

= Magna Carta Holy Grail =

Magna Carta ... Holy Grail (alternatively written as Magna Carta Holy Grail) is the twelfth studio album by American artist Jay Z. It was made available for free digital download for Samsung customers via the Jay Z Magna Carta app on July 4 , 2013 . It was released for retail sale on July 8 , 2013 , by Roc A Fella and Roc Nation while being distributed by Universal . The album features guest appearances by Justin Timberlake , Nas , Rick Ross , Frank Ocean and Beyoncé . Most of the album was produced by Timbaland and Jerome " J Roc " Harmon , while other producers included Boi 1da , Mike Will Made It , Hit Boy , Mike Dean , No I.D. , The Dream , Swizz Beatz , and Pharrell Williams among others . The album was promoted through various commercials presented by Samsung and was not preceded by any retail singles .

Upon its release , Magna Carta Holy Grail was met with mixed reviews from music critics . Some complimented the album 's production and composition , while others were disappointed with its overall theme and found many songs repetitive . On the day of its physical release in the United States , the album was certified Platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for shipments of 1 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 copies . It debuted at number one on the US Billboard 200 , selling 528 @, @ 000 copies in its first week , making it Jay @-@ Z 's 13th consecutive studio album to top the chart . On September 2 , 2013 , it was announced that Magna Carta Holy Grail was certified double Platinum by the RIAA , for shipments of two million copies in the United States . The album was nominated in six categories at the 2014 Grammy Awards winning the Best Rap / Sung Collaboration trophy for " Holy Grail " featuring Justin Timberlake .

The album spawned three successful singles , " Holy Grail " , " Tom Ford " and " Part II (On the Run) " featuring Beyoncé . Multiple other songs on the album achieved chart success including , " FuckWithMeYouKnowIGotIt " , " Oceans " , " Heaven " and " Picasso Baby " . Additionally , the album was supported by the concert tour , Magna Carter World Tour .

= = Background = =

On September 23 , 2010 , rapper Q @-@ Tip confirmed working on Jay @-@ Z 's thirteenth studio album , with a tentative release in 2011 . By May 2012 , reports arose that he was working on new music with Roc Nation producer Jahlil Beats . In an interview with XXL , Beats stated : " Me and Jay @-@ Z been going back and forth . He picked a couple of my joints that he ? s working on . I don ? t even wanna say too much about Jay , but we definitely working on some stuff . I haven ? t even sent him a bunch of beats . I sent him my favorite stuff . He hit me right back like , ? Yo , I ? ma go in on this , ? or , ? I like this . ? ? The album development was kept a secret , but The @-@ Dream hinted about a new Jay @-@ Z album in an April 2013 interview with Hot 97 .

Leading up to the album 's announcement , Jay @-@ Z served as an executive producer for both the film The Great Gatsby and its soundtrack , The Great Gatsby : Music from Baz Luhrmann 's Film , which he and film director Baz Luhrmann worked together for two years . The opening song , " 100 \$ Bill " by Jay @-@ Z contains a chopped and screwed beat , electro @-@ rap elements and is written in the perspective of a modern @-@ day Gatsby , it was both co @-@ written and produced by E * vax one half of electronic rock duo Ratatat .

= = Recording and production = =

In late 2011 , it was confirmed three songs had been recorded and one of which featured Frank Ocean which would end up being " Oceans " , the oldest song that appeared on the album . The recording for " Oceans " and production for " Holy Grail " were completed in 2011 , during the recording sessions for Jay 's collaborative album with Kanye West , Watch the Throne . West wanted the two songs to appear on Watch the Throne , however Jay @-@ Z chose to keep them for Magna Carta Holy Grail . After Watch the Throne was released , Jay @-@ Z chose to go on a worldwide concert tour instead of devoting more time for the album . Following the end of the tour , the main bulk of recording sessions for Magna Carta Holy Grail took place at Alicia Keys and Swizz

Beatz ' Jungle City Studios in New York , where Justin Timberlake and Beyoncé Knowles were also working on their albums at the time . Jay @-@ Z described the recording process as having a " minimalist approach " to give Magna Carta Holy Grail a " 1990s feel " .

While working on Beyoncé 's fifth studio album , frequent collaborator Timbaland played Jay @-@ Z the instrumental for what would become " Picasso Baby " . According to Jay @-@ Z , that song built the sound of the album . Jay @-@ Z and Timbaland had grown apart after they worked on The Blueprint 3 , but reunited for this album . Timbaland ended up handling the majority of the production on Magna Carta Holy Grail . In an interview with BBC Radio 1 , Jay @-@ Z stated that while the two have recorded many songs in the past , it was not until Magna Carta Holy Grail that they got the chemistry to collaborate for a whole project . Producer J @-@ Roc described " Picasso Baby " as " just New York " . He told XXL that him and Timbaland " were really just feeling the city , the energy that it gives out " and were inspired by the " numerous different cultures and different dialects or sounds . "

The instrumental for " FuckWithMeYouKnowIGotIt " was started by producer Vinylz , who was inspired by a Pimp C speech he found on YouTube . He sampled Pimp C 's voice for the intro and then created the instrumental in a short amount of time . After fellow producer Boi @-@ 1da added to the production , the song was sent to Rick Ross who intended to use it for his upcoming album . Jay @-@ Z was meant to add a guest verse to it , but when he heard the instrumental , he wanted the track for his album . Timbaland added additional changes to it before they mastered the final version .

In 2012 , Jay @-@ Z contacted GOOD Music producer Hit @-@ Boy about working together on Magna Carta Holy Grail . Hit @-@ Boy created the instrumental for " Somewhereinamerica " , a song that was initially supposed to appear on the debut album of GOOD Music artist Travis Scott . While in the studio with Jay @-@ Z , Scott played the instrumental for him and Jay @-@ Z instantly liked it . The instrumental for the song " Crown " was made by 16 @-@ year @-@ old Canadian producer WondaGurl . She had collaborated with Travis Scott on his Owl Pharaoh mixtape and went on to produce another track for his upcoming album . Scott liked the instrumental and started to build upon it with Mike Dean . The two then gave it to Jay @-@ Z who recorded " Crown " over it .

Overall , Jay @-@ Z worked extensively on the album 's production with producers such as Swizz Beatz , Timbaland and Pharrell Williams who were also featured in the Samsung commercials promoting Magna Carta Holy Grail . He had also worked on the album 's production with Jahlil Beats , Boi @-@ 1da , Mike Dean , Kanye West and Mike Will Made It , among others . He had also been seen in the studio with various recording artists such as Drake , The @-@ Dream , Raekwon , Nas , and Timberlake working on the album . The final track listing revealed guest appearances by Timberlake , Frank Ocean , Nas , Pharrell , Swizz Beatz , Rick Ross and Beyoncé among others .

= = Release and promotion = =

On June 16 , 2013 , during the fifth game of the 2013 NBA Finals , Jay @-@ Z was featured in a new commercial by Samsung where he announced that his twelfth studio album would be titled , Magna Carta Holy Grail and would be released on July 4 , 2013 . He was seen speaking to producer Rick Rubin in the studio about the album saying , " [It] is about , like this duality of how do you navigate through this whole thing , through success , through failures , through all this and remain yourself . " The commercial featured producers that are confirmed to be on the album including Timbaland , Swizz Beatz and Pharrell Williams . The album was made available for free download on July 4 , 12 : 01 a.m. EST , to the first one million Samsung Galaxy S III , Samsung Galaxy S4 and Samsung Galaxy Note II users of a new app . Shortly after , Billboard said that the Samsung deal would not count towards the sales figures used by Nielsen SoundScan to compile their charts . The album was then released for retail sale three days later , on July 7 , 2013 .

Leading up to the release of the album , Jay @-@ Z released selected lyrics of each song daily , via the Samsung app . This included " Holy Grail " , " Heaven " , " Oceans " , " Part II (On the Run) " , " BBC " , " Jay Z Blue " , " Versus " , " La Familia " , " Tom Ford " , " Beach Is Better " , " Crown " , " Picasso Baby " , " F.U.T.W. " , " Nickels & Dimes " and " SomewhereInAmerica " in order . On July 3

, 2013 , the cover art of the album was revealed in a photo where it was placed next to the one of the four surviving copies of album 's namesake (the 13th @-@ century English charter) in Salisbury Cathedral , England , and it remained on display there until the end of July . The logo for the album was inspired by an art piece by Be Andr from 2009 named ? Untitled (art) ? .

During the 2013 Grammy Awards , Timberlake and Jay @-@ Z performed their hit single " Suit & Tie " . Following their appearance on Grammys , rumors of a stadium tour between the artists were raised as a result of Jay @-@ Z 's posts on his Life + Times website ; he posted series of venues with the note " # LegendsOfSummer this week " . The Legends of the Summer Stadium Tour was officially announced on February 22 , 2013 . The tour begun on July 14 , 2013 in London , England . Starting in October 2013 , Jay @-@ Z toured Europe on the Magna Carter World Tour . It begun on October 3 at the Manchester Arena in Manchester , England and concluded on October 29 at the Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam , Netherlands . The North American leg followed that , and it ended on January 31 , 2014 .

= = Singles = =

On April 11 , 2013 , Jay @-@ Z released the first song from the album titled " Open Letter " . The song was a response to the critics of his fifth wedding anniversary that took place in Cuba . This was due to the current United States embargo against Cuba , which required them needing a permit to visit the country . The song was produced by Swizz Beatz , and was included on the album as a bonus track . On July 10 , 2013 , Third Man Records announced on their website that they had entered a deal to release Magna Carta Holy Grail on vinyl , also confirming that " Open Letter " would be included as a vinyl @-@ only bonus track and that there would be " something [else] very special planned for the vinyl edition . " However , the ' vinyl @-@ only ' appearance of " Open Letter " has been shown to not apply to all market areas . Third Man Records is set to issue " Open Letter " in the form of a vinyl single designed as a playable letter . In an interview with Hot 97 , Jay @-@ Z went into detail about the single 's release , saying : " It 's in a letter . You can play the letter . It 's amazing ... You open the letter , and you can actually play the card . "

The song " Holy Grail " features vocals from singer Justin Timberlake and served as the album 's first single . It was produced by The @-@ Dream , Timbaland and Jerome " J @-@ Roc " Harmon , with additional production from No ID and containing elements of Nirvana 's 1991 hit single " Smells Like Teen Spirit " . Following the release of the album , the song debuted at number eight on the US Billboard Hot 100 and number 24 on the UK Singles Chart . The song has since peaked at number four on the Billboard Hot 100 . The music video was released on August 29 , 2013 , making social media history as the first time a clip from major artists debuted strictly on Facebook .

On September 26 , 2013 , the album 's second single " Tom Ford " was serviced to urban contemporary radio in the United Kingdom and then on October 15 , 2013 , to rhythmic contemporary in the United States . Prior to its single release , the song peaked at number 39 on the US Billboard Hot 100 . " Part II (On the Run) " featuring Beyoncé was serviced to contemporary hit radio stations on February 18 , 2014 as the album 's third single . The song has since peaked at number 80 on the Billboard Hot 100 .

= = Commercial performance = =

Magna Carta Holy Grail debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 and sold 528 @,@ 000 copies in its first week , which bypassed its predicted debut in the range of 350 @,@ 000 to 400 @,@ 000 . The album also debuted at number one on the Canadian Albums Chart . It is Jay @-@ Z 's third straight number one album in Canada . The album debuted at number one on the UK Album Chart , Jay @-@ Z 's first UK number one album . In its second week the album sold 129 @,@ 000 more copies in the United States . Despite the 76 % drop in sales , Magna Carta Holy Grail retained its number one position on the Billboard 200 , becoming the first rap album to spend two consecutive weeks on top since Lil Wayne 's Tha Carter IV (2011) . In its third week the album would drop down to number two , selling 77 @,@ 000 copies . In its fourth week the album would drop down to

number three , selling 62 @, @ 000 copies . It sold 1 @, @ 099 @, @ 000 copies in 2013 in the United States , making it the tenth best @-@ selling album of the year . By February 26 , 2014 , the album had sold 1 @, @ 130 @, @ 000 copies in the United States . As of September 2 , 2013 , It was announced by Billboard that Magna Carta Holy Grail was certified double platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) , for shipments of two million copies in the United States .

At the time of its release , the album had the second @-@ biggest sales week for 2013 , behind Justin Timberlake 's The 20 / 20 Experience . Magna Carta Holy Grail 's debut marked the first time in Billboard 's history when four different rap albums have consecutively spent weeks at number one , after Kanye West 's Yeezus , Wale 's The Gifted and J. Cole 's Born Sinner . Magna Carta Holy Grail also became Jay @-@ Z 's 13th studio album in a row to top the Billboard 200 , extending his record for the most chart @-@ toppers by a solo act in Billboard 's history .

= = Critical reception = =

Magna Carta Holy Grail received generally mixed reviews from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from critics , the album received an average score of 60 , based on 42 reviews . In his review for The New York Times , Jon Pareles wrote that Jay @-@ Z is trying to transition from pop but has not yet found a " reliable alternative " , and that his raps are often mismatched with rigidly produced tracks . AllMusic 's Andy Kellman felt that the album was hastily produced and that , despite occasionally impressive lyrics , Jay @-@ Z 's pop culture references sound reflexive . Spin magazine 's Jordan Sargent said that the songs sound both too elaborate and unfinished , and have similar but less momentous themes as Watch the Throne . Slant Magazine 's Jesse Cataldo viewed Magna Carta Holy Grail as a self @-@ important album marred by shallow name @-@ dropping and accused Jay @-@ Z of becoming disinterested creatively because of his increased success . Evan Rytlewski of The A.V. Club said that he exhausts the ending of his rags to riches narrative and cannot reinvent himself beyond gloating superficially about his riches . The Daily Telegraph 's Helen Brown found his boastful references heavy @-@ handed and the album unchallenging , albeit enjoyable for " the lazy listener " . Greg Kot , writing in the Chicago Tribune , viewed that , apart from well @-@ written moments on " Oceans " , " Jay @-@ Z Blue " , and " Nickel & Dimes " , most of the album is inconsequential .

In a positive review , Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times was impressed by the production 's energy and effective samples , even though he thought the album is not as intellectual or adventurous as its title suggests . Uncut wrote that it mostly succeeds as Jay @-@ Z 's attempt to " balance his great wealth , tough history and news responsibility while retaining his grit . " Louis Pattison of NME said that it lacks a radical presence such as Kanye West to complement Jay @-@ Z 's mature ruminations , but still shows him as a sagacious lyricist comparable with Bruce Springsteen or Bob Dylan . Kitty Empire , writing in The Observer , believed that the diverse production will initially draw listeners rather than Jay @-@ Z 's predictably " umpteenth retelling " of his rags @-@ to @-@ riches story , but the topics become more interesting on subsequent listens because of his surprisingly concerned takes on fatherhood and charity . In his review for MSN Music , Robert Christgau said he was won over after several listens by the familial songs , which he found amusing on an album that pits " black man as artistic rebel versus black man as family stalwart " .

= = = Accolades = = =

Closing out the year , Magna Carta Holy Grail was met with many accolades and was named in multiple " Albums of the Year " lists by major publications . It was nominated for Album of the Year at the 2013 BET Hip Hop Awards and for Best Rap Album at the 56th Annual Grammy Awards . Complex ranked the album at number 23 , on their list of the 50 best albums of 2013 . They praised the " high @-@ gloss production , " and strong rhymes by Jay @-@ Z , deeming it " very listenable " . Rolling Stone named it the tenth best hip hop album of the 2013 saying , " The legendary MC explored of @-@ the @-@ moment sounds , textures and tempos in ways only he could [...] Even

on a bit of an off day , Jay is still plenty impressive . " It was named the eighth best album of 2013 by XXL .

= = Track listing = =

On June 22 , Jay @-@ Z held a viral scavenger hunt around Brooklyn , New York as part of his " #NEWRULES " venture with Samsung . The 100 winners of the hunt were given a binder that revealed the track list .

Notes

^ a signifies an additional producer .

^ b signifies a co @-@ producer .

^ c signifies an additional programmer .

" Somewhereinamerica " is alternatively spelled as " Somewhere in America " in some versions of the album .

" Holy Grail " features additional vocals by The @-@ Dream .

" Picasso Baby " features additional vocals by The @-@ Dream and Zofia Borucka Moreno .

" Tom Ford " features additional vocals by Beyoncé Knowles who is credited as " Third Ward Trill " .

" Crown " features additional vocals by Travis Scott .

" Heaven " features additional vocals by Justin Timberlake .

" BBC " features additional vocals by Pharrell Williams , Timbaland , Niigo , Justin Timberlake , Swizz Beatz & Beyoncé Knowles who is credited as " Third Ward Trill " .

" Jay Z Blue " features additional vocals by Taffy .

Samples credits

" Holy Grail " contains elements of " Smells Like Teen Spirit " performed by Nirvana .

" Picasso Baby " contains a sample of " Sirens " performed by Adrian Younge .

" Tom Ford " contains elements of " Bad Girls " performed by M.I.A.

" Somewhereinamerica " embodies portions of " Gangster of Love (Part 1) " written by Johnny Guitar Watson .

" Crown " contains a sample of " Solid as a Rock " performed by Sizzla .

" Heaven " contains a sample of " Reverie " performed by Adrian Younge , and lyrically samples " Losing My Religion " performed by R.E.M.

" Versus " embodies portions of A Tribe Called Quest 's " Sucka Nigga " , and contains a sample of " Lilith - On The Way " performed by Bruno Spoerri

" Part II (On the Run) " contains a sample of " Believe in Me " performed by One Way .

" BBC " lyrically samples " Feel So Good " performed by Mase .

" Jay Z Blue " contains samples from " My Downfall " performed by The Notorious B.I.G. and a monologue by Faye Dunaway in the 1981 film Mommie Dearest .

" Nickels and Dimes " contains a sample of " Nikels and Dimes " performed by Gonjasufi .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from Allmusic .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =