

= 4 ( Beyoncé album ) =

4 is the fourth studio album by American singer Beyoncé , released on June 24 , 2011 , by Parkwood Entertainment and Columbia Records . Following a career hiatus that reignited her creativity , Beyoncé was inspired to create a record with a basis in traditional rhythm and blues that stood apart from contemporary popular music . Her collaborations with songwriters and record producers The @-@ Dream , Tricky Stewart , and Shea Taylor produced a mellower tone , developing diverse vocal styles and influences from funk , hip hop , and soul .

Severing professional ties with father and manager Mathew Knowles , Beyoncé eschewed the music of her previous releases in favor of an intimate , personal album . 4 's lyrics emphasize monogamy , female empowerment and self @-@ reflection , a result of Beyoncé considering a maturer message to contend artistic credibility . The album was praised by critics for its fusion of various genres and for Beyoncé 's vocals ; many publications included it on their year @-@ end lists .

In May 2011 , Beyoncé submitted seventy @-@ two songs to Columbia Records for consideration , twelve songs of which appeared on the standard edition . 4 was promoted in mid @-@ 2011 by television performances and festival appearances , such as Beyoncé 's headlining Glastonbury Festival set . It was her fourth consecutive album to debut at number one on the US Billboard 200 , and it also reached number one in Brazil , France , Ireland , South Korea , Spain , Switzerland and the United Kingdom . 4 spawned the international singles " Run the World ( Girls ) " , " Best Thing I Never Had " , " Party " , " Love on Top " and " Countdown " . " Love on Top " won the Grammy Award for Best Traditional R & B Performance at the 55th annual ceremony . As of December 2015 , 4 has sold 3 @.@ 3 million copies worldwide and 1 @.@ 5 million copies in the United States .

= = Development = =

Following the release of her third album I Am ... Sasha Fierce ( 2008 ) and a world tour , Beyoncé took a career hiatus in 2010 " to live life [ and ] to be inspired by things again " . During her hiatus , she " killed " Sasha Fierce , the alter @-@ ego used in her previous album , as she felt she could now merge her two personalities . She severed professional ties with father and manager Mathew Knowles , who had guided her career since the 1990s with Destiny 's Child , noting that the decision made her feel vulnerable .

In an interview for Complex , Beyoncé expressed dissatisfaction with contemporary radio . She intended 4 to help change that status , commenting , " Figuring out a way to get R & B back on the radio is challenging ... With 4 , I tried to mix R & B from the ' 70s and the ' 90s with rock ' n ' roll and a lot of horns to create something new and exciting . I wanted musical changes , bridges , vibrata , live instrumentation and classic songwriting . " On her website she wrote , " The album is definitely an evolution . It 's bolder than the music on my previous albums because I 'm bolder . The more mature I become and the more life experiences I have , the more I have to talk about . I really focused on songs being classics , songs that would last , songs that I could sing when I 'm 40 and when I 'm 60 . " Beyoncé also sought to make more artistic music , rather than purely commercially oriented songs .

Although much of 4 's inspiration came from " touring , travelling , watching rock bands and attending festivals " , the album 's early musical direction was influenced by Nigerian Afrobeat musician Fela Kuti , whose passion for music motivated Beyoncé . She worked with the band from Fela ! , the Broadway musical based on Kuti 's life . DJ Swivel , one of 4 's engineers , later described how Kuti 's use of percussion and horns influenced the track " End of Time " . In 2015 , The @-@ Dream revealed that he and Beyoncé had composed a whole album based on Kuti 's music , although this was scrapped in favor of creating 4 , therefore explaining how " End of Time " became so heavily influenced .

She also found additional influences in Earth , Wind & Fire , The Stylistics , Lauryn Hill , Stevie Wonder , and Michael Jackson . She used hip hop for a " broader sound " and looked to bring soul singing back , stating , " I used a lot of the brassiness and grittiness in my voice that people hear in

my live performances , but not necessarily on my records . "

= = Recording = =

Three months into her hiatus in March 2010 , Beyoncé began recording at Jay @-@ Z 's Roc the Mic Studios in New York City . One song ? " Party " ? was recorded because she wanted to see what working relationship would develop with engineer DJ Swivel . Kanye West assisted the production of " Party " after Beyoncé was impressed by his work on My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy ( 2010 ) . André 3000 , the only featured artist on 4 , contributed a rap verse to the song , which he recorded in Georgia , US .

Six weeks later , in May 2010 , she asked Swivel to work on the entire project . Concerning his working relationship with Beyoncé , he commented , " There was no ' We 're doing this today . ' It was a very kind of open project , where whatever she felt like recording at that time was what we 'd work on . It was based on how she felt , her mood , and also her listening to the demos that writers would give us . " With Swivel , she experimented with horns , drums , guitars and percussion instruments . Mostly inspired by the Fela ! sessions , Swivel began to formulate beats using their own recordings and those from Fela ! The project was moved to KMA Studios for a week and a half because Roc the Mic was not large enough . There they began recording " I Care " , " Best Thing I Never Had " and " Rather Die Young " , and completed " Party " . They recorded the songs " Schoolin ' Life " , " 1 + 1 " and " Start Over " at Jungle City Studios in New York .

MSR Studios was the final New York City @-@ based studio used , and where most of 4 was recorded ? only " Party " and " I Was Here " were recorded entirely at other studios . At MSR , Beyoncé emphasized the use of live instruments on songs such as " I Care " and " End of Time " . Consequently , most of the instruments , including drums , keyboards , guitar and bass work , were recorded there and performed by Jeff Bhasker and Shea Taylor . Beyoncé asked Frank Ocean to write and record " I Miss You " at MSR , saying to Complex , " [ Jay @-@ Z ] had a CD playing in the car one Sunday when we were driving to Brooklyn . I noticed his tone , his arrangements , and his storytelling . I immediately reached out to him ? literally the next morning . I asked him to fly to New York and work on my record . "

After listening to each song , Beyoncé would often request the addition of specific instruments , leaving her production team to make the sounds cohesive . Her vocals were recorded through an Avalon Design 737 preamp and compressed in a 1176 Peak Limiter with a 4 : 1 ratio . After recording the lead vocals for a track , Swivel cut them in different ways and he and Beyoncé picked the best , then recording the backing vocals . Beyoncé composed her own vocal arrangements and harmonies for each song . Her microphones were carefully placed to achieve a blend of sounds with a clear quality . Swivel spoke of her work ethic in an interview for Sound on Sound :

She 's so fast and good at what she does that you can 't afford to waste time on anything , so if we ? re ready to record drums , for example , we ? re going to work with whatever we have available right there and then . That 's why we worked in such great studios , because we know they have great gear , and we don 't need to worry about renting gear . Part of my job as an engineer is to make sure the sessions are not only moving along , but moving along at her pace .

After the move to MSR , Beyoncé and her production team began travelling . In the United Kingdom , they worked at Peter Gabriel 's Real World Studios in Wiltshire ? particularly using Gabriel 's multi @-@ instrument room ? to create " Love on Top " . Soon after , Beyoncé joined Jay @-@ Z in a Sydney mansion , as he was working on his collaboration album Watch the Throne ( 2011 ) with Kanye West . There they created a " primitive studio " using a microphone , a rig out and Pro Tools software to record . Sessions were also held in Las Vegas , Los Angeles , Atlanta and Honolulu .

In February 2011 , MTV reported the project was nearing completion . 4 was mixed mostly at MixStar Studios in Virginia and mastered at Sterling Sound in New York City . The audio mastering was delayed by a week following the unexpected recording of " I Was Here " . Diane Warren had played the song to Jay @-@ Z during a telephone conversation , leading him to put Warren and Beyoncé in contact . In May 2011 , Beyoncé submitted seventy @-@ two songs in preparation for the album 's release . According to Swivel , an eclectic range of songs were recorded , including

ballads , " weird ethereal things " and 1990 's R & B and Afrobeat @-@ inspired songs . Columbia Records were reportedly overwhelmed with the " sheer volume of material she presented to them " .

= = Composition = =

The final cut of 4 comprises twelve tracks on the standard edition and eighteen on the deluxe edition ? three of which are remixes of " Run the World ( Girls ) " . Critics viewed 4 as a major departure from Beyoncé 's previous catalogue , with a distinctive mellower sound . The album consists mostly of mid @-@ tempo R & B songs , with 1970s funk , 1980s pop and 1990s soul influences . The second half was more eclectic , exploring a variety of genres including hard rock , reggae and adult contemporary . The Guardian complimented the album 's divergence from the " layering [ of ] Euro @-@ synths on pop @-@ step woomphs " that characterize the music of Beyoncé 's contemporaries .

The balladry of the first half of 4 combines diverse vocal styles with the use of live instrumentation . " 1 + 1 " demonstrates Beyoncé 's vocal @-@ flexing over " magnificent guitar bombast " and a soft backing beat , while " Start Over " , a mid tempo R & B ballad , uses a futuristic beat with electric elements and synthesizers . " I Miss You " , with its " layers of atmospheric keyboards " , ambient synthesizers and tinny 808 drums was sung in a half @-@ whisper to exhibit intense emotion . " I Was Here " , an understated pop @-@ R & B ballad with indie rock inflections , primarily concerns self @-@ reflection with dramatic vocals .

On other songs , Beyoncé explores womanhood . " Best Thing I Never Had " , 4 's fourth track , was described as a moment of self @-@ realization and a " female call to arms " . With vocals that allude to a " wounded bird turned resilient lioness " , the song is built on a " winkly piano riff and beefy bass drums " . " Dance for You " conveys a more sexual tone through breathy vocals and blaring electric guitars . It forgoes her typical empowerment themes in favor of sensual imagery and comfort with one 's partner . " Run the World ( Girls ) " , a female empowerment anthem reminiscent of Beyoncé 's more contemporary work on I Am ... Sasha Fierce , uses an energetic sample of Major Lazer 's " Pon de Floor " . The song incorporates " layered melodics " , most prominently a military marching drumbeat , while Beyoncé 's near @-@ chanted delivery encompasses her full vocal range .

The tracks " Countdown " and " End of Time " were distinguished by their musical and lyrical experimentalism . " Countdown " was described as " everywhere on the genre map " , although predominantly dancehall @-@ led with a " bristling brass arrangement " . Its chorus describes a relationship by counting backwards from ten , using a sample from Boyz II Men 's " Uhh Ahh " . " End of Time " ' s pulsating , brass sound ? reminiscent of a marching @-@ band ? was heavily influenced by Afrobeat musician Fela Kuti . Kuti 's use of horns and percussion instruments was recreated and combined with elements of electronic music and synthesizers . " Lay Up Under Me " is also built on retro horns , featuring upbeat vocals , a sound Ryan Dombal of Pitchfork associated with Michael Jackson 's 1979 album Off the Wall .

Other tracks were noted for their retro stylization . " Rather Die Young " is a throwback to 1960s doo @-@ wop and Philadelphia soul , with a slow tempo and modern drums . " Party " achieves a vintage aesthetic through minimalistic production , replete with heavy synthesizers and a 1980s smooth @-@ funk groove . The song is unique for its conversation @-@ like structure , in which Beyoncé and guest @-@ vocalist André 3000 sing verses that allude to socialization at parties . Elements of Prince 's style was found on " Schoolin ' Life " and " I Care " . " Schoolin ' Life " is an uptempo funk song , with lyrics that advise the listener to live life to the fullest while cautioning them about the consequences of excess . The chorus of " I Care " was compared to " Purple Rain " , with themes of sadness and resentment , the song uses soft background vocals and dense percussion . " Love on Top " was noted for its energetic key changes with a joyful tone , evoking the work of Michael and Janet Jackson . Its retro sound is marked by a melding of horns as well as sweet backing harmonies that are most prominent on its bridge and chorus .

= = Release and artwork = =

On May 18 , 2011 , 4 's release date in the United States was confirmed on to be June 28 . On June 7 , the album was leaked onto the Internet in full ; Beyoncé 's legal representatives issued warnings to infringing websites and leaked tracks were soon removed from such sites . On June 9 , Beyoncé responded to the leak through Facebook , commenting , " My music was leaked and while this is not how I wanted to present my new songs , I appreciate the positive response from my fans . When I record music I always think about my fans singing every note and dancing to every beat . I make music to make people happy and I appreciate that everyone has been so anxious to hear my new songs . " Following the leak , reports circulated that Columbia Records executives hoped to cover their assets in fear that the album may be a commercial failure . Rumors had suggested that the label requested from Beyoncé to make changes to the record and reunite Destiny 's Child , claims Columbia denied . In August 2013 , NME reported that Sony Music were suing a forty @-@ seven @-@ year @-@ old man from Gothenburg for US \$ 233 @,@ 000 concerning the leak of 4 . The deluxe version was released simultaneously with the standard edition in several countries . In the United States , it was available exclusively through Target stores .

In an interview for Billboard , Beyoncé stated that despite having another concept for the album , she was ultimately influenced by her fans to name the album 4 . She described the number four as being " special " to her , as her and Jay @-@ Z 's birthday , several other family and friends ' birthdays , and her wedding anniversary fall on the fourth day of the month . The cover of the standard edition was revealed on Beyoncé 's website on May 18 , 2011 . Shot on the rooftop of the Hôtel Meurice in Paris , Beyoncé is looking into the distance with her arms raised over her head , wearing smokey eye makeup , thick gold cuffs and a fox @-@ fur stole by cult French designer Alexandre Vauthier , embellished with Swarovski crystals by the Lesage embroidery house . The cover of the deluxe version was shown on June 16 , where Beyoncé is dressed in a tight @-@ fitting blue @-@ purple dress by French designer Maxime Simoens , holding her hands in her hair . For its artwork , she opted for clothing made by lesser @-@ known designers . The promotional and interior @-@ package images for 4 were shot at the same time .

= = Promotion = =

Beyoncé made several appearances on television and in live shows to promote 4 . She performed " Run the World ( Girls ) " for the first time on May 17 , 2011 , on Surprise Oprah ! A Farewell Spectacular at the United Center in Chicago . She also performed the song at the 2011 Billboard Music Awards . On May 25 , " 1 + 1 " was made available for download through the iTunes Store in the United States . The same day , " 1 + 1 " was performed at the American Idol final ; she introduced it as her favorite song . In June , she performed at the Palais Nikaia in Nice , Zénith de Lille , and the Galaxie in Amnéville . On June 26 , Beyoncé was the closing act at the Glastonbury Festival 2011 in the United Kingdom . She was the first solo female artist to headline the Pyramid stage at the Glastonbury Festival in more than twenty years . A pre @-@ taped performance of " Best Thing I Never Had " and " End of Time " at the Glastonbury Festival was broadcast during the 2011 BET Awards . The following day , Beyoncé 's exclusive hour @-@ long interview with Piers Morgan in London was broadcast on Piers Morgan Tonight . She also appeared on the finale of France 's The X Factor to perform " Run the World " and " Best Thing I Never Had " . An MTV television special , Beyoncé : Year of 4 , premiered on June 30 , documenting Beyoncé 's life during 4 's production .

On July 1 , Beyoncé appeared on Good Morning America as part of its " Summer Concert Series " in New York City . She also projected images from 4 on a number of London 's landmarks , including Madame Tussauds and Battersea Power Station . She then traveled to Scotland to perform at the T in the Park Festival on July 10 , 2011 . The next day , she performed at the Oxegen Festival in Ireland . On July 28 , 2011 , Beyoncé performed " 1 + 1 " and " Best Thing I Never Had " on The View ; the latter was also performed on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon the same day . From August 16 ? 19 , Beyoncé held the 4 Intimate Nights with Beyoncé concerts at the Roseland Ballroom to a standing room only audience . Subsequently , the Live at Roseland : Elements of 4 DVD was released in November . " Love on Top " was sung at the 2011 MTV Video Music Awards on August

28 , Beyoncé finished the performance by unbuttoning her blazer and rubbing her stomach to confirm her pregnancy . A live performance of " Countdown " recorded in July was broadcast on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon in November .

== Singles ==

4 was Beyoncé ' first album that yielded no number one singles in the United States , as no song from 4 reached the top ten on the Billboard Hot 100 . " Run the World ( Girls ) " was released internationally as the lead single from 4 on April 21 , 2011 . It reached number twenty @-@ nine on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and number eleven on the UK Singles Chart . " Best Thing I Never Had " followed on June 1 , 2011 . It fared much better on national charts , reaching number sixteen in the United States , number five in New Zealand and number three in the United Kingdom .

" Party " was released as an urban contemporary single in the US on August 30 , 2011 ; its remix , featuring J. Cole , was released in the United States , Canada and some European countries on October 24 , 2011 . " Love on Top " was released in Australia as a contemporary hit radio single in September 2011 ; it was released in Italy , Belgium and the United States later . It topped the Billboard Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs chart for seven consecutive weeks . " Countdown " was released in the United States and parts of Europe , beginning October 4 , 2011 . " I Care " was released in Italy only on March 23 , 2012 , while " End of Time " was released in the UK only on April 23 , 2012 .

== Critical reception ==

4 received generally positive reviews from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a weighted mean rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 73 , based on 36 reviews . Michael Cragg of The Observer called it Beyoncé 's " most accomplished album yet " . Slant Magazine 's Eric Henderson believed 4 succeeds vocally as an album of mostly intimate and slow @-@ tempo ballads . Mikael Wood of Spin magazine applauded its ballads , mid @-@ tempo songs , and evocations of late 1970s and early 1980s pop @-@ soul . In his review for Rolling Stone , Jody Rosen wrote that Beyoncé eschews contemporary production styles for a more personal and idiosyncratic album . Jon Caramanica of The New York Times viewed it as a good showcase for Beyoncé as a torch singer , because she convincingly sings about heartbreak and the strong emotional effect of love . Pitchfork Media critic Ryan Dombal found it easygoing , retro @-@ informed , and engaging because it shows " one of the world 's biggest stars exploring her talent in ways few could 've predicted " . AllMusic 's Andy Kellman said that the quality of Beyoncé 's singing and the songwriting compensate for the assorted arrangement of the songs . Uncut viewed it is an exceptional album in spite of occasionally trite lyrics .

In a less enthusiastic review , Adam Markovitz of Entertainment Weekly said the first @-@ half of 4 is marred by boring ballads and the songwriting in general are not on @-@ par with Beyoncé 's vocal talent . In his review for The Guardian , Alexis Petridis was ambivalent towards the album 's 1980s influence and argued that , despite well written songs , it is not very consequential . Time magazine 's Claire Suddath said the songs lack lyrical substance , even though they are performed well . Greg Kot , writing in the Chicago Tribune , called 4 inconsistent , short , and unfinished . NME magazine 's Hamish MacBain felt Beyoncé did not progress from her past work and that " even the OK bits here " sounded " uninspired " .

== Accolades ==

4 was included on various publication 's year @-@ end lists . It was ranked as the best album of the year by The New Yorker , and came in the runner @-@ up spot on lists produced by Spin and Amazon . The album was ranked within the top 10 by MSN , where it came in at number three , The Guardian and MTV , which placed it at number four , and the Chicago Sun Times , which placed it at number six . The BBC ranked it at number seven , while The New York Times listed it as the 10th

best album of the year . The album had strong showings on other lists , where it was placed number 13 by Consequence of Sound , number 18 by Stereogum , number 25 by Rolling Stone , and number 27 by Pitchfork . 4 was included in NPR 's Top 50 Favorite Albums of 2011 , and was ranked at number 26 in the Pazz & Jop 's critics poll . It was listed at 37 on Rolling Stone 's Women Who Rock : 50 Greatest Albums of All Time . Pitchfork Media ranked the album at 39 on their list of the Top 100 Best Albums of the decade thus far , Kyle Kramer wrote that 4 " avoided the trappings of safe , later @-@ career bids , instead setting up the perfect platform for Beyoncé as the pop star , a queen for all the people . " The album was included on Consequence of Sound 's list of The 10 Best Summer Albums of All Time with Kenneth Partridge writing that " whether she 's hopelessly heartbroken or crazy in love , Queen Bey works damn hard to make you feel exactly what she 's feeling " .

4 won R & B Album of the Year at the 2012 Billboard Music Awards and received nominations at the 2011 American Music Awards , the 2011 Soul Train Music Awards , the 38th People 's Choice Awards , the 43rd NAACP Image Awards and the 2012 Grammys . At the 55th Annual Grammy Awards , " Love on Top " won the Best Traditional R & B Performance Award .

= = Commercial performance = =

On its first day of release , 4 sold around 32 @, @ 000 copies in the United Kingdom . According to the Official Charts Company data , this was more than the combined sales of its three nearest challengers : Adele 's 19 ( 2008 ) and 21 ( 2011 ) and Lady Gaga 's Born This Way ( 2011 ) . After a week of sales , 4 debuted atop the UK Albums Chart on July 4 , 2011 , with first @-@ week sales of 89 @, @ 211 copies , staying there for a second week with sales of 44 @, @ 929 copies . By May 2013 , it had sold 603 @, @ 548 copies in the UK . 4 opened at number two on the Australian ARIA Charts , giving Beyoncé her highest chart debut there . 4 debuted at number three on the Canadian Albums Chart , selling 8 @, @ 700 copies in its first week . It debuted at number one in France , selling 12 @, @ 393 copies in its first week . According to the Japanese music charting site Oricon , the album debuted at number ten , selling 18 @, @ 984 copies for the week ending July 11 , 2011 .

In the United States , 4 debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 , with first @-@ week sales of 310 @, @ 000 copies . This gave Beyoncé her fourth consecutive solo album to debut at number one on The Billboard album chart , making her the second female artist and third artist overall to have her first four studio albums debut atop the Billboard 200 . 4 's first @-@ week sales became Beyoncé 's lowest sales start with a studio album to date . Keith Caulfield of Billboard magazine noted that the album was not released during the festive season and that Beyoncé was so far lacking a hit single , which could help explain the album 's softer entry . It marks the third @-@ largest sales week of the year , after the number one bows of Lady Gaga 's Born This Way and Adele 's 21 . " 4 became the ninth numerically titled album to top the chart since 1956 . In its second week , the album remained at number one on the Billboard 200 , despite a 63 % sales decrease , selling 115 @, @ 000 copies . It hence became the first album by Beyoncé to top the Billboard 200 albums chart for more than one week ; an effort succeeded by her fifth album Beyoncé ( 2013 ) that remained there for three weeks . On August 1 , 2011 , the album was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) , having shipped 1 million copies to retail stores . As of 2015 , 4 had sold 3 @. @ 8 million copies worldwide , and by December 2015 , reached sales of 1 @. @ 5 million copies in the US .

= = Track listings = =

#### Notes

^ a signifies a co @-@ producer

^ b signifies an additional producer

^ c signifies a vocal producer

^ d signifies a remixer

The deluxe edition contains an exclusive version of the music video for " Run the World ( Girls ) " .

" Party " samples " La Di Da Di " as performed by Doug E. Fresh and the Get Fresh Crew featuring MC Ricky D. and written by Douglas Davis and Ricky Walters .

" Countdown " samples " Uhh Ahh " as performed by Boyz II Men and written by Michael Bivins , Nathan Morris and Wanya Morris .

" Run the World ( Girls ) " samples " Pon de Floor " as performed by Major Lazer and written by Afrojack , Vybz Cartel , Diplo and Switch .

= = Personnel = =

The following people are credited on the album :

Managerial

Performance credits

Visuals and imagery

Instruments

Technical and production

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =