

= Kanye West =

Kanye Omari West (/ ˈkæˈnʃeɪ / ; born June 8 , 1977) , is an American rapper , songwriter , record producer , fashion designer , and entrepreneur . Raised in Chicago , West first became known as a producer for Roc-A-Fella Records in the early 2000s , producing hit singles for artists such as Jay Z and Alicia Keys . Intent on pursuing a solo career as a rapper , West released his debut album *The College Dropout* in 2004 to widespread critical and commercial success . He went on to explore a variety of different musical styles on subsequent albums that included the baroque-inflected *Late Registration* (2005) , the arena-inspired *Graduation* (2007) , and the polarizing *808s & Heartbreak* (2008) . In 2010 , he released his critically acclaimed fifth album *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* , and the following year he collaborated with Jay Z on the joint LP *Watch the Throne* (2011) . West released his sixth album , *Yeezus* , to further critical praise in 2013 . West 's seventh album , *The Life of Pablo* , was released in 2016 .

West 's outspoken views and life outside of music have received significant mainstream attention . He has been a frequent source of controversy and public scrutiny for his conduct at award shows , on social media , and in other public settings . His more publicized comments include his unscripted denunciation of President George W. Bush during a live 2005 television broadcast for Hurricane Katrina relief and his interruption of country music singer Taylor Swift at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards . West 's efforts as a fashion designer include collaborations with Nike , Louis Vuitton , and A.P.C. on both clothing and footwear , and have most prominently resulted in the YEEZY collaboration with Adidas beginning in 2013 . He is the founder and head of the creative content company DONDA . His 2014 marriage to television personality Kim Kardashian has also been subject to widespread media coverage .

West is among the most acclaimed musicians of the 21st century , and is one of the best-selling artists of all time , having sold more than 32 million albums and 100 million digital downloads worldwide . He has won a total of 21 Grammy Awards , making him one of the most awarded artists of all time and the most Grammy-awarded artist to have debuted in the 21st century . Three of his albums have been included and ranked on *Rolling Stone* 's 2012 update of the " 500 Greatest Albums of All Time " list . He has also been included in a number of *Forbes* annual lists . *Time* named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2005 and 2015 .

= = Early life = =

Kanye Omari West was born on June 8 , 1977 in Atlanta , Georgia . His parents divorced when he was three years old . After the divorce , he and his mother moved to Chicago , Illinois . His father , Ray West , is a former Black Panther and was one of the first black photojournalists at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* . Ray West was later a Christian counselor , and in 2006 , opened the Good Water Store and Café in Lexington Park , Maryland with startup capital from his son . West 's mother , Dr. Donda C. (Williams) West , was a professor of English at Clark Atlanta University , and the Chair of the English Department at Chicago State University before retiring to serve as his manager . West was raised in a middle-class background , attending Polaris High School in suburban Oak Lawn , Illinois after living in Chicago .

At the age of 10 , West moved with his mother to Nanjing , China , where she was teaching at Nanjing University as part of an exchange program . According to his mother , West was the only foreigner in his class , but settled in well and quickly picked up the language , although he has since forgotten most of it . When asked about his grades in high school , West replied , " I got A 's and B 's . And I 'm not even frontin ' . "

West demonstrated an affinity for the arts at an early age ; he began writing poetry when he was five years old . His mother recalled that she first took notice of West 's passion for drawing and music when he was in the third grade . Growing up in Chicago , West became deeply involved in its hip hop scene . He started rapping in the third grade and began making musical compositions in the seventh grade , eventually selling them to other artists . At age thirteen , West wrote a rap song called " Green Eggs and Ham " and began to persuade his mother to pay \$ 25 an hour for time in a

recording studio . It was a small , crude basement studio where a microphone hung from the ceiling by a wire clothes hanger . Although this wasn 't what West 's mother wanted , she nonetheless supported him . West crossed paths with producer / DJ No I.D. , with whom he quickly formed a close friendship . No I.D. soon became West 's mentor , and it was from him that West learned how to sample and program beats after he received his first sampler at age 15 .

After graduating from high school , West received a scholarship to attend Chicago 's American Academy of Art in 1997 and began taking painting classes , but shortly after transferred to Chicago State University to study English . He soon realized that his busy class schedule was detrimental to his musical work , and at 20 he dropped out of college to pursue his musical dreams . This action greatly displeased his mother , who was also a professor at the university . She later commented , " It was drummed into my head that college is the ticket to a good life ... but some career goals don 't require college . For Kanye to make an album called College Dropout it was more about having the guts to embrace who you are , rather than following the path society has carved out for you . "

= = Career = =

= = = 1996 ? 2002 : Early work and Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella Records = = =

Kanye West began his early production career in the mid @-@ 1990s , making beats primarily for burgeoning local artists , eventually developing a style that involved speeding up vocal samples from classic soul records . His first official production credits came at the age of nineteen when he produced eight tracks on Down to Earth , the 1996 debut album of a Chicago rapper named Grav . For a time , West acted as a ghost producer for Deric " D @-@ Dot " Angelettie . Because of his association with D @-@ Dot , West wasn 't able to release a solo album , so he formed and became a member and producer of the Go @-@ Getters , a late @-@ 1990s Chicago rap group composed of him , GLC , Timmy G , Really Doe , and Arrowstar . His group was managed by John " Monopoly " Johnson , Don Crowley , and Happy Lewis under the management firm Hustle Period . After attending a series of promotional photo shoots and making some radio appearances , The Go @-@ Getters released their first and only studio album World Record Holders in 1999 . The album featured other Chicago @-@ based rappers such as Rhymefest , Mikkey Halsted , Miss Criss , and Shayla G. Meanwhile , the production was handled by West , Arrowstar , Boogz , and Brian " All Day " Miller .

West spent much of the late @-@ 1990s producing records for a number of well @-@ known artists and music groups . The third song on Foxy Brown 's second studio album Chyna Doll was produced by West . Her second effort subsequently became the very first hip @-@ hop album by a female rapper to debut at the top of the U.S. Billboard 200 chart in its first week of release . West produced three of the tracks on Harlem World 's first and only album The Movement alongside Jermaine Dupri and the production duo Trackmasters . His songs featured rappers Nas , Drag @-@ On , and R & B singer Carl Thomas . The ninth track from World Party , the last Goodie Mob album to feature the rap group 's four founding members prior to their break @-@ up , was co @-@ produced by West with his manager Deric " D @-@ Dot " Angelettie . At the close of the millennium , West ended up producing six songs for Tell ' Em Why U Madd , an album that was released by D @-@ Dot under the alias of The Madd Rapper ; a fictional character he created for a skit on The Notorious B.I.G. ' s second and final studio album Life After Death . West 's songs featured guest appearances from rappers such as Ma \$ e , Raekwon , and Eminem .

West got his big break in the year 2000 , when he began to produce for artists on Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella Records . West came to achieve recognition and is often credited with revitalizing Jay @-@ Z 's career with his contributions to the rap mogul 's influential 2001 album The Blueprint . The Blueprint is consistently ranked among the greatest hip @-@ hop albums , and the critical and financial success of the album generated substantial interest in West as a producer . Serving as an in @-@ house producer for Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella Records , West produced records for other artists from the label , including Beanie Sigel , Freeway , and Cam 'ron . He also crafted hit songs

for Ludacris , Alicia Keys , and Janet Jackson .

Despite his success as a producer , West 's true aspiration was to be a rapper . Though he had developed his rapping long before he began producing , it was often a challenge for West to be accepted as a rapper , and he struggled to attain a record deal . Multiple record companies ignored him because he did not portray the ' gangsta image ' prominent in mainstream hip hop at the time . After a series of meetings with Capitol Records , West was ultimately denied an artist deal .

According to Capitol Record 's A & R , Joe Weinberger , he was approached by West and almost signed a deal with him , but another person in the company convinced Capitol 's president not to . Desperate to keep West from defecting to another label , then @-@ label head Damon Dash reluctantly signed West to Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella Records . Jay @-@ Z later admitted that Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella was initially reluctant to support West as a rapper , claiming that many saw him as a producer first and foremost , and that his background contrasted with that of his labelmates .

West 's breakthrough came a year later on October 23 , 2002 , when , while driving home from a California recording studio after working late , he fell asleep at the wheel and was involved in a near @-@ fatal car crash . The crash left him with a shattered jaw , which had to be wired shut in reconstructive surgery . The accident inspired West ; two weeks after being admitted to the hospital , he recorded a song at the Record Plant Studios with his jaw still wired shut . The composition , " Through The Wire " , expressed West 's experience after the accident , and helped lay the foundation for his debut album , as according to West " all the better artists have expressed what they were going through " . West added that " the album was my medicine " , as working on the record distracted him from the pain . " Through The Wire " was first available on West 's Get Well Soon ... mixtape , released December 2002 . At the same time , West announced that he was working on an album called The College Dropout , whose overall theme was to " make your own decisions . Don 't let society tell you , ' This is what you have to do . ' "

= = = 2003 ? 06 : The College Dropout and Late Registration = = =

Carrying a Louis Vuitton backpack filled with old disks and demos to the studio and back , West crafted much of his production for his debut album in less than fifteen minutes at a time . He recorded the remainder of the album in Los Angeles while recovering from the car accident . Once he had completed the album , it was leaked months before its release date . However , West decided to use the opportunity to review the album , and The College Dropout was significantly remixed , remastered , and revised before being released . As a result , certain tracks originally destined for the album were subsequently retracted , among them " Keep the Receipt " with Ol ' Dirty Bastard and " The Good , the Bad , and the Ugly " with Consequence . West meticulously refined the production , adding string arrangements , gospel choirs , improved drum programming and new verses . West 's perfectionism led The College Dropout to have its release postponed three times from its initial date in August 2003 .

The College Dropout was eventually issued by Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella in February 2004 , shooting to number two on the Billboard 200 as his debut single , " Through the Wire " peaked at number fifteen on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for five weeks . " Slow Jamz " , his second single featuring Twista and Jamie Foxx , became an even bigger success : it became the three musicians ' first number one hit . The College Dropout received near @-@ universal critical acclaim from contemporary music critics , was voted the top album of the year by two major music publications , and has consistently been ranked among the great hip @-@ hop works and debut albums by artists . " Jesus Walks " , the album 's fourth single , perhaps exposed West to a wider audience ; the song 's subject matter concerns faith and Christianity . The song nevertheless reached the top 20 of the Billboard pop charts , despite industry executives ' predictions that a song containing such blatant declarations of faith would never make it to radio . The College Dropout would eventually be certified triple platinum in the US , and garnered West 10 Grammy nominations , including Album of the Year , and Best Rap Album (which it received) . During this period , West also founded GOOD Music , a record label and management company that would go on to house affiliate artists and producers , such as No I.D. and John Legend . At the time , the focal point of West 's production style was the

use of sped @-@ up vocal samples from soul records . However , partly because of the acclaim of The College Dropout , such sampling had been much copied by others ; with that overuse , and also because West felt he had become too dependent on the technique , he decided to find a new sound .

Beginning his second effort that fall , West would invest two million dollars and take over a year to craft his second album . West was significantly inspired by Roseland NYC Live , a 1998 live album by English trip hop group Portishead , produced with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra . Early in his career , the live album had inspired him to incorporate string arrangements into his hip @-@ hop production . Though West had not been able to afford many live instruments around the time of his debut album , the money from his commercial success enabled him to hire a string orchestra for his second album Late Registration . West collaborated with American film score composer Jon Brion , who served as the album 's co @-@ executive producer for several tracks . Although Brion had no prior experience in creating hip @-@ hop records , he and West found that they could productively work together after their first afternoon in the studio where they discovered that neither confined his musical knowledge and vision to one specific genre . Late Registration sold over 2 @.@ 3 million units in the United States alone by the end of 2005 and was considered by industry observers as the only successful major album release of the fall season , which had been plagued by steadily declining CD sales .

While West had encountered controversy a year prior when he stormed out of the American Music Awards of 2004 after losing Best New Artist , the rapper 's first large @-@ scale controversy came just days following Late Registration 's release , during a benefit concert for Hurricane Katrina victims . In September 2005 , NBC broadcast A Concert for Hurricane Relief , and West was a featured speaker . When West was presenting alongside actor Mike Myers , he deviated from the prepared script . Myers spoke next and continued to read the script . Once it was West 's turn to speak again , he said , " George Bush doesn 't care about black people . " West 's comment reached much of the United States , leading to mixed reactions ; President Bush would later call it one of the most " disgusting moments " of his presidency . West raised further controversy in January 2006 when he posed on the cover of Rolling Stone wearing a crown of thorns .

= = = 2007 ? 09 : Graduation and 808s & Heartbreak = = =

Fresh off spending the previous year touring the world with U2 on their Vertigo Tour , West felt inspired to compose anthemic rap songs that could operate more efficiently in large arenas . To this end , West incorporated the synthesizer into his hip @-@ hop production , utilized slower tempos , and experimented with electronic music and influenced by music of the 1980s . In addition to U2 , West drew musical inspiration from arena rock bands such as The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin in terms of melody and chord progression . To make his next effort , the third in a planned tetralogy of education @-@ themed studio albums , more introspective and personal in lyricism , West listened to folk and country singer @-@ songwriters Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash in hopes of developing methods to augment his wordplay and storytelling ability .

West 's third studio album , Graduation , garnered major publicity when its release date pitted West in a sales competition against rapper 50 Cent 's Curtis . Upon their September 2007 releases , Graduation outsold Curtis by a large margin , debuting at number one on the U.S. Billboard 200 chart and selling 957 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . Graduation once again continued the string of critical and commercial successes by West , and the album 's lead single , " Stronger " , garnered the rapper his third number @-@ one hit . " Stronger " , which samples French house duo Daft Punk , has been accredited to not only encouraging other hip @-@ hop artists to incorporate house and electronica elements into their music , but also for playing a part in the revival of disco and electro @-@ infused music in the late 2000s . Ben Detrick of XXL cited the outcome of the sales competition between 50 Cent 's Curtis and West 's Graduation as being responsible for altering the direction of hip @-@ hop and paving the way for new rappers who didn 't follow the hardcore @-@ gangster mold , writing , " If there was ever a watershed moment to indicate hip @-@ hop 's changing direction , it may have come when 50 Cent competed with Kanye in 2007 to see whose

album would claim superior sales . "

West 's life took a different direction when his mother , Donda West , died of complications from cosmetic surgery involving abdominoplasty and breast reduction in November 2007 . Months later , West and fiancée Alexis Phifer ended their engagement and their long @-@ term intermittent relationship , which had begun in 2002 . The events profoundly affected West , who set off for his 2008 Glow in the Dark Tour shortly thereafter . Purportedly because his emotions could not be conveyed through rapping , West decided to sing using the voice audio processor Auto @-@ Tune , which would become a central part of his next effort . West had previously experimented with the technology on his debut album The College Dropout for the background vocals of " Jesus Walks " and " Never Let Me Down . " Recorded mostly in Honolulu , Hawaii in three weeks , West announced his fourth album , 808s & Heartbreak , at the 2008 MTV Video Music Awards , where he performed its lead single , " Love Lockdown " . Music audiences were taken aback by the uncharacteristic production style and the presence of Auto @-@ Tune , which typified the pre @-@ release response to the record .

808s & Heartbreak , which features extensive use of the eponymous Roland TR @-@ 808 drum machine and contains themes of love , loneliness , and heartache , was released by Island Def Jam to capitalize on Thanksgiving weekend in November 2008 . Reviews were positive , though slightly more mixed than his previous efforts . Despite this , the record 's 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 " , while follow @-@ up single " Heartless " performed similarly and became his second consecutive " Hot Shot Debut " by debuting at number four on the Billboard Hot 100 . While it was criticized prior to release , 808s & Heartbreak had a significant effect on hip @-@ hop music , encouraging other rappers to take more creative risks with their productions .

In 2012 , Rolling Stone journalist Matthew Trammell asserted that the record was ahead of its time and wrote , " 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 . "

West 's controversial incident the following year at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards was arguably his biggest controversy , and led to widespread outrage throughout the music industry . During the ceremony , West crashed the stage and grabbed the microphone from winner Taylor Swift in order to proclaim that , instead , Beyoncé 's video for " Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It) " , nominated for the same award , was " one of the best videos of all time " . He was subsequently withdrawn from the remainder of the show for his actions . West 's tour with Lady Gaga was cancelled in response to the controversy , and it was suggested that the incident was partially responsible for 808s & Heartbreak 's lack of nominations at the 52nd Grammy Awards .

= = = 2010 ? 12 : My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy and collaborations = = =

Following the highly publicized incident , West took a brief break from music and threw himself into fashion , only to hole up in Hawaii for the next few months writing and recording his next album . Importing his favorite producers and artists to work on and inspire his recording , West kept engineers behind the boards 24 hours a day and slept only in increments . Noah Callahan @-@ Bever , a writer for Complex , was present during the sessions and described the " communal " atmosphere as thus : " With the right songs and the right album , he can overcome any and all controversy , and we are here to contribute , challenge , and inspire . " A variety of artists contributed to the project , including close friends Jay @-@ Z , Kid Cudi and Pusha T , as well as off @-@ the @-@ wall collaborations , such as with Justin Vernon of Bon Iver .

My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , West 's fifth studio album , was released in November 2010 to rave reviews from critics , many of whom described it as his best work that solidified his comeback . In stark contrast to his previous effort , which featured a minimalist sound , Dark Fantasy adopts a maximalist philosophy and deals with themes of celebrity and excess . The record included the international hit " All of the Lights " , and Billboard hits " Power " , " Monster " , and " Runaway " , the latter of which accompanied a 35 @-@ minute film of the same name . During this time , West

initiated the free music program GOOD Fridays through his website , offering a free download of previously unreleased songs each Friday , a portion of which were included on the album . This promotion ran from August 20 - December 17 , 2010 . Dark Fantasy went on to go platinum in the United States , but its omission as a contender for Album of the Year at the 54th Grammy Awards was viewed as a " snub " by several media outlets .

Following a headlining set at Coachella 2011 that was described by The Hollywood Reporter as " one of greatest hip @-@ hop sets of all time " , West released the collaborative album Watch the Throne with Jay @-@ Z. By employing a sales strategy that released the album digitally weeks before its physical counterpart , Watch the Throne became one of the few major label albums in the Internet age to avoid a leak . " Niggas in Paris " became the record 's highest charting single , peaking at number five on the Billboard Hot 100 . In 2012 , West released the compilation album Cruel Summer , a collection of tracks by artists from West 's record label GOOD Music . Cruel Summer produced four singles , two of which charted within the top twenty of the Hot 100 : " Mercy " and " Clique " . West also directed a film of the same name that premiered at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival in custom pyramid @-@ shaped screening pavilion featuring seven screens .

= = = 2013 ? 15 : Yeezus and Adidas collaboration = = =

Sessions for West 's sixth solo effort begin to take shape in early 2013 in his own personal loft 's living room at a Paris hotel . Determined to " undermine the commercial " , he once again brought together close collaborators and attempted to incorporate Chicago drill , dancehall , acid house , and industrial music . Primarily inspired by architecture , West 's perfectionist tendencies led him to contact producer Rick Rubin fifteen days shy of its due date to strip down the record 's sound in favor of a more minimalist approach . Initial promotion of his sixth album included worldwide video projections of the album 's music and live television performances . Yeezus , West 's sixth album , was released June 18 , 2013 to rave reviews from critics . It became the rapper 's sixth consecutive number one debut , but also marked his lowest solo opening week sales . Def Jam issued " Black Skinhead " to radio in July 2013 as the album 's lead single . On September 6 , 2013 , Kanye West announced he would be headlining his first solo tour in five years , to support Yeezus , with fellow American rapper Kendrick Lamar accompanying him along the way .

In June 2013 , West and television personality Kim Kardashian announced the birth of their first child , North . In October 2013 , West and Kardashian announced their engagement to widespread media attention . November 2013 , West stated that he was beginning work on his next studio album , hoping to release it by mid @-@ 2014 , with production by Rick Rubin and Q @-@ Tip . In December 2013 , Adidas announced the beginning of their official apparel collaboration with West , to be premiered the following year . In May 2014 , West and Kardashian were married in a private ceremony in Florence , Italy , with a variety of artists and celebrities in attendance . West released a single , " Only One " , featuring Paul McCartney , on December 31 , 2014 .

" FourFiveSeconds " , a single jointly produced with Rihanna and McCartney , was released in January 2015 . West also appeared on the Saturday Night Live 40th Anniversary Special , where he premiered a new song entitled " Wolves " , featuring Sia Furler and fellow Chicago rapper , Vic Mensa . In February 2015 , West premiered his clothing collaboration with Adidas , entitled Yeezy Season 1 , to generally positive reviews . This would include West 's Yeezy Boost sneakers . In March 2015 , West released the single " All Day " featuring Theophilus London , Allan Kingdom and Paul McCartney . West performed the song at the 2015 BRIT Awards with a number of US rappers and UK grime MC 's including : Skepta , Wiley , Novelist , Fekky , Krept & Konan , Stormzy , Allan Kingdom , Theophilus London and Vic Mensa . He would premiere the second iteration of his clothing line , Yeezy Season 2 , in September 2015 at New York Fashion Week .

= = = 2015 ? present : The Life of Pablo and Turbo Grafx 16 = = =

Having initially announced a new album entitled So Help Me God slated for a 2014 release , in March 2015 West announced that the album would instead be tentatively called SWISH . Later that

month , West was awarded an honorary doctorate by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for his contributions to music , fashion , and popular culture , officially making him an honorary DFA . The next month , West headlined at the Glastonbury Festival in the UK , despite a petition signed by almost 135 @, @ 000 people against his appearance . Toward the end of the set , West proclaimed himself : " the greatest living rock star on the planet . " Media outlets , including social media sites such as Twitter , were divided on his performance . NME stated , " The decision to book West for the slot has proved controversial since its announcement , and the show itself appeared to polarise both Glastonbury goers and those who tuned in to watch on their TVs . " The publication added that " he 's letting his music speak for and prove itself . " The Guardian said that " his set has a potent ferocity ? but there are gaps and stutters , and he cuts a strangely lone figure in front of the vast crowd . " In December 2015 , West released a song titled " Facts " .

West announced in January 2016 that SWISH would be released on February 11 , and that month released new songs " Real Friends " and a snippet of " No More Parties in L.A. " with Kendrick Lamar . This also revived the GOOD Fridays initiative in which Kanye releases new singles every Friday . On January 26 , 2016 , West revealed he had renamed the album from SWISH to Waves , and also announced the premier of his Yeezy Season 3 clothing line at Madison Square Garden . In the weeks leading up to the album 's release , West became embroiled in several Twitter controversies and released several changing iterations of the tracklist for the new album . Several days ahead of its release , West again changed the title , this time to The Life of Pablo . On February 11 , West premiered the album at Madison Square Garden as part of the presentation of his Yeezy Season 3 clothing line . Following the preview , West announced that he would be modifying the track list once more before its release to the public , and further delayed its release to finalize the recording of the track " Waves " at the behest of co @-@ writer Chance the Rapper . He released the album exclusively on Tidal on 14 February 2016 following a performance on SNL . Following its official streaming release , West continued to tinker with mixes of several tracks , describing the work as " a living breathing changing creative expression " and proclaiming the end of the album as a dominant release form . Although a statement by West around Life of Pablo 's initial release indicated that the album would be a permanent exclusive to Tidal , the album was released through several other competing services starting in April .

On February 24 , 2016 , West stated on Twitter that he was planning to release another album in the summer of 2016 , tentatively called Turbo Grafx 16 in reference to the 1980s video game console of the same name .

On June 3 , 2016 , West premiered the first single " Champions " off the GOOD Music album Cruel Winter , which was six minutes and featured Travis Scott , Big Sean , Gucci Mane , Designer , Yo Gotti , Quavo , and 2 Chainz . He told the radio host , Big Boy , that the beat had been in works for a year and a half .

= = Musical style = =

= = Influences and early work = =

West 's musical career has been defined by frequent stylistic shifts , and has seen him develop and explore a variety of different musical approaches and genres . When asked about his early musical inspirations , he has named artists such as A Tribe Called Quest , Stevie Wonder , Michael Jackson , George Michael , LL Cool J , Phil Collins and Madonna . West has named Puff Daddy as the " most important cultural figure " in his life , and he has also described David Bowie as one of his " most important inspirations . " West was formatively mentored by Chicago producer No I.D. , who introduced him to hip hop production in the early 1990s , allowing a teenage West to sit in on recording sessions . Early in his career , West pioneered a style of production dubbed " chipmunk soul " which utilized pitched @-@ up vocal samples , usually from soul and R & B songs , along with his own drums and instrumentation . His first major release featuring his trademark soulful vocal sampling style was " This Can 't Be Life " , a track from Jay @-@ Z 's The Dynasty : Roc La Familia

. West has said that Wu @-@ Tang Clan producer RZA influenced him in his style , and has named Wu @-@ Tang rappers Ghostface Killah and Ol ' Dirty Bastard as inspirations . RZA spoke positively of the comparisons , stating in an interview for Rolling Stone , " I got super respect for Kanye [...] [he] is going to inspire people to be like him . " West further developed his style on his 2004 debut album , The College Dropout . After a rough version was leaked , he meticulously refined the production , adding string arrangements , gospel choirs , and improved drum programming .

For his second album , Late Registration (2005) , he collaborated with film score composer Jon Brion and drew influence from non @-@ rap influences such as English trip hop group Portishead . Blending West 's primary soulful hip hop production with Brion 's elaborate chamber pop orchestration , the album experimentally incorporated a wide array of different genres and prominent orchestral elements , including string arrangements , piano chords , brass flecks , and horn riffs among other symphonic instrumentation . It also incorporated a myriad of foreign and vintage instruments not typical in popular music , let alone hip hop , such as a celesta , harpsichord , Chamberlin , CS @-@ 80 analog synthesizer , Chinese bells and berimbau , vibraphones , and marimba . Rolling Stone described Late Registration as West claiming " the whole world of music as hip @-@ hop turf " chronicling the album as " his mad quest to explode every cliché about hip @-@ hop identity . " Critic Robert Christgau wrote that " there 's never been hip @-@ hop so complex and subtle musically . " For a period of time , Kanye West stood as the sole current pop star to tour with a string section , as audible on his 2006 live album Late Orchestration .

= = = Middle period = = =

With his third album , Graduation (2007) , West moved away from the soulful sound of his previous releases and towards a more atmospheric , rock @-@ tinged , electronic @-@ influenced soundscape . Under the belief that Late Registration had been too indulgent and poorly arranged , he fashioned Graduation to contain less ornate production , made the album completely devoid of skits , and attempted to sequence it as a tighter , more cohesive package . The musical evolution arose from him listening to music genres encompassing European Britpop and Euro @-@ disco , American alternative and indie @-@ rock , and his native Chicago house . Towards this end , West retracted much of the live instrumentation that characterized his previous album and replaced it with heavy , gothic synthesizers , distorted synth @-@ chords , rave stabs , house beats , electro @-@ disco rhythms , and a wide array of modulated electronic noises and digital audio @-@ effects . In addition , West drew musical inspiration from arena rock bands such as The Rolling Stones , U2 , and Led Zeppelin in terms of melody and chord progression . Similar to its predecessor , the album wasn 't confined to the conventional looping techniques typical of contemporary hip @-@ hop and instead continued to implement sudden musical shifts within its multi @-@ layered song structures and express intricately composed introductions , bridges , and codas .

Conceived in the wake of several distressing personal events , West 's fourth studio album , 808s & Heartbreak (2008) , marked a radical departure from his previous releases , largely abandoning rap and hip hop stylings in favor of a stark electropop sound composed utilizing the Roland TR @-@ 808 drum machine , the Auto @-@ Tune vocal processor , and virtual synthesis technology . The album 's music features austere production and elements such as droning synthesizers , dense drums , lengthy strings , and somber piano , and drew comparisons to the work of 1980s post @-@ punk and new wave groups ; West would confess an affinity with artists such as Joy Division , Gary Numan , TJ Swan and Boy George , and later described 808s as " the first black new wave album . " Maintaining a " minimal but functional " approach towards the album 's studio production , West explored the electronic feel produced by his explicitly Auto @-@ Tuned vocals and manipulated the sounds created by the 808 , modulating its pitch to produce a distorted , electronic sound ; he then sought to juxtapose mechanical sounds with the traditional sounds of taiko drums and choir monks . 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 . "

West recorded his fifth album , My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (2010) , with a wide range of collaborators . It has been noted by writers for its maximalist aesthetic and its incorporation of elements from West 's previous four albums . Entertainment Weekly 's Simon Vozick @-@ Levinson noted that such elements " all recur at various points " , namely " the luxurious soul of 2004 's The College Dropout , the symphonic pomp of Late Registration , the gloss of 2007 's Graduation , and the emotionally exhausted electro of 2008 's 808s & Heartbreak . " AllMusic 's Andy Kellman views it as the " culmination " of those albums , while noting that " it does not merely draw characteristics from each one of them . The 13 tracks ... sometimes fuse them together simultaneously . Consequently , the sonic and emotional layers are often difficult to pry apart and enumerate " . Kellman emphasized the track " All of the Lights " as most representative of the album 's " contrasting elements and maniacal extravagance . " Robert Christgau , writing for MSN Music , commented that the music eschews the " grace " of The College Dropout and Late Registration for " grandiosity " and " sonic luxuries . "

= = = Recent work = = =

Describing his sixth studio album Yeezus (2013) as " a protest to music , " West embraced an abrasive style that incorporated a variety of unconventional influences . Music critic Greg Kot described it as " a hostile , abrasive and intentionally off @-@ putting " album that combines " the worlds of " 1980s acid @-@ house and contemporary Chicago drill music , 1990s industrial music , and the " avant @-@ rap " of Saul Williams , Death Grips and Odd Future . The album also incorporates elements of trap music , as well as dancehall , punk , and electro . Inspired by the minimalist design of Le Corbusier and primarily electronic in nature , the album features 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 . It also continues West 's practice of eclectic samples : he employs a sample of Nina Simone 's " Strange Fruit , " 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 . Rolling Stone called the album a " brilliant , obsessive @-@ compulsive career auto @-@ correct " .

Released in 2016 after several years of delays , West 's seventh album The Life of Pablo was noted for its " raw , occasionally even intentionally messy , composition " in distinction to West 's previous albums . Rolling Stone wrote that " this is a messy album that feels like it was made that way on purpose , after the laser @-@ sharp intensity of Yeezus , " stating that " It 's designed to sound like a work in progress . " Carl Wilson of Slate characterized the album as creating " strange links between Kanye 's many iterations ? soul @-@ sample enthusiast , heartbroken Auto @-@ Tune crooner , hedonistic avant @-@ pop composer , industrial @-@ rap shit @-@ talker , " suggesting that " the point is that in the context of all this sonic landscaping , in West 's kamikaze , mood @-@ swinging way , Pablo now seems undeniably (not half @-@ assedly , as I 'd been about to conclude) like an album of struggle . " He also noted the album 's use of auto @-@ tune , a cappella , as well as bass and percussion lines " that are only the tail @-@ end decay of some lost starting place , some vanished rhythmic Eden . " West initially characterized the release as " a gospel album . " Greg Kot of the Chicago Tribune wrote in his review of The Life of Pablo , " West 's version of gospel touches on some of those sonic cues ? heavy organ , soaring choirs ? but seems more preoccupied with gospel text and the notion of redemption . "

= = Other ventures = =

= = = Fashion = = =

Early in his career , West made clear his interest in fashion and desire to work in the clothing design industry . In September 2005 , West announced that he would release his Pastelle Clothing line in spring 2006 , claiming " Now that I have a Grammy under my belt and Late Registration is finished , I am ready to launch my clothing line next spring . " The line was developed over the following four years ? with multiple pieces teased by West himself ? before the line was ultimately cancelled in 2009 . In 2009 , West collaborated with Nike to release his own shoe , the Air Yeezys , with a second version released in 2012 . In January 2009 , West introduced his first shoe line designed for Louis Vuitton during Paris Fashion Week . The line was released in summer 2009 . West has additionally designed footwear for Bape and Italian shoemaker Giuseppe Zanotti .

On October 1 , 2011 , Kanye West premiered his women 's fashion label , DW Kanye West at Paris Fashion Week . He received support from DSquared2 duo Dean and Dan Caten , Olivier Theyskens , Jeremy Scott , Azzedine Alaïa , and the Olsen twins , who were also in attendance during his show . His debut fashion show received mixed @-@ to @-@ negative reviews , ranging from reserved observations by Style.com to excoriating commentary by The Wall Street Journal , The New York Times , the International Herald Tribune , Elleuk.com , The Daily Telegraph , Harper 's Bazaar and many others . On March 6 , 2012 , West premiered a second fashion line at Paris Fashion Week . The line 's reception was markedly improved from the previous presentation , with a number of critics heralding West for his " much improved " sophomore effort .

On December 3 , 2013 , Adidas officially confirmed a new shoe collaboration deal with West . After months of anticipation and rumors , West confirmed the release of the Adidas Yeezy Boosts with a Twitter announcement directing fans to the domain yeezy.supply. In 2015 , West unveiled his Yeezy Season clothing line , premiering Season 1 in collaboration with Adidas early in the year . The line received positive critical reviews , with Vogue observing " a protective toughness , a body @-@ conscious severity that made the clothes more than a simple accessory . " The release of the Yeezy Boosts and the full Adidas collaboration was showcased in New York City on February 12 , 2015 , with free streaming to 50 cinemas in 13 countries around the world . An initial release of the Adidas Yeezy Boosts was limited to 9000 pairs to be available only in New York City via the Adidas smartphone app ; the Adidas Yeezy Boosts were sold out within 10 minutes . The shoes released worldwide on February 28 , 2015 , were limited to select boutique stores and the Adidas UK stores . He followed with Season 2 later that year at New York Fashion Week . On February 11 , West premiered his Yeezy Season 3 clothing line at Madison Square Garden in conjunction with the previewing of his album The Life of Pablo .

= = = Business ventures = = =

West founded the record label and production company GOOD Music in 2004 , in conjunction with Sony BMG , shortly after releasing his debut album , The College Dropout . John Legend , Common , and West were the label 's inaugural artists . The label houses artists including West , Big Sean , Pusha T , Teyana Taylor , Yasiin Bey / Mos Def , D 'banj and John Legend , and producers including Hudson Mohawke , Q @-@ Tip , Travis Scott , No I.D. , Jeff Bhasker , and S1 . GOOD Music has released ten albums certified gold or higher by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) . In November 2015 , West appointed Pusha T the new president of GOOD Music .

In August 2008 , West revealed plans to open 10 Fatburger restaurants in the Chicago area ; the first was set to open in September 2008 in Orland Park . The second followed in January 2009 , while a third location is yet to be revealed , although the process is being finalized . His company , KW Foods LLC , bought the rights to the chain in Chicago . Ultimately , in 2009 , only two locations actually opened . In February 2011 , West shut down the Fatburger located in Orland Park . Later that year , the remaining Beverly location also was shuttered .

On January 5 , 2012 , West announced his establishment of the creative content company DONDA , named after his late mother Donda West . In his announcement , West proclaimed that the company would " pick up where Steve Jobs left off " ; DONDA would operate as " a design company which will galvanize amazing thinkers in a creative space to bounce their dreams and ideas " with

the " goal to make products and experiences that people want and can afford . " West is notoriously secretive about the company 's operations , maintaining neither an official website nor a social media presence . In stating DONDA 's creative philosophy , West articulated the need to " put creatives in a room together with like minds " in order to " simplify and aesthetically improve everything we see , taste , touch , and feel . " . Contemporary critics have noted the consistent minimalistic aesthetic exhibited throughout DONDA creative projects .

On March 30 , 2015 , it was announced that West is a co @-@ owner , with various other music artists , in the music streaming service Tidal . The service specialises in lossless audio and high definition music videos . Jay Z acquired the parent company of Tidal , Aspiro , in the first quarter of 2015 . Including Beyoncé and Jay @-@ Z , sixteen artist stakeholders (such as Rihanna , Beyoncé , Madonna , Chris Martin , Nicki Minaj and more) co @-@ own Tidal , with the majority owning a 3 % equity stake . The idea of having an all artist owned streaming service was created by those involved to adapt to the increased demand for streaming within the current music industry , and to rival other streaming services such as Spotify , which have been criticised for their low payout of royalties . " The challenge is to get everyone to respect music again , to recognize its value " , stated Jay @-@ Z on the release of Tidal .

On June 6 , 2016 , West announced the Yeezy Season 2 Zine and the Adidas Yeezy Boost 750 will be released to retailers on June 11 . They are high @-@ top shoes with a glow in the dark sole .

= = = Philanthropy = = =

West , alongside his mother , founded the " Kanye West Foundation " in Chicago in 2003 , tasked with a mission to battle dropout and illiteracy rates , while partnering with community organizations to provide underprivileged youth access to music education . In 2007 , the West and the Foundation partnered with Strong American Schools as part of their " Ed in ' 08 " campaign . As spokesman for the campaign , West appeared in a series of PSAs for the organization , and hosted an inaugural benefit concert in August of that year .

In 2008 , following the death of West 's mother , the foundation was rechristened " The Dr. Donda West Foundation . " The foundation ceased operations in 2011 .

Kanye West and friend , Rhymefest , also founded " Donda 's House , Inc " . Got Bars is the Donda 's House signature music / lyric composition and performance program . Participants are selected through an application and audition process . Got Bars is a free music writing program with the goal of helping at @-@ risk Chicago youth . It is aimed at students between 15 and 24 , and includes lessons on how to write and record music . Their curriculum is based on the teaching philosophy and pedagogy of Dr. Donda West with a focus on collaborative and experiential learning .

West has additionally appeared and participated in many fundraisers , benefit concerts , and has done community work for Hurricane Katrina relief , the Kanye West Foundation , the Millions More Movement , 100 Black Men of America , a Live Earth concert benefit , World Water Day rally and march , Nike runs , and a MTV special helping young Iraq War veterans who struggle through debt and PTSD a second chance after returning home .

= = Controversies = =

= = = General media = = =

West has been an outspoken and controversial celebrity throughout his career , receiving both criticism and praise from many , including the mainstream media , other artists and entertainers , and two U.S. presidents . On September 2 , 2005 , during a benefit concert for Hurricane Katrina relief on NBC , A Concert for Hurricane Relief , West (a featured speaker) accused President George W. Bush of not " car [ing] about black people " . When West was presenting alongside actor Mike Myers , he deviated from the prepared script to criticize the media 's portrayal of hurricane victims , saying :

I hate the way they portray us in the media . You see a black family , it says , ' They 're looting . ' You see a white family , it says , ' They 're looking for food . ' And , you know , it 's been five days [waiting for federal help] because most of the people are black . And even for me to complain about it , I would be a hypocrite because I 've tried to turn away from the TV because it 's too hard to watch . I 've even been shopping before even giving a donation , so now I 'm calling my business manager right now to see what is the biggest amount I can give , and just to imagine if I was down there , and those are my people down there . So anybody out there that wants to do anything that we can help ? with the way America is set up to help the poor , the black people , the less well @-@ off , as slow as possible . I mean , the Red Cross is doing everything they can . We already realize a lot of people that could help are at war right now , fighting another way ? and they 've given them permission to go down and shoot us !

Myers spoke next and continued to read the script . Once it was West 's turn to speak again , he said , " George Bush doesn 't care about black people . " At this point , telethon producer Rick Kaplan cut off the microphone and then cut away to Chris Tucker , who was unaware of the cut for a few seconds . Still , West 's comment reached much of the United States .

Bush stated in an interview that the comment was " one of the most disgusting moments " of his presidency . In November 2010 , in a taped interview with Matt Lauer for the Today show , West expressed regret for his criticism of Bush . " I would tell George Bush in my moment of frustration , I didn 't have the grounds to call him a racist " , he told Lauer . " I believe that in a situation of high emotion like that we as human beings don 't always choose the right words . " The following day , Bush reacted to the apology in a live interview with Lauer saying he appreciated the rapper 's remorse . " I 'm not a hater " , Bush said . " I don 't hate Kanye West . I was talking about an environment in which people were willing to say things that hurt . Nobody wants to be called a racist if in your heart you believe in equality of races . " Reactions were mixed , but some felt that West had no need to apologize . " It was not the particulars of your words that mattered , it was the essence of a feeling of the insensitivity towards our communities that many of us have felt for far too long " , argued Def Jam co @-@ founder Russell Simmons . Bush himself was receptive to the apology , saying , " I appreciate that . It wasn 't just Kanye West who was talking like that during Katrina , I cited him as an example , I cited others as an example as well . You know , I appreciate that . "

In September 2013 , West was widely rebuked by human rights groups for performing in Kazakhstan at the wedding of authoritarian President Nursultan Nazarbayev 's grandson . He traveled to Kazakhstan , which has one of the poorest human rights records in the world , as a personal guest of Nazarbayev . Other notable Western performers , including Sting , have previously cancelled performances in the country over human rights concerns . West was reportedly paid US \$ 3 million for his performance . West had previously participated in cultural boycotts , joining Shakira and Rage Against The Machine in refusing to perform in Arizona after the 2010 implementation of stop and search laws directed against potential illegal aliens .

Later in 2013 , West launched a tirade on Twitter directed at talk show host Jimmy Kimmel after his ABC program Jimmy Kimmel Live ! ran a sketch on September 25 involving two children re @-@ enacting West 's recent interview with Zane Lowe for BBC Radio 1 in which he calls himself the biggest rock star on the planet . Kimmel reveals the following night that West called him to demand an apology shortly before taping .

During a November 26 , 2013 radio interview , West explained why he believed that President Obama had problems pushing policies in Washington : " Man , let me tell you something about George Bush and oil money and Obama and no money . People want to say Obama can 't make these moves or he 's not executing . That 's because he ain 't got those connections . Black people don 't have the same level of connections as Jewish people ... We ain 't Jewish . We don 't got family that got money like that . " In response to his comments , the Anti @-@ Defamation League stated : " There it goes again , the age @-@ old canard that Jews are all @-@ powerful and control the levers of power in government . " On December 21 , 2013 , West backed off of the original comment and told a Chicago radio station that " I thought I was giving a compliment , but if anything it came off more ignorant . I don 't know how being told you have money is an insult . "

In February 2016 , West again became embroiled in controversy when he posted a tweet seemingly asserting Bill Cosby 's innocence in the wake of over 50 women making allegations of sexual assault directed at Cosby . That same month , West became embroiled in a short @-@ lived social media altercation with rapper Wiz Khalifa on Twitter that eventually involved their mutual ex @-@ partner , Amber Rose , who protested to West 's mention of her and Khalifa 's child . The feud involved allegations by Rose concerning her sexual relationship with West , and received significant media attention . As of February 2 , 2016 , West and Khalifa had reconciled .

= = = Award shows = = =

In 2004 , West had his first of a number of public incidents during his attendance at music award events . At the American Music Awards of 2004 , West stormed out of the auditorium after losing Best New Artist to country singer Gretchen Wilson . He later commented , " I felt like I was definitely robbed [...] I was the best new artist this year . " After the 2006 Grammy nominations were released , West said he would " really have a problem " if he did not win the Album of the Year , saying , " I don 't care what I do , I don 't care how much I stunt ? you can never take away from the amount of work I put into it . I don 't want to hear all of that politically correct stuff . " On November 2 , 2006 , when his " Touch the Sky " failed to win Best Video at the MTV Europe Music Awards , West went onto the stage as the award was being presented to Justice and Simian for " We Are Your Friends " and argued that he should have won the award instead . Hundreds of news outlets worldwide criticized the outburst . On November 7 , 2006 , West apologized for this outburst publicly during his performance as support act for U2 for their Vertigo concert in Brisbane . He later spoofed the incident on the 33rd season premiere of Saturday Night Live in September 2007 .

On September 9 , 2007 , West suggested that his race had something to do with his being overlooked for opening the 2007 MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs) in favor of Britney Spears ; he claimed , " Maybe my skin 's not right . " West was performing at the event ; that night , he lost all five awards that he was nominated for , including Best Male Artist and Video of the Year . After the show , he was visibly upset that he had lost at the VMAs two years in a row , stating that he would not come back to MTV ever again . He also appeared on several radio stations saying that when he made the song " Stronger " that it was his dream to open the VMAs with it . He has also stated that Spears has not had a hit in a long period of time and that MTV exploited her for ratings .

On September 13 , 2009 , during the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards while Taylor Swift was accepting her award for Best Female Video for " You Belong with Me " , West went on stage and grabbed the microphone to proclaim that Beyoncé 's video for " Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It) " , nominated for the same award , was " one of the best videos of all time " . He was subsequently removed from the remainder of the show for his actions . When Beyoncé later won the award for Best Video of the Year for " Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It) " , she called Swift up on stage so that she could finish her acceptance speech . West was criticized by various celebrities for the outburst , and by President Barack Obama , who called West a " jackass " . In addition , West 's VMA disruption sparked a large influx of Internet photo memes with blogs , forums and " tweets " with the " Let you finish " photo @-@ jokes . He posted a Tweet soon after the event where he stated , " Everybody wanna booooo me but I 'm a fan of real pop culture ... I 'm not crazy y 'all , I 'm just real . " He then posted two apologies for the outburst on his personal blog ; one on the night of the incident , and the other the following day , when he also apologized during an appearance on The Jay Leno Show . After Swift appeared on The View two days after the outburst , partly to discuss the matter , West called her to apologize personally . Swift said she accepted his apology .

In September 2010 , West wrote a series of apologetic tweets addressed to Swift including " Beyonce didn 't need that . MTV didn 't need that and Taylor and her family friends and fans definitely didn 't want or need that " and concluding with " I 'm sorry Taylor . " He also revealed he had written a song for Swift and if she did not accept the song , he would perform it himself . However , on November 8 , 2010 , in an interview with a Minnesota radio station , he seemed to recant his past apologies by attempting to describe the act at the 2009 awards show as " selfless " and downgrade the perception of disrespect it created . In " Famous , " a track from his 2016 album

The Life of Pablo , West implies that this incident led to Swift 's stardom , rapping , " I feel like me and Taylor might still have sex / Why ? I made that bitch famous . " After some media backlash about the reference , West posted on Twitter " I did not diss Taylor Swift and I 've never dissed her ... First thing is I 'm an artist and as an artist I will express how I feel with no censorship . " He continued by adding that he had asked both Swift and his wife , Kim Kardashian , for permission to publish the line .

On February 8 , 2015 , at the 57th Annual Grammy Awards , West walked on stage as Beck was accepting his award for Album of the Year and then walked off stage , leaving the audience to think he was joking . After the awards show , West stated in an interview that he was not joking and that " Beck needs to respect artistry , he should have given his award to Beyoncé " . On February 26 , 2015 , he publicly apologized to Beck on Twitter .

On August 30 , 2015 , West was presented with the Michael Jackson Video Vanguard Award at the MTV Video Music Awards . In his acceptance speech , he stated , " Y 'all might be thinking right now , ' I wonder did he smoke something before he came out here ? ' And the answer is : ' Yes , I rolled up a little something . I knocked the edge off . ' " At the end of his speech , he announced , " I have decided in 2020 to run for president . "

= = = Petitions = = =

Music fans have turned to Change.org around the globe to try and block West 's participation at various events . The largest unsuccessful petition has been to the Glastonbury Festival 2015 with 133 @ , @ 000 + voters stating they would prefer a rock band to headline . On July 20 , 2015 , within five days of West 's announcement as the headlining artist of the closing ceremonies of the 2015 Pan American Games , Change.org user XYZ collected over 50 @ , @ 000 signatures for West 's removal as headliner , on the grounds that the headlining artist should be Canadian . In his Pan American Games Closing Ceremony performance , close to the end of his performance , West closed the show by tossing his faulty microphone in the air and walked off stage .

= = Personal life = =

= = = Relationships = = =

West began an on @ - @ and @ - @ off relationship with designer Alexis Phifer in 2002 , and they became engaged in August 2006 . The pair ended their 18 @ - @ month engagement in 2008 . West subsequently dated model Amber Rose from 2008 until the summer of 2010 . West began dating reality star and longtime friend Kim Kardashian in April 2012 . West and Kardashian became engaged in October 2013 , and married on May 24 , 2014 at Fort di Belvedere in Florence , Italy . Their private ceremony was subject to widespread mainstream coverage , with West taking issue with the couple 's portrayal in the media . They have two children : daughter North " Nori " West (born June 15 , 2013) and son Saint West (born December 5 , 2015) . In April 2015 , West and Kardashian traveled to Jerusalem to have North baptized in the Armenian Apostolic Church at the Cathedral of St. James . The couple 's high status and respective careers have resulted in their relationship becoming subject to heavy media coverage ; The New York Times referred to their marriage as " a historic blizzard of celebrity . "

= = = Mother 's death = = =

On November 10 , 2007 , at approximately 7 : 35 pm , paramedics responding to an emergency call transported West 's mother , Donda West , to the nearby Centinela Freeman Hospital in Marina del Rey , California . She was unresponsive in the emergency room , and after resuscitation attempts , doctors pronounced her dead at approximately 8 : 30 pm , at age 58 . The Los Angeles County coroner 's office said in January 2008 that West had died of heart disease while suffering " multiple

post @-@ operative factors " after plastic surgery . She had undergone liposuction and breast reduction . Beverly Hills plastic surgeon Andre Aboolian had refused to do the surgery because West had a health condition that placed her at risk for a heart attack . Aboolian referred her to an internist to investigate her cardiac issue . She never met with the doctor recommended by Aboolian and had the procedures performed by a third doctor , Jan Adams .

Adams sent condolences to Donda West 's family but declined to publicly discuss the procedure , citing confidentiality . West 's family , through celebrity attorney Ed McPherson , filed complaints with the Medical Board against Adams and Aboolian for violating patient confidentiality following her death . Adams had previously been under scrutiny by the medical board . He appeared on Larry King Live on November 20 , 2007 , but left before speaking . Two months later , he appeared again , with his attorney , stating he was there to " defend himself " . He said that the recently released autopsy results " spoke for themselves " . The final coroner 's report January 10 , 2008 , concluded that Donda West died of " coronary artery disease and multiple post @-@ operative factors due to or as a consequence of liposuction and mammoplasty " .

The funeral and burial for Donda West was held in Oklahoma City on November 20 , 2007 . West played his first concert following the funeral at The O2 in London on November 22 . He dedicated a performance of " Hey Mama " , as well as a cover of Journey 's " Don 't Stop Believin ' " , to his mother , and did so on all other dates of his Glow in the Dark tour .

At a December 2008 press conference in New Zealand , West spoke about his mother 's death for the first time . " It was like losing an arm and a leg and trying to walk through that " , he told reporters .

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the " Donda West Law " , legislation which makes it mandatory for patients to provide medical clearance for elective cosmetic surgery .

= = = Legal issues = = =

In December 2006 , Robert " Evel " Knievel sued West for trademark infringement in West 's video for " Touch the Sky " . Knievel took issue with a " sexually charged video " in which West takes on the persona of " Evel Kanyevel " and attempts flying a rocket over a canyon . The suit claimed infringement on Knievel 's trademarked name and likeness . Knievel also claimed that the " vulgar and offensive " images depicted in the video damaged his reputation . The suit sought monetary damages and an injunction to stop distribution of the video . West 's attorneys argued that the music video amounted to satire and therefore was covered under the First Amendment . Just days before his death in November 2007 , Knievel amicably settled the suit after being paid a visit from West , saying , " I thought he was a wonderful guy and quite a gentleman . "

On September 11 , 2008 , West and his road manager / bodyguard Don " Don C. " Crowley were arrested at Los Angeles International Airport and booked on charges of felony vandalism after an altercation with the paparazzi in which West and Crowley broke the photographers ' cameras . West was later released from the Los Angeles Police Department 's Pacific Division station in Culver City on \$ 20 @, @ 000 bail bond . On September 26 , 2008 , the Los Angeles County District Attorney 's Office said it would not file felony counts against West over the incident . Instead the case file was forwarded to the city attorney 's office , which charged West with one count of misdemeanor vandalism , one count of grand theft and one count of battery and his manager with three counts of each on March 18 , 2009 . West 's and Crowley 's arraignment was delayed from an original date of April 14 , 2009 .

West was arrested again on November 14 , 2008 at the Hilton hotel near Gateshead after another scuffle involving a photographer outside the famous Tup Tup Palace nightclub in Newcastle upon Tyne . He was later released " with no further action " , according to a police spokesperson .

On July 19 , 2013 , West was leaving LAX as he was surrounded by dozens of paparazzi . West became increasingly agitated as a photographer , Daniel Ramos , continued to ask him why people were not allowed to speak in his presence . West then says , " I told you don 't talk to me , right ? You trying to get me in trouble so I steal off on you and have to pay you like \$ 250 @, @ 000 and shit . " Then he allegedly charged the man and grabbed him and his camera . The incident captured

by TMZ , took place for a few seconds before a female voice can be heard telling West to stop . West then released the man , and his camera , and drove away from the scene . Medics were later called to the scene on behalf of the photographer who was grabbed . It was reported West could be charged with felony attempted robbery behind the matter . However , the charges were reduced to misdemeanor criminal battery and attempted grand theft . In March 2014 , West was sentenced to serve two years ' probation for the misdemeanor battery conviction and required to attend 24 anger management sessions , perform 250 hours of community service and pay restitution to Ramos .

= = Religious beliefs = =

After the success of his song " Jesus Walks " from the album The College Dropout , West was questioned on his beliefs and said , " I will say that I 'm spiritual . I have accepted Jesus as my Savior . And I will say that I fall short every day . " In a 2008 interview with The Fader , West stated that " I 'm like a vessel , and God has chosen me to be the voice and the connector . "

In a 2009 interview with online magazine Bossip , West clarified that he believed in God , but " would never go into a religion , " explaining that " I feel like religion is more about separation and judgment than bringing people together and understanding . That 's all I 'm about . " More recently , in September 2014 , West referred to himself as a Christian during one of his concerts .

= = Legacy = =

West is among the most critically acclaimed artists of the twenty @-@ first century , receiving praise from music critics , fans , fellow musicians , artists , and wider cultural figures for his work . AllMusic editor Jason Birchmeier writes of his impact , " As his career progressed throughout the early 21st century , West shattered certain stereotypes about rappers , becoming a superstar on his own terms without adapting his appearance , his rhetoric , or his music to fit any one musical mold . " Jon Caramanica of The New York Times said that West has been " a frequent lightning rod for controversy , a bombastic figure who can count rankling two presidents among his achievements . " Village Voice Media senior editor Ben Westhoff dubbed him the greatest hip hop artist of all time , writing that " he 's made the best albums and changed the game the most , and his music is the most likely to endure , " while Complex called him the 21st century 's " most important artist of any art form , of any genre . " In 2016 , The Guardian compared West to the late David Bowie within the " modern mainstream " , arguing that " there is nobody else who can sell as many records as West does [...] while remaining so resolutely experimental and capable of stirring things up culturally and politically . "

= = Influence = =

Rolling Stone credited West with transforming hip hop 's mainstream , " establishing a style of introspective yet glossy rap [...] " , and called him " as interesting and complicated a pop star as the 2000s produced ? a rapper who mastered , upped and moved beyond the hip @-@ hop game , a producer who created a signature sound and then abandoned it to his imitators , a flashy , free @-@ spending sybarite with insightful things to say about college , culture and economics , an egomaniac with more than enough artistic firepower to back it up . " West 's middle @-@ class background , flamboyant fashion sense and outspokenness have set him apart from other rappers . Early in his career , he was among the first rappers to publicly criticize the preponderance of homophobia in hip hop . The sales competition between rapper 50 Cent 's Curtis and West 's Graduation altered the direction of hip hop and helped pave the way for new rappers who did not follow the hardcore @-@ gangster mold . Rosie Swash of The Guardian viewed the sales competition as a historical moment in hip @-@ hop , because it " highlighted the diverging facets of hip @-@ hop in the last decade ; the former was gangsta rap for the noughties , while West was the thinking man 's alternative . "

West 's 2008 album 808s & Heartbreak polarized both listeners and critics upon its release , but was commercially successful and impacted hip hop and pop stylistically , as it laid the groundwork

for a new wave of artists who generally eschewed typical rap braggadocio for intimate subject matter and introspection , including Frank Ocean , The Weeknd , Drake , Future , Kid Cudi , Childish Gambino , Lil Durk , Chief Keef , and Soulja Boy . According to Ben Detrick of XXL magazine , West effectively led a new wave of artists , including Kid Cudi , Wale , Lupe Fiasco , Kidz in the Hall , and Drake , who lacked the interest or ability to rap about gunplay or drug @-@ dealing . In 2013 , Julianne Escobedo Shepherd of Spin described West as fronting a " new art @-@ pop era " in contemporary music , in which musicians draw widely on the visual arts as a signifier of both creative exploration and extravagant wealth .

Drake , Nicki Minaj and Casey Veggies have acknowledged being influenced directly by West . Non @-@ rap artists such as English singer @-@ songwriters Adele and Lily Allen , New Zealand artist Lorde , English rock band Arctic Monkeys , American pop singer Halsey , American pop rock singer Andy Grammar , Sergio Pizzorno of English rock band Kasabian and the American indie rock bands MGMT and Yeah Yeah Yeahs have cited West as an influence . Experimental and electronic artists such as James Blake Daniel Lopatin , and Tim Hecker have also cited West 's work as an inspiration .

= = = Accolades = = =

A substantial number of artists and other figures have professed admiration for West 's work , including hip hop artists Rakim , RZA of Wu @-@ Tang Clan , Chuck D of Public Enemy , and DJ Premier of Gang Starr . Experimental rock pioneer and Velvet Underground founder Lou Reed said of West that " the guy really , really , really is talented . He 's really trying to raise the bar . No one 's near doing what he 's doing , it 's not even on the same planet . " Musicians such as Paul McCartney and Prince have also commended West 's work . Famed Tesla Motors CEO and inventor Elon Musk complimented West in a piece for Time Magazine 's 100 most influential people list , writing that :

" Kanye West would be the first person to tell you he belongs on this list . The dude doesn 't believe in false modesty , and he shouldn 't [...] He fought for his place in the cultural pantheon with a purpose . In his debut album , over a decade ago , Kanye issued what amounted to a social critique and a call to arms (with a beat) : " We rappers is role models : we rap , we don 't think . " But Kanye does think . Constantly . About everything . And he wants everybody else to do the same : to engage , question , push boundaries . Now that he 's a pop @-@ culture juggernaut , he has the platform to achieve just that . He 's not afraid of being judged or ridiculed in the process . Kanye 's been playing the long game all along , and we 're only just beginning to see why . "

West 's first six solo studio albums , all of which have gone platinum , have received numerous awards and critical acclaim . All of his albums have been commercially successful , with Yeezus , his sixth solo album , becoming his fifth consecutive No. 1 album in the U.S. upon release . West has had six songs exceed 3 million in digital sales as of December 2012 , with " Gold Digger " selling 3 @,@ 086 @,@ 000 , " Stronger " selling 4 @,@ 402 @,@ 000 , " Heartless " selling 3 @,@ 742 @,@ 000 , " E.T. " selling over 4 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 , " Love Lockdown " selling over 3 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 , and " Niggas in Paris " selling over 3 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 , placing him third in overall digital sales of the past decade . He has sold over 30 million digital songs in the United States making him one of the best @-@ selling digital artists of all @-@ time .

As of 2013 , West has won a total of 21 Grammy Awards , making him one of the most awarded artists of all @-@ time . About.com ranked Kanye West No. 8 on their " Top 50 Hip @-@ Hop Producers " list . On May 16 , 2008 , Kanye West was crowned by MTV as the year 's No. 1 " Hottest MC in the Game . " On December 17 , 2010 , Kanye West was voted as the MTV Man of the Year by MTV . Billboard ranked Kanye West No. 3 on their list of Top 10 Producers of the Decade . West ties with Bob Dylan for having topped the annual Pazz & Jop critic poll the most number of times ever , with four number @-@ one albums each . West has also been included twice in the Time 100 annual lists of the most influential people in the world as well as being listed in a number of Forbes annual lists .

In its 2012 list of " 500 Greatest Albums of All Time , Rolling Stone included three of West 's albums

? The College Dropout at number 298 , Late Registration at number 118 , and My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy at number 353 .

The Pitchfork online music publication ranked My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy as the world 's best album of the decade " so far " ? between 2010 and 2014 ? on August 19 , 2014 , while Yeezus was ranked in the eighth position of a list of 100 albums . During the same week , the song " Runaway " (featuring Pusha T) was ranked in the third position in the publication 's list of the 200 " best tracks " released since 2010 .

= = Discography = =

Studio albums

The College Dropout (2004)

Late Registration (2005)

Graduation (2007)

808s & Heartbreak (2008)

My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (2010)

Watch the Throne (with JAY @-@ Z) (2011)

Yeezus (2013)

The Life of Pablo (2016)

= = Videography = =

The College Dropout Video Anthology (2004)

Late Orchestration (2006)

VH1 Storytellers (2010)

= = Tours = =

Touch The Sky Tour (2005)

Glow in the Dark Tour (2008)

Fame Kills : Starring Kanye West and Lady Gaga (Cancelled) (2009 ? 10)

Watch the Throne Tour (With JAY @-@ Z) (2011 ? 12)

The Yeezus Tour (2013 ? 14)

Saint Pablo Tour (2016)

= = Filmography = =

= = = Film = = =

= = = Television = = =