

= Yeezus =

Yeezus is the sixth studio album by American rapper Kanye West . It was released on June 18 , 2013 by Def Jam Recordings . West gathered a number of artists and close collaborators for production on the album , including Mike Dean , Daft Punk , Arca , No I.D. and Hudson Mohawke . Yeezus also features vocal guest appearances from Assassin and King L , as well as previous collaborators Justin Vernon , Frank Ocean , Chief Keef , Kid Cudi and Charlie Wilson . Fifteen days before its release date , West enlisted the help of producer Rick Rubin to strip down the record 's sound in favor of a more minimalist approach .

Yeezus has been characterized as West 's most experimental and sonically abrasive work . It incorporates elements from an array of genres including industrial , acid house , dancehall , punk , electro , and Chicago drill while continuing West 's unconventional use of samples . The release features no album artwork , and the physical CD edition of the album was released in a clear jewel box with only a strip of red tape and sample credits . Initial promotion of Yeezus included worldwide video projections of the album 's music and live television performances . West released two singles from the album , the song " Black Skinhead " in July 2013 and " Bound 2 " the following month .

Yeezus received rave reviews from music critics , many of whom named it among West 's best work and commended its brash direction , though public response proved considerably more divided . The album debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 , selling 327 @,@ 000 copies in its first week of release . It topped the charts of 30 other countries , including the United Kingdom and Australia . Yeezus was nominated in two categories at the 2014 Grammy Awards , including Best Rap Album .

= = Background = =

Following the release of his fifth album , My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (2010) , West collaborated with longtime friend Jay Z on Watch the Throne (2011) . In July 2012 , producer No I.D. revealed that he had been working on West 's sixth solo studio album (and seventh overall) and that it would be released after Cruel Summer (2012) , a collaborative compilation album between members of West 's record label GOOD Music . For Yeezus , West enlisted several collaborators , including Kid Cudi , Charlie Wilson , S1 , The Heatmakerz , Mike Dean , Hudson Mohawke , Skrillex , Young Chop , Chief Keef , Frank Ocean , Odd Future , Travis Scott , The @-@ Dream , Cyhi the Prynce , Malik Yusef , King L , John Legend , James Blake , RZA , Mase and Pusha T. The album features additional vocals by Justin Vernon , Frank Ocean , Chief Keef , King L , Kid Cudi , Assassin and Charlie Wilson .

West was influenced primarily by minimalist design and architecture during the production of Yeezus , and visited a furniture exhibit in the Louvre five times . A single Le Corbusier lamp was his " greatest inspiration " . West worked closely with the architect Oana Stanescu , and took " field trips " to Le Corbusier homes . Fascinated by Stanescu 's comments on the unusual and radical nature of Corbusier design choices , West applied the situation to his own life , feeling that " visionaries can be misunderstood by their unenlightened peers . " West also met with architect Joseph Dirand and Belgian interior designer Axel Vervoordt , and had " rare Le Corbusier lamps , Pierre Jeanneret chairs and obscure body @-@ art journals from Switzerland " delivered to the loft . West also wanted a deep hometown influence on the album , and listened to 1980s house music most associated with his home city of Chicago for influence . Alejandro Jodorowsky 's The Holy Mountain was also an inspiration for the album .

= = Recording and production = =

In 2012 , West began recording his seventh studio album with collaborators , including No I.D. and DJ Khaled . The first recordings were held in January 2013 , in the living room of his personal loft at a Paris hotel , referred to in the album 's credits as the " No Name Hotel " . West kept compositions simple in order to hear the tracks more clearly ; too much bass or complexity would simply

overpower the room 's poor acoustics . The beats emanating from the loft space , which sometimes lasted through the night , provoked complaints from neighbors . Reports emerged that he and his then @-@ girlfriend Kim Kardashian had moved to the loft in order for West to begin work on the album .

The atmosphere in the studio was described by contributor Evian Christ as " very focused , " and West once again brought in several close collaborators . Producer Hudson Mohawke noted the inclusive " group " atmosphere of the sessions , in which multiple contributors would work on similar pieces , with different elements ultimately selected from each . All involved were given a song to work on and return the next day to sit and critique , a process Anthony Kilhoffer compared to an art class . Producer Arca described being initially asked to send West music , noting that " I made sure to send maybe the strangest stuff I had , and it just so happened that Kanye was excited by that . " Describing West 's collaborative style , Arca stated :

It was a lot of coming up with design , like solving riddles . If the song called for something aggressive , it was up to three or four people to design what in their head was the best solution for that aggression in that moment . Everyone would approach it in completely different ways , and ultimately , it would all be edited by Kanye himself . In a weird way , he kind of produced it . Not only did he select it , but he stylized it .

Determined to " undermine the commercial , " several tracks were left off the finished product that were deemed too melodic or more in line with West 's previous material . West set parameters regarding sound and style , insisting that there be no " bass wobbles " reminiscent of dubstep . The album 's recording process was described as " very raw " by Thomas Bangalter of the French electronic duo Daft Punk , who produced four songs for the album , adding that West was " rapping ? kind of screaming primally , actually . " While previous albums , particularly *Dark Fantasy* , took considerable time in the studio , *Yeezus* was described by Kilhoffer as " the fastest record we ever made . " In May 2013 , Def Jam executives listened to the " final product , " (only later to be changed) describing the album as " dark . "

W writer Christopher Bagley reports that West 's creative process often bordered on perfectionist . In March 2013 , West described the album to Bagley as near completion , only to revise this statement one month later to " [the album is] only 30 percent complete . " West made several last @-@ minute alterations to *Yeezus* , enlisting the co @-@ founder of Def Jam Recordings , Rick Rubin , as an executive producer for additional recording mere days before its release ; changes included re @-@ recording whole songs and rewriting entire verses . The rough cut West played Rubin ran nearly three and a half hours long . West 's orders to Rubin were to take the music in a " stripped @-@ down minimal direction " , often removing elements already recorded .

For several days in late May and early June 2013 , West and a " rotating group of intimates , collaborators and hangers @-@ on " holed up at Rubin 's Shangri @-@ La Studio in Malibu in service of completing the record . Rubin thought it impossible to meet the deadline and all involved ended up working long hours with no days off in order to complete the record . West had intended the album be 16 tracks until Rubin suggested cutting the album down to fewer tracks . Rubin gave as example " Bound " , which was " a more middle of the road R & B song , done in an adult contemporary style " before Kanye decided to replace the musical backing with a minimalistic sample , " a single note baseline in the hook which we processed to have a punk edge in the Suicide tradition . " Two days before the album had to be delivered to the label , West wrote and sung lyrics to two songs while also recording the vocals to three others in just two hours . Rubin also suggested to reduce the album from sixteen songs to just ten , saying the others could be reserved for a follow @-@ up .

= = Music and composition = =

According to Chicago Tribune critic Greg Kot , *Yeezus* is a " hostile , abrasive and intentionally off @-@ putting " album that combines " the worlds of " 1980s Chicago acid @-@ house and 2013 Chicago drill music , 1990s industrial music , and the " avant @-@ rap " of Saul Williams , Death Grips and Odd Future . Slant Magazine critic Ted Scheinman described the album as " built on alien

, angular beats , slowly morphing drones and sirens , abrupt periods of silence , and a pulse @-@ quickening style of delivery from Yeezy himself , " writing that West reconceives the " notion of what kind of music (or noise) can underpin hip @-@ hop . " According to Charles Aaron of Spin , Yeezus is " a hip hop album , not a rap album " , because of how its sounds and subject matter are assembled together , and although listeners can hear " ' punk ' or ' post @-@ punk ' or ' industrial ' " throughout , " hip @-@ hop has always been about noise and dissonance and dance music as agitation " . The album also incorporates elements of industrial and trap music . The record " most closely resembles " 1990s industrial rock , during which the genre had a significant pop culture impact , with artists such as Nine Inch Nails , Ministry , and Marilyn Manson gaining success . The industrial scene created a " vast global underground community , " and Esquire notes that one of its epicenters was in Chicago , where West was raised . Evan Rytlewski of The A.V. Club characterized its opening series of songs as electro and industrial hip hop . West , himself would later go onto describe the sound of the album as " a protest to music "

Yeezus is primarily electronic in nature , and boasts distorted drum machines and " synthesizers that sound like they 're malfunctioning , low @-@ resolution samplers that add a pixelated digital aura to the most analog sounds . " To this end , the album incorporates glitches reminiscent of CD skips or corrupted MP3 's , and Auto @-@ Tuned vocals are modulated to a point in which they are difficult to decipher . Esquire cites " On Sight " as an early example of the album 's connection to electronic music , citing its " droning synthesizer tone , " which is " modulated until the signal starts throwing off harshly treble @-@ heavy spikes and begins to clip , as if it were overloading a digital audio processor . "

Yeezus continues West 's practice of eclectic samples : he employs an obscure Hindi sample on " I Am a God " , and a sample of 1970s Hungarian rock group Omega on " New Slaves " . " On Sight " interpolates a melody from " Sermon (He 'll Give Us What We Really Need) " by the Holy Name of Mary Choral Family , although the track originally sampled an old vocal track from the original recording . As late as a week prior to release , lawyers were forced to track down the choir director and members of the choir on the South Side of Chicago in order to get clearance for such a sample . Def Jam executives were significantly worried enough the deal would not be in place in time for the record 's deadline , and producers re @-@ recorded the vocals with a new choir as the sample could not be cleared in enough time . " Bound 2 " features heavy soul music samples and has been described as the only song on Yeezus which recalls the sound of West 's early work . " Bound " , a 1971 song by American soul group Ponderosa Twins Plus One from their album 2 + 2 + 1 = Ponderosa Twins Plus One , serves as the primary sample used in West 's track .

The album 's second track " Black Skinhead " has alternately been called an industrial hip hop song and " a galloping punk @-@ rap manifesto " . " I Am a God " was inspired by a " diss " from a major fashion designer , who informed West of his invitation to a widely anticipated runway show on the condition he agree to not attend other shows . " I 'm in It " began with a different sample and melody , but West removed the sample and Rubin edited the track down from a six @-@ minute arrangement . " Blood on the Leaves , " which samples Nina Simone 's 1965 rendition of " Strange Fruit " and was the first track in the first incarnation of the track list , is an example of West 's signature dichotomy in which he melds the sacred and profane . " Strange Fruit " , first recorded by Billie Holiday in 1939 , brought the lynchings of black Americans to a " startling poignancy , " creating " one of the most towering , important songs of the 20th century . " West 's anthemic re @-@ telling instead details an MDMA @-@ fueled hookup and the perils of fame .

= = Promotion and release = =

On May 1 , 2013 , West used the social networking site Twitter to post a single message reading " June Eighteen " , leading several media outlets to speculate that the post referred to the release date of West 's upcoming album . On May 17 , he began promotion of the album by unveiling the previously unreleased song " New Slaves " through video projections in 66 assorted locations . The following day , West appeared on the American late @-@ night live television sketch comedy show Saturday Night Live and performed the songs " New Slaves " and " Black Skinhead " . He

subsequently revealed the album's cover and title, Yeezus, on his official website. The iTunes Store made Yeezus available for pre-order on May 20, but the listing was subsequently taken down for unknown reasons. On May 29, A.P.C. founder Jean Touitou unveiled an advertisement for Yeezus which stated that the album would not be available for pre-order. Speaking about the album's minimal promotion, West stated: "With this album, we ain't drop no single to radio. We ain't got no NBA campaign, nothing like that. Shit, we ain't even got no cover. We just made some real music."

The physical CD edition of Yeezus was released in a clear jewel box with no album artwork, reflecting the minimalist tone. The packaging consists of little more than a piece of red tape and a sticker affixed to the back, with sample credits and the album's UPC. Other versions of this release have different colors of stickers, with green, yellow and orange being some of the other colors. The front is affixed with a Parental Advisory label. The Source pointed out a resemblance between the Yeezus CD packaging and a packaging concept designed for the single "Crystal" by the English band New Order in 2001.

Def Jam confirmed in late June 2013 that "Black Skinhead" would be serviced to American radio as the album's first single on July 2, 2013 and that a music video for the track was being produced. It was officially released to radio in the United Kingdom on June 19. The song peaked at number 69 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and 34 on the UK Singles Chart. In August 2013, it was revealed that "Bound 2" would be released as the second single from Yeezus. "Bound 2" features vocals from American soul singer Charlie Wilson and incorporates numerous samples into its production, including prominent elements of the song "Bound" (1971) by soul group Ponderosa Twins Plus One. "Bound 2" received general acclaim from music critics, who referred to the song as one of the highlights of the album and compared its soul sample-based production to West's early work from his debut studio album *The College Dropout*. The song has since peaked at number 55 on the UK Singles Chart. In November 2013, producer Hudson Mohawke revealed that "Blood on the Leaves" would serve as the album's third single. West subsequently made the announcement in an interview on New York's 92.3 NOW.

On September 6, 2013, Kanye West announced The Yeezus Tour, a North American tour to take place between October 19 through December 7, 2013. The tour was marketed as his "first solo tour in 5 years", and featured Kendrick Lamar, Pusha T, A Tribe Called Quest and Travis Scott as supporting acts. On October 30, 2013 while on the road to Vancouver, a truck carrying custom-made video screens and equipment for the show was involved in a car accident, the crash damaged the equipment beyond repair. The tour resumed on November 16, 2013, at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. The missed Chicago and Detroit shows were rescheduled however, the rest of the missed dates were cancelled, Def Jam cited routing logistics as the reason.

== Commercial performance ==

Within one day of availability on the iTunes Store, Yeezus topped sales in the UK, Canada, Australia and Germany, while remaining at number two in the United States behind J. Cole's *Born Sinner*. Yeezus debuted at number one in 31 countries, while also landing top five spots in 20 more charts. It would eventually have chart-topping performances in the United Kingdom, where Yeezus debuted at number one on the UK Albums Chart on downloads alone, making the album West's first number one on that chart since *Graduation* in 2007, and Australia, where it became West's first album to top the ARIA Charts.

Yeezus debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 chart, selling 327,000 copies in the United States in its first week. The album failed to reach the 500,000 sales projections, and marked West's lowest solo opening week sales in the US. However, it still had the third-best first week sales of 2013 at the time of its release and the best first week sales by a hip hop album since Drake's 2011 album *Take Care*. The second-week sales saw the album fall dramatically: although it still ended at number three on the chart, sales dropped by 80% to 65,000 units, making Yeezus the largest second-week percentage drop for a number one debuting album in 2013 and the fourth-largest for a number one bowing

album in the SoundScan era . Billboard 's Keith Caulfield attributed the diminished figures to the non @-@ traditional marketing , considering that the lack of singles and public appearances led the album to find " difficulty in sustaining its momentum " . On August 12 , 2013 , The album was certified gold for sales of over 500 @,@ 000 copies . On January 8 , 2014 , it was certified platinum for shipments of one million albums shipped to stores and digital retailers . As of February 2016 , the album has sold 750 @,@ 000 copies in the United States .

= = = Public reaction = = =

Public reaction to Yeezus , including its unorthodox and deliberate lack of promotion as well as its brash and aggressive sound , was mixed . Yeezus was noted as one of the most anticipated releases of 2013 by major publications , but the lack of a major radio single was regarded as a risky move . Regardless , radio stations have still played tracks from Yeezus on air , despite it being a departure from the normal playlists found on hip @-@ hop stations . " When I listen to radio , that ain 't where I wanna be no more , " stated West at his headlining June 9 , 2013 Governor 's Ball performance , where he unveiled several tracks from the record for the first time . Rolling Stone summarized the audience 's response : " Half the crowd cheered , half almost audibly rolled their eyes . "

West 's June 11 interview with Jon Caramanica of The New York Times was similarly viewed with a mixed reaction , with many outlets mocking West 's seemingly vain statements . In the article , West compares himself to Apple co @-@ founder Steve Jobs and refers to himself as " the nucleus of all society . "

Within four days prior to the release , Yeezus was leaked online . The New York Times wrote that the leak " stirred up a Twitter frenzy " and received widespread media coverage . The Washington Post commented on the significance of the leak : " Kanye West ? s new album didn ? t leak online over the weekend . It gushed out into the pop ecosystem like a million barrels of renegade crude ? ominous , mesmerizing and of great consequence . " Critics were very kind to Yeezus regarding critical reviews , but others viewed the release as " musical and commercial suicide , " and " fans live @-@ blogged their own befuddlement on Twitter and Facebook . " The New Yorker 's Sasha Frere @-@ Jones suggests that Yeezus may be preferred over any of West 's previous works in coming decades by a new generation due to the " lean vibrancy " of the album . " One of the most fascinating aspects of Yeezus ' arrival is the discursive crisis it 's caused , produced by a fast @-@ react culture colliding with a work of art so confounding , " wrote The Atlantic columnist Jack Hamilton .

West was criticized by the UK and US Parkinson 's Disease Associations for controversial lyrics in lead @-@ song " On Sight " . In February 2014 , English singer Lily Allen announced that she would title her third studio album Sheezus . In an interview with Australian radio station Nova , Allen stated that she is terrified that West would think it 's " a diss rather than a tribute . " She said that she thinks West is brilliant and praised him for speaking his mind all the time . Jack White , a vocal advocate of analog recording , remarked that the album " is obviously recorded on Pro Tools but sounds unbelievable , because it is very simple and there aren 't a lot of components going on , and this really allows the songs to shine . Plus he mixed using analogue components . "

= = Critical reception = =

Yeezus received widespread acclaim from critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream publications , the album received an average score of 84 , based on 46 reviews . In The Guardian , lead critic Alexis Petridis found it " noisy , gripping , maddening , potent " , while Helen Brown from The Daily Telegraph said it was " the most exciting album " she had heard in some time . Jon Dolan from Rolling Stone called it a " brilliant , obsessive @-@ compulsive career auto @-@ correct " that made other abrasive records by " mad geniuses " , such as In Utero by Nirvana and Radiohead 's Kid A , seem tame by comparison . Pitchfork Media critic Ryan Dombal viewed it as a " razor @-@ sharpened take " on West 's fourth album , 808s &

Heartbreak , concluding that " cohesion and bold intent are at a premium on Yeezus , perhaps more than any other Kanye album . Each fluorescent strike of noise , incongruous tempo flip , and warped vocal is bolted into its right place across the album 's fast 40 minutes . " Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times felt it was his most ambitious piece of music yet , and Evan Rytlewski from The A.V. Club said it was his most uninhibited record : " Even by the standards of an artist who reinvents himself with each release , it 's a drastic departure " . In the opinion of AllMusic 's David Jeffries , the album was an " extravagant stunt with the high @-@ art packed in , offering an eccentric , audacious , and gripping experience that 's vital and truly unlike anything else . " Rock artist Lou Reed reviewed Yeezus shortly before his death , describing it as " majestic and inspiring ... no one 's near doing what [West] ' s doing , it 's not even on the same planet . "

In a less enthusiastic review for The New York Times , Jon Pareles felt West 's innovative transfiguration of his music , with unrefined electronica and drill elements , was undermined by his distasteful lyrics and appropriation of 1960s civil rights slogans " to his own celebrity or to bedroom exploits " . Robert Christgau , writing for The Barnes & Noble Review , said the combination of harsh rock and hip hop sounds on Yeezus was as bold as Public Enemy 's music during the 1980s , but found West 's lyrics grotesquely off @-@ putting : " He 's wordsmith enough to insure that his sexist imagery is very hard to take . " Chris Richards from The Washington Post found West 's lyricism to be perhaps " his least compelling " yet and " drunk on bitterness " , while Slant Magazine critic Ted Scheinman believed West was struggling to reinvent himself thematically and " seeking social @-@ commentary cred that he hasn 't earned . " Tiny Mix Tapes described the album as " a nebulous , dense , paranoid web of utterly unfiltered expression that ? s utterly or negligibly fascinating depending on how much you care about Yeezy .

= = = Accolades = = =

Based on 146 individual year @-@ end top ten lists compiled by Metacritic , Yeezus was the most critically acclaimed album of 2013 , appearing on 61 lists and being named first on 18 of them . In October 2013 , Complex named Yeezus the sixth best hip hop album of the last five years . Yeezus was rated as album of the year by nine publications . Spin named it the best album of 2013 , writing , " Yeezus was a thorny tangram puzzle of boxy headbanger blats that exemplified a year of equally stripped @-@ down , basal pleasures . " The A.V. Club named it the best album of 2013 saying " It ? s magnificent , and it sounds like absolutely nothing else . " Rolling Stone named it the second best album of 2013 , comparing it in concept to Reed 's polarizing 1975 album Metal Machine Music : " No wonder the late , great Lou Reed embraced Yeezus , since it 's basically the Metal Machine Music concept translated into futuristic hip @-@ hop , all industrial overload and hypertense egomania and hostile vibes . " Exclaim ! also named it the hip hop album of the year . NME named it the second best album of the year calling it " his most sonically challenging album to date . " Stereogum , TIME and Complex also named Yeezus the best album of 2013 . It was also nominated in two categories at the 2014 Grammy Awards including for Best Rap Album and Best Rap Song for " New Slaves " . West responded unfavorably to this due to not receiving more nominations . He then addressed the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences at one of his concerts and referred to it as patronizing .

The Pitchfork online music publication ranked Yeezus in the eighth position of a list of the best 100 albums of the decade " so far " ? between 2010 and 2014 ? on August 19 , 2014 . In January 2014 , Yeezus was named the best album of 2013 by The Village Voice 's Pazz & Jop annual critics ' poll ; this is the fourth instance that a Kanye West album has topped the poll , after The College Dropout , Late Registration , and My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy in 2004 , 2005 , and 2010 , respectively . On the same poll for singles , " Bound 2 " , " New Slaves " , and " Black Skinhead " were ranked in the top 10 .

= = Track listing = =

Credits adapted from West 's official website .

Notes

^ a signifies a co @-@ producer

^ b signifies an additional producer

" Black Skinhead " features uncredited vocals by Lupe Fiasco .

" I Am a God " features additional vocals by Justin Vernon .

" New Slaves " features additional vocals by Frank Ocean .

" Hold My Liquor " features vocals by Chief Keef and Justin Vernon .

" I 'm In It " features vocals by Justin Vernon and Assassin .

" Guilt Trip " features uncredited vocals by Kid Cudi .

" Send it Up " features vocals by King L.

" Bound 2 " features additional vocals by Charlie Wilson .

Sample credits

" On Sight " contains interpolations of " Sermon (He 'll Give Us What We Really Need) " , written by Keith Carter , Sr. , performed by Holy Name of Mary Choral Family , re @-@ sung by a different choir .

" I Am a God " contains samples of " Forward Inna Dem Clothes " , written by Clifton Bailey III and H. Hart , performed by Capleton ; and samples of " Are Zindagi Hai Khel " , written by Anand Bakshi and Rahul Burman , performed by Burman , Manna Dey and Asha Bhosle .

" New Slaves " contains samples of " Gyöngyhajú lány " , written by Gábor Presser and Anna Adamis , performed by Omega .

" I 'm In It " contains samples of " Lately " , written by Vidal Davis , Carvin Haggins , Andre Harris , Kenny Lattimore and Jill Scott , performed by Lattimore .

" Blood on the Leaves " contains samples of " Strange Fruit " , written by Lewis Allan , performed by Nina Simone ; and samples of " R U Ready " , written by Ross Birchard and Lunice Pierre , performed by TNGHT .

" Guilt Trip " contains interpolations of " Chief Rocka " , written by Keith Elam , Kevin Hansford , Dupre Kelly , Christopher Martin , Alterick Wardrick and Marlon Williams , performed by Lords of the Underground ; and samples of " Blocka (Ackeejuice Rockers Remix) " , written by Terrence Thornton and Tyree Pittman , performed by Pusha T featuring Travis Scott and Popcaan .

" Send It Up " contains samples of " Memories " , written by Anthony Moses Davis , Collin York and Lowell Dunbar , performed by Beenie Man .

" Bound 2 " contains samples of " Aeroplane (Reprise) " , written by Norman Whiteside , performed by Wee ; samples of " Bound " , written by Bobby Massey and Robert Dukes , performed by Ponderosa Twins Plus One ; and samples of " Sweet Nothin 's " , written by Ronnie Self , performed by Brenda Lee .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =