " , he explained . " What was in me I couldn 't stop . " West went to classify 808s & Heartbreak as a pop album , asserting his disdain towards the contemporary backlash to the concept of pop music and expressed admiration for what some pop stars have accomplished in their careers . He later stated that he wishes to present the music as a new genre called " pop art , " clarifying that he was well aware of the visual art movement of the same name and wished to present a musical equivalent . " Either call it ' pop ' or ' pop art , ' either one I 'm good with , " he later stated .

= = Recording and production = =

The album was recorded over a span of approximately three weeks from September to October 2008 . Recording sessions took place at Glenwood Studios in Burbank , California and at Avex Recording Studio in Honolulu , Hawaii . As implied by its title , 808s & Heartbreak prominently features the Roland TR @-@ 808 drum machine . Drawing inspiration from 1980s synthpop and electropop performers such as Phil Collins , Gary Numan , TJ Swan and Boy George , West felt that the 808 is a resourceful instrument that can be used to evoke emotion ; the concept was introduced to him by Jon Brion . West utilized the sounds created by the 808 and manipulated its pitch to produce a distorted , electronic sound , an effect he referred to as " heartbreak " . He felt the

characteristic of the sound was representative of his state of mind . According to West , the fact that Hawaii 's area code was " 808 " was coincidental , as he had already developed the album 's title before being informed . The realization inspired him to pursue his direction with the album , however . In terms of musical direction , West 's intentions , according to Mike Dean , were to go against the typical sound of hip hop beat , instead evoking the presence of tribal drums . Overall , West maintained a " minimal but functional " approach towards the album 's studio production .

The album makes prominent use of the voice audio processor technology of Auto @-@ Tune . West had previously experimented with the technology on The College Dropout for the background vocals of " Jesus Walks " and " Never Let Me Down " , but he had not used it for lead vocals until 2008 . " We were working on the remixes for Lil Wayne 's ' Lollipop ' and Young Jeezy 's ' Put On ' and he fell in love with the Auto @-@ Tune " , producer Mike Dean explained . Towards the end , West enlisted T @-@ Pain for coaching on how to utilize the technology . West himself openly stated that he loved using Auto @-@ Tune and was dismayed that the term has been commonly associated with being " wack " . He considers the technology " the funnest thing to use " and compared the situation to when he was a child and thought the color pink was cool until someone told him " it was gay " , producing an analogy of how the views of society can rob people of their confidence and self @-@ esteem . He later went on to state that he enjoyed the electronic feel produced by Auto @-@ Tune and sought out to juxtapose the mechanical sounds with the traditional sounds of taiko drums and choir monks .

Rapper Kid Cudi , who had signed onto West 's G.O.O.D. Music label , contributed to two of the album 's songs . Young Jeezy contributed a rap verse on the track " Amazing " while " See You in My Nightmares " is a duet with Lil Wayne . Singer @-@ songwriter Esthero provided the few female vocals found on the album ; credited under birth name Jenny @-@ Bea Englishman , she co @-@ wrote three tracks . When " RoboCop " appeared on the Internet , West disclaimed responsibility and was upset that the leak had occurred as the track was an unfinished version . Mike Dean had previously stated that the track was expected to receive additional treatment by Herbie Hancock before the album 's release .

= = Music and lyrics = =

808s & Heartbreak is a radical departure from West 's previous hip hop albums . According to 33 ? writer Kirk Walker Graves , 808s & Heartbreak is an avant @-@ garde electropop album . Rolling Stone magazine called it an " introspective , synthpop album , " while The 405 described it as West 's " experimental pop record . " According to The Independent , West abandoned his customary hip hop sound in favor of sparse , drum machine @-@ based electropop . Pitchfork Media 's Scott Plagenhoef also categorized the album as " an introspective , minimal electro @-@ pop record " , but added that it is " steeped in regret , pain , and even more self @-@ examination than a typical Kanye West album " . Music writer Robert Christgau called it a " slow , sad @-@ ass and self @-@ involved ... breakup album " and analyzed that West 's choice to " robotize as well as pitch @-@ correct his voice both undercuts his self @-@ importance and adds physical reality to tales of alienated fame that might otherwise be pure pity parties " . Christgau asserted that its final track " Pinocchio Story " is " the only track here about what 's really bringing [West] down : not the loss of his girlfriend but the death of his mother , during cosmetic surgery that somewhere not too deep down he 's sure traces all too directly to his alienated fame . " Andre Grant of HipHopDX wrote that " to combat this trenchant melancholia , he poured himself into an all @-@ autotunes R & B album " which would prove divisive in hip hop . West 's singing has been characterized as " flat " and " nearly unmelodic " which " underscores his own cyborgish detachment . " Canadian writer Stephen Marche viewed that West used " the shallow musical gimmickry of Auto @-@ Tune , a program designed to eliminate individuality , and produced a hauntingly personal album . "

The music of 808s & Heartbreak draws heavily on electronic elements , particularly virtual synthesis , the Roland TR @-@ 808 drum machine , and explicitly auto @-@ tuned vocal tracks . Tracks on the album utilize step input drum machine and synth @-@ bass parts . Step input sequencing , a product of vintage analogue devices limited to recording only 16 individual notes , was popular in

music production during the 1980s , but also became available in digital workstations . The album 's music features austere production and elements such as dense drums , lengthy strings , droning synths , and somber piano . Andy Kellman of AllMusic writes of the music , " Several tracks have almost as much in common with irrefutably bleak post @-@ punk albums , such as New Order 's Movement and The Cure 's Pornography , as contemporary rap and R & B. " These musical elements help convey moods of despair and dejection that reflect the album 's subject matter . Critic Trist McCall wrote that the record " stripped modern art @-@ pop down to its iconic rudiments ? beats , charismatic personalities , hand @-@ selected melodies , and computer @-@ assisted vocals . " Most of the lyrics are directed at an ex @-@ lover ; West refers to her treatment of him as " the coldest story ever told " on " Heartless " , and on " RoboCop " , she is called a " spoiled little L.A. girl " and is compared to the antagonist in the 1990 film Misery . On " Welcome to Heartbreak " , West 's character faces an existential crisis as he dispassionately recounts sitting alone on a flight , with a laughing family seated ahead of him . He longs for his late mother on the album 's penultimate track " Coldest Winter " , which samples the desolate 1983 song " Memories Fade " by Tears for Fears .

= = Release and promotion = =

On September 24 , West announced that he had finished the album and would be releasing it sometime in November . In his blog post , he wrote " I changed my album to November something cause I finished the album and I felt like it .. I want y 'all to hear it as soon as possible " . West later stated that the album would be released on November 25 , 2008 . However , Island Def Jam , the distributing label , brought the date forward by one day to capitalize on Thanksgiving weekend . 808s & Heartbreak was also released on November 24 , 2008 in the United Kingdom and the Philippines . A limited edition in a digipak case was first released in Germany on November 21 , 2008 . A special edition of the album was released on December 16 that contains the album in CD and dual LP format , and also features album artwork redone by the artist of the original cover , KAWS .

On October 16 , West released an excerpt of " Coldest Winter " on the radio station Power 106 in Los Angeles . The track recreates elements of the song " Memories Fade " by the band Tears for Fears . The song " Paranoid " later leaked onto the Internet and features Mr. Hudson in the chorus . A remixed version of " Paranoid " was reported to feature pop singer Rihanna , but did not materialize . Also appearing prior to the release date were " Amazing " featuring Young Jeezy , " See You in My Nightmares " featuring Lil Wayne , " Street Lights " , " Say You Will " , " Welcome to Heartbreak " and " Bad News " . An additional track , " Pinocchio Story " is a freestyle recorded at a live concert in Singapore . It was included in the album at the request of Beyoncé Knowles .

On October 14 , West , in collaboration with Italian artist Vanessa Beecroft , hosted a promotional album listening event at Ace Gallery . Over 700 guests were invited to preview the entirety of 808s & Heartbreak . Under Beecroft 's guidance , the event featured approximately forty nude women wearing nothing besides wool masks who silently stood in the center of the room . The women were illuminated by multicolored lights that would change as the music progressed . When it came time for him to speak , West stated that he 'd been a fan of Beecroft 's work and strong imagery , saying that he liked the idea of nudity because " society told us to wear clothes at a certain point " . Beecroft had been contacted a month prior and conceptualized and generated the installation in a week . Beecroft admitted that while he had caught her offguard , she had the opportunity to hear the album for herself and heard things that touched her own life . Five days later , promotional photos for the album by photographer Willy Vanderperre were released . The images portrayed West wearing a grey glen plaid suit , large browline glasses , and a heart @-@ shaped pin .

In October 2009 , West was scheduled to embark on a tour , Fame Kills : Starring Kanye West and Lady Gaga tour , in promotion of Gaga 's The Fame , and West 's 808s & Heartbreak . It was canceled on October 1 , 2009 , without reason . Several songs from the album were performed by West during his live VH1 Storytellers performance , such as " Heartless " , " Amazing " and " Say You Will . " In the interim , director Nabil Elderkin directed two additional promotional videos for the

album . " Welcome to Heartbreak " , which featured an artistic use of liberal compression artifacts , was released in June 2009 . A remixed version of " Coldest Winter " was released in February 2010 . This video featured a woman in a wedding gown running away from a cult group through a moonlit forest .

= = Public reaction = =

Before its release , reaction to 808s & Heartbreak was mixed , ranging from anticipation to bewilderment and indifference to the album 's concept . Upon the unveiling of the lead single " Love Lockdown " at the 2008 MTV Video Music Awards , music audiences were taken aback by the uncharacteristic production style and the presence of Auto @-@ Tune . The negative feedback intensified when West revealed that the entire album would be primarily sung with Auto @-@ Tune rather than rapped and would focus on themes of love and heartache .

Numerous hip hop fans and certain rappers mocked West for becoming " sappy " while others deemed the upcoming LP as a throwaway experimental album . Comparisons were drawn to Electric Circus , an album recorded by West 's labelmate and close friend Common . MTV eventually interviewed Common to share his thoughts and views on the artistic direction of the album . Common expressed both his understanding and his support for West 's intentions , stating " I love it . I 'mma tell you , as an artist , you wanna be free . I 'mma do what I feel . You can 't just cater to the audience . You gotta say , ' Hey , y 'all , this is where I 'm at . ' For him to do an album called 808s and Heartbreak , you know that 's where he is at this moment . I heard some songs , and I think it 's fresh . I think the people are ready for it . "

West received similar approval from Lil Wayne and Young Jeezy , both of whom contributed to the album . During an interview , when asked what music today inspires him , Wayne stated " everybody 's doing their thing , but they 're not exciting . Everybody is doing the same thing . That 's terrible . Do I love the music that 's out right now ? I love it with a passion . Does it motivate me ? Not one bit . That 's because 808s & Heartbreak isn 't out yet . " Despite the approval from the rap superstars , as well as the record @-@ breaking chart performances of the first two singles , hip hop audiences remained indifferent towards the album , predicting it would flop . Responding to reviews , West stated that he didn 't care about sales or getting good ratings , saying that it came from the heart and that 's all that matters to him . When asked about the current state of hip hop , West compared it to a high school , stating that hip hop used to be all about being fearless and standing out , and that now it is about being afraid and fitting in .

= = = Commercial performance = = =

In its first week of sales , 808s & Heartbreak reached the number one spot on Billboard 200 , selling 450 @,@ 145 units in its first week . In the last week of the year , 808s & Heartbreak sold 165 @,@ 100 copies , jumping from the eleventh spot back up to the number five on the Billboard 200 . The album moved up again the following week , selling 70 @,@ 900 units and landing at number three . On January 27 , 2009 , 808s & Heartbreak was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America , serving as West 's fourth album to ship one million copies in the United States . As of June 14 , 2013 , it has sold 1 @.@ 7 million copies in the US , according to Nielsen SoundScan .

Despite the debate and uncertainty surrounding the album 's conception , its preceding singles demonstrated outstanding chart performances . Upon its release , the lead single " Love Lockdown " debuted at number three on the Billboard Hot 100 and became a " Hot Shot Debut " . It is the highest debut of West 's career , the second highest debut on the Hot 100 that year and the tenth song of the millennium to debut in the top three . Grossing over 1 @.@ 3 million copies at the iTunes Store alone , the single was certified platinum by the RIAA by the end of the year . On August 18 , 2010 , it was certified triple platinum by the RIAA , for shipments of three million units in the US . The single was also met by positive reviews from music critics , eventually culminating with being crowned " Song of the Year " by Time . The second single , " Heartless " performed similarly

and became his second consecutive " Hot Shot Debut " by debuting at number four on the Billboard Hot 100 . It was certified double platinum by the RIAA , having shipped two million units in the US . Due in part to the momentum produced by the album 's release , certain tracks were met by chart success despite not actually being released as singles . The tenth track " See You in My Nightmares " became yet another " Hot Shot Debut , " peaking at number twenty @-@ one in the US and at number twenty @-@ two in Canada while the fourth track " Amazing " charted at 81 on the Hot 100 . Following suit , " Welcome to Heartbreak " peaked at number eighty @-@ seven on the Pop 100 .

= = Critical reception = =

808s & Heartbreak received generally positive reviews from critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream publications , the album received an average score of 75 , based on 36 reviews . Chris Richards from The Washington Post called it " an information @-@ age masterpiece " , while USA Today critic Steve Jones said " West deftly uses the 808 drum machine and Auto @-@ Tune vocal effect to channel his feelings of hurt , anger and doubt through his well @-@ crafted lyrics " . Dan Cairns from The Times stated , " This so should not work ... Yet 808s & Heartbreak is a triumph , recklessly departing from the commercially copper @-@ bottomed script and venturing far beyond West 's comfort zone . " Rolling Stone 's Jody Rosen commended West 's incorporation of the Roland TR @-@ 808 drum machine and described the album as " Kanye 's would @-@ be Here , My Dear or Blood on the Tracks , a mournful song @-@ suite that swings violently between self @-@ pity and self @-@ loathing " . In the Chicago Tribune , Greg Kot called it West 's " most radical yet " and said while West 's fans may be disappointed , " this one is for him . It remains to be seen if he goes back to making records for everybody else . For now , this is one fascinatingly perverse detour . " PopMatters critic Dave Heaton was impressed by West 's " song and album construction , and with the way he captures a particular feeling through unusual , evocative , carefully crafted music that 's both simple and complex , cold and warm , mechanical and human , melodic and harsh " . Writing for MSN Music , Robert Christgau found it " brilliant " with a unique " dark sound " and " engaging tunes " , despite a second @-@ half drop @-@ off , and praised West 's use of Auto @-@ Tune , which he felt " both undercuts his self @-@ importance and adds physical reality to tales of alienated fame that might otherwise be pure pity parties " .

In a less enthusiastic review , The Independent found West 's " immersion in personal misery " uncomfortable and commented that the " stylistic tropes quickly become irritating " . AllMusic editor Andy Kellman stated " no matter its commendable fearlessness , the album is a listless , bleary trudge along West 's permafrost " . Charles Aaron of Spin criticized the songs ' musical structures , calling the album " a long processional that starts and restarts and never reaches the ceremony " . Slant Magazine 's Wilson McBea panned West 's singing , while Jon Caramanica from The New York Times singled it out as the " weakness for which this album will ultimately be remembered , some solid songs notwithstanding . " Caramanica wrote that , " at best , it is a rough sketch for a great album , with ideas he would have typically rendered with complexity , here distilled to a few words , a few synthesizer notes , a lean drumbeat . At worst , it 's clumsy and underfed , a reminder that all of that ornamentation served a purpose " . Chicago Sun @-@ Times writer Jim DeRogatis stated , " If West had interspersed the more mechanical tracks with some that were the exact opposite ? say , simple piano interludes provided by his old collaborators John Legend or Jon Brion ? he might have made a masterpiece . Instead , he 's merely given us an extremely intriguing , sporadically gripping , undeniably fearless and altogether unexpected piece of his troubled soul . "

= = Accolades = =

808s & Heartbreak was voted the tenth best album of 2008 in the Pazz & Jop , an annual poll of prominent American critics . The album was also named one of the ten best albums of 2008 by a number of publications , including the Associated Press (number four) , The Hartford Courant (number seven) , NOW (number four) , The Observer (number eight) , Vibe (no order) and Time

(number six) . Pitchfork Media named 808s & Heartbreak the twenty @-@ first best album of 2008 . Dan Leroy of LA Weekly cited it as one of the top ten hip hop albums of the year . Jam ! named it the top album of 2008 . Chicago Sun @-@ Times writer Jim DeRogatis included the album on his list of the year 's ten best albums and wrote , " With every listen , the poignancy of these personal tales of loss grows deeper , perfectly matched by the cold , lonely , robotic but nevertheless winning grooves that accompany them . Upon further reflection , it is a brave and daring 4 @-@ star effort that deserves to be heard by any fan of adventurous pop music . " Time Out New York featured the album on its list of the Best and Worst Albums of 2008 . The magazine 's writer Colin St. John cited 808s & Heartbreak as one of the worst of 2008 , and editor Steve Smith named it third on his best @-@ of list , while calling the album " the year 's most misunderstood triumph . "

Despite its accolades , 808s & Heartbreak was largely overlooked as a contender for the 52nd Grammy Awards . According to Vibe magazine editor @-@ in @-@ chief Jermaine Hall , West 's controversial incident at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards and the ensuing backlash against West " probably hurt him " , but perceived West 's stylistic change on the album as the primary reason for it not being nominated . West received one solo nomination , Best Rap Performance by a Duo or Group for " Amazing " , and five other nominations for his guest appearances and collaborative work . 808s & Heartbreak received a nomination for Outstanding Album at 40th annual NAACP Image Awards . The album also received a nomination for Best Album at the 2009 MOBO Awards . In 2009 , Rolling Stone ranked it number 63 on its list of the 100 Best Album of the Decade , and Q named it the decade 's 81st best record . On similar lists , Slant Magazine and PopMatters ranked it 124th and 42nd , respectively .

= = Legacy and influence = =

Although West designed it as a melancholic pop album , 808s & Heartbreak had a significant effect on hip hop music . While his decision to sing about love , loneliness , and heartache for the entirety of the album was at first heavily criticized by music audiences and the album predicted to be a flop , its subsequent critical acclaim and commercial success encouraged other mainstream rappers to take greater creative risks with their music . During the release of The Blueprint 3 , New York rap mogul Jay @-@ Z revealed that his next studio album would be an experimental effort , stating , " ... it 's not gonna be a # 1 album . That 's where I 'm at right now . I wanna make the most experimental album I ever made . " Jay @-@ Z elaborated that like West , he was unsatisfied with contemporary hip hop , was being inspired by indie @-@ rockers like Grizzly Bear and asserted his belief that the indie rock movement would play an important role in the continued evolution of hip hop .

The album impacted hip hop stylistically and laid the groundwork for a new wave of hip hop artists who generally eschewed typical rap braggadocio for intimate subject matter and introspection , including B.o.B , Kid Cudi , Childish Gambino , Frank Ocean , The Weeknd , and Drake . Jake Paine of HipHopDX dubbed the album as " our Chronic " , noting West 's effect on hip hop with 808s & Heartbreak as " a sound , no different than the way Dr. Dre 's synthesizer challenged the boom @-@ bap of the early ' 90s . " Fact described the record as an " art @-@ pop masterpiece [which] broke the shackles of generations of one @-@ upmanship [in hip hop] . " Rolling Stone journalist Matthew Trammell asserted that the record was ahead of its time and wrote in a 2012 article , " Now that popular music has finally caught up to it , 808s & Heartbreak has revealed itself to be Kanye ? s most vulnerable work , and perhaps his most brilliant . "

According to Greg Kot , 808s & Heartbreak initiated the " wave of inward @-@ looking sensitivity " and " emo " -inspired rappers during the late 2000s : " [It] presaged everything from the introspective hip @-@ hop of Kid Cudi 's Man on the Moon : The End of Day (2009) to the wispy crooning , plush keyboards and light mechanical beats of Bon Iver 's Justin Vernon and British dub @-@ step balladeer James Blake . " Consequence of Sound credited it with shaping subsequent developments in " indie R & B or electropop or whatever you want to call it " : " 808s ' is flooded with R & B and it digitizes the raw emotion and isolated feelings that [James Blake and The Weeknd] have carved their brands out of today . " Craig D. Linsey from The Village Voice wrote that the album 's " naked humanity ... practically set off the emo @-@ rap / r & b boom that everyone from

Drake to Frank Ocean to The Weeknd now traffic in . " Marcus Scott of GIANT said rappers such as B.o.B , Drake , and Kid Cudi followed West 's album with similarly @-@ minded works , citing West 's introspective , emotional themes and synthpop / " Vangelis @-@ inspired " music as influences . In the opinion of Billboard senior editor Alex Gale , the album was " the equivalent of (Bob) Dylan going electric , and you still hear that all the time , in hip @-@ hop and outside of hip @-@ hop . " Drake 's 2009 mixtape So Far Gone received comparisons from critics to 808s & Heartbreak . Todd Martens of the Los Angeles Times cited 808s & Heartbreak as " the template [...] for essentially the entirety of Drake 's young career " , and that wrote that he " shares West 's love for mood and never @-@ ending existential analysis " . In a 2009 interview , Drake cited West as " the most influential person " in shaping his own sound .

= = Track listing = =

Songwriting credits , production credits , and notes for tracks 1 ? 11 adapted from the liner notes of 808s & Heartbreak . Songwriting credits for track 12 adapted from BMI .

Notes

^ [a] co @-@ producer

" RoboCop " embodies portions of " Kissing in the Rain " , written by Doyle .

" Bad News " contains a sample of the recording " See Line Woman " as performed by Nina Simone and written by Bass .

" Coldest Winter " embodies an interpolation of " Memories Fade " , written by Orzabal .

= = Personnel = =

Credits for 808s & Heartbreak adapted from AllMusic .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =