

= Reasonable Doubt (album) =

Reasonable Doubt is the debut studio album by American rapper Jay Z. It was released on June 25 , 1996 , by Roc-A-Fella Records and Priority Records . The album features production provided by DJ Premier , Ski , Knobody and Clark Kent , and also it includes guest appearances from Memphis Bleek , Mary J. Blige and The Notorious B.I.G. , among others . The album features Mafioso rap themes and gritty lyrics about the " hustler " lifestyle and material obsessions .

Reasonable Doubt debuted at number 23 on the US Billboard 200 , on which it charted for 18 weeks . It was promoted with four singles ; including " Ain 't No Nigga " and " Can 't Knock the Hustle " . Reasonable Doubt was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and , as of 2006 , has sold 1 @. @ 5 million copies in the United States . A critical success , it has been ranked on several publications ' lists of the greatest rap albums ever , while many hip hop fans have viewed it as Jay Z 's best work .

= = Background = =

In 1989 , aspiring rapper Jay Z was recruited by mentor Jaz O to appear on his song " Hawaiian Sophie " . He appeared on two more Jaz O songs in the next year , but after Jaz O was dropped from his record label , Jay Z dealt drugs to support himself . He continued to pursue a rap career and appeared on two songs from Original Flavor 's 1993 album Beyond Flavor . Jay Z then caught Big Daddy Kane 's attention and toured with him ; they collaborated on Kane 's 1994 posse cut " Show & Prove " along with Wu Tang Clan 's Ol ' Dirty Bastard , Wu Tang affiliate Shyheim , Sauce Money , and Scoob Lover .

Despite the exposure he received from Kane , Jay Z was still without a record deal . He began selling tapes from his car with help from friend Damon Dash . The success of his street level marketing led to a deal with Payday Records , which released his first solo single , " In My Lifetime " and its B side " I Can 't Get wid Dat " . In an unconventional move , Jay Z then spurned the record contract he had long sought and left Payday Records to form his own label , Roc-A-Fella Records , with Damon Dash and Kareem " Biggs " Burke . Jay Z later explained that he thought he could do a better job of marketing his records on his own :

[Payday] eventually signed me to a deal , but were acting shady the whole time , like they didn 't know how to work a record or something , " says Jay . " The things that they were setting up for me I could have done myself . They had me traveling places to do instores , and my product wasn 't even available in the store . We shot one video , but when the time came for me to do the video for the second single , I had to be cut out . They gave me the money and I started my own company . There was a little arguing back and forth , but our conflict finally got resolved . The bottom line was they wasn 't doing their job , so I had to get out of there .

Jay Z rented a small , cheap office for Roc-A-Fella Records on John Street in one of the " dreariest parts of the busiest city in the world " . Jay Z and his compatriots thought of their low rent headquarters as a " starting point " that would eventually lead them to Manhattan . In 1995 and early 1996 , Jay Z appeared on records by Big L and Mic Geronimo , further raising his profile . At this point , he was still considered an " underground " rapper with a " new jack " style . Roc-A-Fella released Reasonable Doubt with Priority Records .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Reasonable Doubt was recorded at D & D Studios and mixed at Platinum Island , however , its beats were formed elsewhere . " Can 't Knock the Hustle " was produced by Knobody at his mother 's home in 1994 , while the vocals were recorded on tour at a studio in Tampa Florida named Progressive Music with Mary J Blige . Ski produced " Feelin ' It " and " Politics as Usual " while recording with Camp Lo . The recording sessions were often competitive ; Ski and Clark Kent created similar beats for " Politics as Usual " , but Ski submitted his to Jay Z first causing his to

appear on the album . " Brooklyn 's Finest " was a competitive , though friendly battle between Jay @-@ Z and The Notorious B.I.G. in which Jay @-@ Z tried proving that he is of Biggie 's caliber , while Biggie tried brushing his rhymes off as insignificant . Although the rappers had already met on the set for the " Dead Presidents " music video , they discovered that neither wrote down their rhymes while recording . The recording of " Brooklyn 's Finest " spanned two months and moved from D & D Studios to Giant Studios where the Clark Kent @-@ sung chorus was recorded .

Reasonable Doubt has Mafioso rap themes . David Drake from Stylus Magazine said the lyrics were characterized by " gritty realism " . Dream Hampton believed that although rappers had alluded to hustling before , Jay @-@ Z " talks about what it can do to a person 's inner peace , and what it can do to their mind " . Jay @-@ Z later said , " the studio was like a psychiatrist 's couch for me " while recording Reasonable Doubt . AllMusic 's Steve Huey described him as " a street hustler from the projects who rapped about what he knew ? and he was very , very good at it ... detailing his experiences on the streets with disarming honesty " . Huey summarizes the album 's subject matter saying :

He 's cocky bordering on arrogant , but playful and witty , and exudes an effortless , unaffected cool throughout . And even if he 's rapping about rising to the top instead of being there , his material obsessions are already apparent [...] the album 's defining cut might [...] be the brief " 22 Two 's , " which not only demonstrates Jay @-@ Z 's extraordinary talent as a pure freestyle rapper , but also preaches a subtle message through its club hostess : Bad behavior gets in the way of making money . Perhaps that 's why Jay @-@ Z waxes reflective , not enthusiastic , about the darker side of the streets .

AllMusic 's Jason Birchmeier writes that the album 's production exhibits characteristics of " the pre @-@ gangsta era , a foregone era when samples fueled the beats and turntablism supplied the hooks " , which " sets Reasonable Doubt apart from Jay @-@ Z 's later work " . " Can 't Knock the Hustle " features a smooth beat . " Politics as Usual " has an R & B sound and a sample of " Hurry Up This Way Again " by The Stylistics . " Dead Presidents " samples Nas ' voice from " The World Is Yours " in its chorus . According to IGN 's Spence D. , " Ski brings back the stripped down piano fill style lending the track a late night jazz vibe " on " Feelin ' It " , and " 22 Two 's " has a " mournful jazz inclined groove " that prominently features string instruments . " Coming of Age " contains a Clark Kent @-@ produced beat that samples the melody and drums from " Inside You " by Eddie Henderson .

== Reception and legacy ==

Released on June 25 , 1996 , Reasonable Doubt peaked at number 23 on the Billboard 200 . It spent 18 weeks on the chart , and 55 weeks on the Billboard Top R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Albums , on which it reached number three . By the end of 1996 , it had sold 420 @, @ 000 copies in the United States . On February 7 , 2002 , Reasonable Doubt was certified Platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) , for shipments of one million copies in the US . It remains the lowest charting album of Jay @-@ Z 's career .

According to Pitchfork Media 's Ryan Schreiber , Reasonable Doubt has often been " considered one of hip @-@ hop 's landmark albums " . while Birchmeier said it was viewed like Nas ' Illmatic (1994) as a classic hip hop album by a young rapper about their street and criminal experiences . Reasonable Doubt helped transfigure gangsta rap into Mafioso rap , popularizing the subgenre and the imagery of high class , expensive lifestyles and tastes in hip hop , including drinking Cristal , driving Lexus automobiles , and living out the plots of films such as Scarface and Carlito 's Way . In the opinion of Miles Marshall Lewis , Reasonable Doubt was a " seminal " work that " shocked the world ... a personal touchstone for fans then Jay 's own age who were getting their own hustles on ? hip hop 's young , gifted , and black " . Jay @-@ Z said that recreating Reasonable Doubt would be challenging , as he was living a different lifestyle with a completely different state of mind when he wrote the album .

Reasonable Doubt has often been considered by many fans to be Jay @-@ Z 's best record . He himself deemed it his best . According to Birchmeier , it differed from his subsequent albums by

lacking " pop @-@ crossover " songs and hits . Shaheem Reid of MTV explained , " Reasonable Doubt might not have the radio hits or club bangers of many of his other albums , but it may be Jay at his most lyrical ? and certainly at his most honest , according to him " . Huey said the lyrical appeal lied within Jay @-@ Z 's " effortless , unaffected cool " flow , " disarming honesty " , and knack for " writing some of the most acrobatic rhymes heard in quite some time " . According to Huey , this " helped Reasonable Doubt rank as one of the finest albums of New York 's hip @-@ hop renaissance of the ' 90s " . Birchmeier , on the other hand , believed the superior quality of producers was more responsible for the album 's reputation as a classic more so than Jay @-@ Z . In a retrospective review for MSN Music , Robert Christgau said the album was " designed for the hip @-@ hop cognoscenti and street aesthetes who still swear he never topped it , " finding it " richer than any outsider could have known , and benefiting from everything we 've since learned about the minor crack baron who put his money where his mouth was . You can hear him marshalling a discipline known to few rappers and many crack barons , and that asceticism undercuts the intrinsic delight of his rhymes " .

Reasonable Doubt was named one of the greatest hip hop albums of all time by The Source in 1998 , Vibe , who ranked it seventh on their 2002 list , MTV.com , who ranked it sixth on their 2005 list , and About.com 's Henry Adaso ; Adaso ranked it as the 14th greatest hip hop album , the second best rap record of 1996 , and the fifth most " essential " hip hop album ever . Blender included Reasonable Doubt on the magazine 's 2003 list of " 500 CDs You Must Own Before You Die " . That same year , Rolling Stone ranked it number 248 on their list of the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time . The magazine also named it the 17th best album of the 1990s . It was included in Vibe 's " 51 Albums Representing a Generation , a Sound and a Movement " (2004) , and Hip Hop Connection 's " The 100 Greatest Rap Albums 1995 @-@ 2005 " .

In 2006 , Jay @-@ Z performed the songs from Reasonable Doubt at the Radio City Music Hall to celebrate its tenth anniversary . The concert 's band included The Roots ' drummer Questlove , the Illadelphonic , a 50 @-@ piece orchestra dubbed The Hustla 's Symphony and Just Blaze , the performance 's disc jockey . On " Can 't Knock the Hustle " , Beyoncé Knowles replaced Mary J. Blige , who was preparing for her Breakthrough Tour at the time . Jay @-@ Z rapped The Notorious B.I.G. 's verses on " Brooklyn 's Finest " , and Jaz @-@ O 's verse was left out of " Bring It On " . Jay @-@ Z added a verse to " 22 Two 's " in which he says variations of the words " for / four " 44 times over the beat of " Can I Kick It ? " by A Tribe Called Quest . Other alterations include Jay @-@ Z changing a lyrical mention of Cristal to Dom Pérignon and Jay @-@ Z 's band " spruc [ing] up tracks like ' Regrets ' to add more energy " . Celebrities such as Alicia Keys , Young Jeezy , Jadakiss , Chris Tucker , LeBron James and Carmelo Anthony attended the concert . 3 @,@ 000 tickets were put on sale ; all were sold within two minutes according to Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella Records ' website .

= = Track listing = =

Notes

" Can 't Knock the Hustle " contains additional vocals from Pain in Da Ass .

" Brooklyn 's Finest " contains additional vocals from Pain in Da Ass , and DJ Clark Kent .

" Feelin ' It " contains additional vocals from Mecca .

" 22 Two 's " contains dialogue from Mary Davis .

" Ain 't No Nigga " contains additional vocals from Khadijah Bass , and Big Jaz .

Sample credits

" Can 't Knock the Hustle " contains samples of " Much Too Much " by Marcus Miller , " I Know You Got Soul " by Eric B. & Rakim and interpolations of " Fool 's Paradise " by Meli 'sa Morgan , and dialogue from the film Scarface .

" Politics as Usual " contains a sample of " Hurry Up This Way Again " by The Stylistics .

" Brooklyn 's Finest " contains samples of " Ecstasy " by The Ohio Players , " Brooklyn Zoo " by Ol ' Dirty Bastard and interpolates dialogue from the film Carlito 's Way .

" Dead Presidents II " contains samples of " A Garden of Peace " by Lonnie Liston Smith , " The

World Is Yours (Tip Mix) " by Nas . , and " Oh My God (Remix) " by A Tribe Called Quest .

" Feelin ' It " contains a sample of " Pastures " by Ahmad Jamal .

" D 'Evils " contains samples of " Go Back Home " by Allen Toussaint , " I Shot Ya (Remix) " by LL Cool J and " Murder Was the Case " by Snoop Dogg .

" 22 Two 's " contains an interpolation of " Can I Kick It ? " by A Tribe Called Quest .

" Can I Live " contains a sample of " The Look of Love " by Isaac Hayes .

" Ain 't No Nigga " contains a sample of " Seven Minutes of Funk " by The Whole Darn Family and an interpolation of " Ain 't No Woman (Like the One I Got) " by The Four Tops .

" Friend or Foe " contains a sample of " Hey What 's That You Say " by Brother to Brother .

" Coming of Age " contains a sample of " Inside You " by Eddie Henderson .

" Cashmere Thoughts " contains a sample of " Save Their Souls " by Bohannon .

" Bring It On " contains a sample of " 1 , 2 Pass It " by D & D All @-@ Stars .

" Regrets " contains a sample of " It 's So Easy Loving You " by Earl Klugh and Hubert Laws .

" Can I Live II " contains a sample of " Mother 's Day " by 24 Carat Black .

= = Personnel = =

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =