

= Monster ( Kanye West song ) =

" Monster " is a song by American hip hop recording artist Kanye West , released as the third single from his fifth studio album , My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy ( 2010 ) . The track features rappers Jay @-@ Z , Rick Ross , Nicki Minaj , and singer Justin Vernon of indie folk group Bon Iver . All five credited performers have writing credits on the posse cut , with the production handled by West and Mike Dean . Lyrically the song expresses often disturbing , horror film influenced concepts , with some comparing the track 's eerie aesthetic to the Michael Jackson song " Thriller " . The song contains an atmospheric , drum @-@ heavy composition , notable for featuring no samples .

Originally released through West 's GOOD Friday initiative , a weekly free music giveaway started by the rapper to promote My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , the song was later confirmed to be featured on the album , and was released as a digital download on October 23 . The song received acclaim from music critics , and was listed amongst the best tracks of 2010 by publications , with NME placing it at number 53 on its list of the " 150 Best Tracks of the Past 15 Years " . The song was applauded for its funky , bombastic beat , with West 's and Minaj 's contributions to the song receiving particularly positive notices .

The song debuted and peaked on the Billboard Hot 100 at position 18 . The track was promoted with a music video directed by Jake Nava . The music video had several references to horror films and featured extensive horror imagery , with zombies , decapitated corpses and heavily atmospheric cinematography . The music video was widely controversial , being banned from MTV . The video has been criticized for its negative sexual portrayal of women , and the content of the video was described as weird and disturbing in nature .

= = Background = =

To promote his upcoming fifth album , West launched GOOD Fridays , a weekly free music giveaway . The intention was to release a free new song every Friday for a few months , and the weekly tracks generally featured various rappers from his label , GOOD Music , and other artists he usually collaborated with . In the first week West released onto his website a remix of the album 's first single , " Power " , and " Monster " was released on the second week . The song was promptly removed from his website and replaced with another track , with " Monster " being uploaded as a digital single onto iTunes . West announced that " Monster " was actually intended for his collaborative album Watch the Throne with Jay @-@ Z . West 's announcement failed to surface however , and the song actually appeared on My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy and was released as the album 's third single .

= = = Recording = = =

Following some media controversies , West chose to record his fifth studio My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy in a reclusive manner in Oahu , Hawaii . Like the majority of the album , " Monster " was composed there . Rapper Rick Ross was invited to Hawaii to work with West , because West was set to produce the song " Live Fast , Die Young " , which appeared on Teflon Don , an album by Ross . While Ross was there with West in his recording studio , he actually walked in on West while recording another song . Ross was not initially intended to be featured on West 's album , however Ross was so impressed with what he heard he decided to record a quick , though short verse .

Ross had the concept of the song explained to him by West , which according to Ross , blew him away in presentation . West was so impressed by Ross that he invited him back to his studio during the final stages of the album , where he also appeared on " Devil in a New Dress " . While Ross was there , both Jay @-@ Z and Minaj were recording their verses . Ross expressed his admiration for Minaj , who impressed him during the recording . He stated that what he had observed had earned him respect for Minaj , who called the recording process a " moment of history " .

Minaj expressed excitement when approached to collaborate on the song , and she had contributed 32 bars to the track . Her main inspiration behind working on the track was the possibility of meeting

Jay @-@ Z , with whom she was obsessed since a young age . According to her , she literally couldn't have a conversation without quoting a line by him , and it was a dream come true to collaborate with the artist . Minaj had recorded her lines around four months before the lyrics finally appeared on the song . Minaj described both Jay @-@ Z and West as " icons " , and stated that she was blessed to be working with them . In an interview with Rap @-@ Up , Minaj mused " never in a billion years would 've thought that I would 've not only been on a song with one of them but both them " .

Justin Vernon 's involvement on the song stemmed from being approached by West directly . West first got into contact with Vernon when he directly phoned him , with the intention of sampling his song " Woods " . The two talked on the phone for about 40 minutes , where West explained some of the concepts for the project , and invited him down to his studio in Hawaii . West is a big admirer of Bon Iver 's album For Emma , Forever Ago , and was impressed with Vernon 's unique use of auto @-@ tune . The two artists became friends while playing games of basketball together , and West introduced him to Jeff Bhasker , one of his main producers .

Vernon was sampled on another song from the album , " Lost in the World " and appears on vocals on " Monster " . While there during recording sessions , he had reportedly recorded 10 tracks . He watched Minaj record her verse , and he too , expressed admiration for Minaj 's performance on the song , however he noted that initially he had no idea who she was . Vernon described the process as highly artistic , stating that the fourteen @-@ hour day recording schedule allowed for a lot of fun and creativity . West , talking about recording the song with Vernon , stated that he was " similar to me , where he just does shit just so people would be like , ' Oh shit , how did you do that ? How did that happen ? ' He 's just a really cool guy to be around . ?

= = Composition = =

" Monster " has been described as brooding , disturbing , creepy and the " weirdest A @-@ list event @-@ rap posse cut in recent memory . " The song begins with an ominous , distorted vocal roar , sung by Justin Vernon of Bon Iver , with Vernon declaring " I shoot the lights out " , which sets up the dark atmosphere of the track . The intro of the song is followed by a brief verse given by Ross , delivered in the rapping style of boom bap . In a deep voice , Ross asserts the lines " bitch , I 'm a monster , no good bloodsucker , fat motherfucker , now look who 's in trouble , " over the eerie production featured during the beginning . Following the introduction by Ross , West then provides the song 's hook , singing " everybody know / I 'm a motherfuckin ' monster " in a heavily distorted manner . West then launches into a full verse . Chicago Sun @-@ Times writer Thomas Conner stated that West rhymes ? esophagus ? with ? sarcophagus ? , commenting that it was surely a hip @-@ hop first .

Jay @-@ Z appears on the song after West 's verse , and raps in a more forceful , sinister flow . During his verse , Jay @-@ Z references several different horror characters , including the Sasquatch , Godzilla , King Kong , the Loch Ness Monster , goblins , ghouls and zombies . Lyrically Jay @-@ Z discusses his discontent at former associates , and concludes his verse by admitting that his achilles ' heel is " love " . Minaj is the final rapper to appear on the song , who delivers her lines in an urgent , energetic manner . Minaj 's delivery has been described as surreal , changing delivery in mid @-@ line . The song ends in a spooky , hoarse vocal riff delivered by Vernon , reminiscent of the track " Thriller " . An extended vocal riff , described as " scatchy " closes the track . Pitchfork Media 's Tom Breihan summarized the content of the song , writing :

Rick Ross drops by to say hi , keeping his appearance so brief that I can 't help but wonder what he 's even doing here . Justin Vernon inexplicably bookends the thing , pushing his falsetto into Antony range on the outro and muttering befuddling lyrics that have nothing to do with the rest of the song . All this over the straight @-@ up funkiest beat Kanye West has made in years , a rippling electro push @-@ pull that adds an effortless strut to his recent progged @-@ out chilliness . But all that other stuff fades into the background when Nicki Minaj shows up . [ ... ] She 's a whirlwind of energy , showing her full repertoire of nutso voices and kicking the living fuck out of the beat , sounding like she 's having an absolute blast the whole time . "

The song heavily features bombastic tribal drums , and paranoia @-@ inducing strings that create a feeling of tension . The beat of " Monster " has been described as a " hyperventilating death rattle " by The Washington Post 's Chris Richards , commenting that the song was permeated with dark , urgent @-@ sounding moans . The chorus of the song has two separate meanings ; on the surface , it appears that West is bragging about his abilities as a rapper , while also making a comment on the media 's reception of him , with lines like " gossip , gossip , nigga just stop it , everybody knows I ? m a muthafuckin ? monster " .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

" Monster " has received acclaim from music critics , who praised Minaj 's verse and rapping style , and West handling the production . Becky Bain of Idolator stated that while the song featured five distinct artists , Minaj actually had the brightest appearance on the song . Sara D. Anderson of AOL gave the song a positive review , complimenting each artist on their contribution . Chris Ryan of MTV positively reviewed West , Jay @-@ Z and Minaj as the stand out rappers in the song , stating " on car stereos , computers and in clubs all over , nothing got more burn than ' Monster , ' his new beastly posse cut . Kanye spits about his presence being a present to us all , Jay @-@ Z comes through with what might be his strongest verse in years , and that 's where Nicki comes in , more than holding her own against the bad boys . " Pitchfork Media 's Ryan Dombal reported that Minaj gave the verse of her life , and applauded the contributions by Ross , who added a " hallucinatory tone " to the song . Another Pitchfork writer , Tom Breihan mused that the track contained the " straight @-@ up funkiest beat " West has made in years , while commenting that Minaj was the best in show .

The Village Voice 's Sean Fennessey commented that " Monster " was the track that announced Minaj 's " brilliance " to most people , stating that when the posse cut " crept up the Hot 100 , the song became more than track six ? it became an essential part of this album ? s story , delivered months early . " Alex Denney of NME mused that the track " proves a riotous bit of respite " and features West " sending up his rep with a self @-@ mocking diatribe about drowning his pain in a blizzard of blow jobs and mass adulation while Nicki Minaj sets the dials to ? ridiculous ? with a fire @-@ breathing , raga @-@ inflected verse . " Embling of Tiny Mix Tapes felt that with " super @-@ sized cipher cuts " like " Monster " and " So Appalled " , West balanced out some of the darker moments of My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , and that the song contained heavy " shit @-@ talking . " Slant Magazine 's Cole Matthew also commented that posse cuts " Monster " and " So Appalled " were amongst the hardest tracks ever produced by West .

IGN 's Chad Grischow mused that the track featured great guest appearances from Jay @-@ Z and Minaj , going as far as saying that Minaj 's performance " clears up what all the hype is about for anyone still unsure " . Robert Christgau of MSN Music stated that West perfectly acknowledged his status as a rapper , and noted that his persona seems to be aware that his " bling @-@ and @-@ sex brag is about to get blown away by padrone Jay @-@ Z 's ' all I see is these niggaz I made millionaires / Millin about ' and pink @-@ haired Nicki Minaj 's ' bitch from Sri Lanka @-@ Willy Wonka @-@ watch the queen conquer ' trifecta . " David Amidon of PopMatters praised the production of the song , and stated that the track features " glass @-@ shattering bass " . Nitsuh Abebe of New York declared that Minaj gave one of the best verses of the year .

Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club praised the guest picks on the album , musing that West trades verses with the " few superstars fit to breathe his rarified air , including Jay @-@ Z , Rick Ross , and Nicki Minaj , who single @-@ handedly justifies her deafening buzz with her verse on the song . " Kitty Empire of The Guardian praised West 's performance on the song describing it as " brilliant " , but also noted that on the particular song Minaj and Jay @-@ Z were superior to him , citing Minaj 's verse as her career 's best . Dan Vidal of URB stated that West milks the potential of his guest rappers to the most impressive degree , reporting that Jay @-@ Z 's generally relaxed performance

was " with a fiery growl on " and that it " features Nicki Minaj going even more bonkers with her flow than we ? re accustomed to . " Sputnikmusic 's Channing Freeman echoed the consensus about Minaj stating that her verse was the most memorable part of the song , though felt that Bon Iver 's appearance didn 't add up to much .

= = = Accolades = = =

The song was named the " Collaboration of the Year " 2010 by HipHopDX . Minaj 's verse for the song was named " Verse of the Year " by the same website . Rolling Stone ranked it number 10 on its list of the Best Singles of 2010 . Rap @-@ Up declared the song the third best of 2010 . MTV News declared the track the 14th best of the year , with other West singles " Power " and " Runaway " making the top 10 . In October 2011 , NME placed it at number 53 on its list " 150 Best Tracks of the Past 15 Years " , with the site 's staff stating that while West had a good performance on the song , it was " star turns from Jay @-@ Z ( channeling his world @-@ weary hip hop legend who just needed a cuddle ) and Nicki Minaj ( a show stealing turn from the heir apparent who was battling herself as much as the haters ) that took this track over . " In 2013 , Complex Magazine gave Minaj 's Monster verse the title " Best Rap Verse of the Past 5 Years " . In January 2011 , The Village Voice 's Pazz & Jop annual critics ' poll named " Monster " the sixth @-@ best single of 2010 ; West 's other singles " Power " and " Runaway " were ranked at numbers five and four , respectively on the same poll , with their parent album My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy ranked the best album of 2010 as well . It was ranked at number 69 by Rolling Stone on their list of " 100 Greatest Hip @-@ Hop songs of all time " .

= = = Commercial performance = = =

" Monster " was sent out to radio on September 21 , and it was released to the iTunes Store on October 23 , 2010 around Halloween . It spent five weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 , peaking at number 18 on the chart . The song also appeared within the top 30 on both the Billboard Hot Rap Songs and Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs charts . The song also appeared on the UK Singles Chart at position 146 . " Monster " was certified platinum on March 31st , 2014 .

= = Live performances = =

The song was performed at Jay @-@ Z 's and Eminem 's " Home & Home " concert in the new Yankee Stadium , during Jay @-@ Z 's portion of the performance . Both Minaj and West joined Jay @-@ Z at the concert and performed the song together as a group , though Ross was absent . After joining Jay @-@ Z during the performance , West remained on stage and performed his own singles , including the remixed version of " Power " , " Can 't Tell Me Nothing " and " Good Life " . West wore exactly the same outfit he did for his 2010 MTV Video Music Awards performance and his subsequent Saturday Night Live performance ; a red suit accessorized with his gold Egyptian god Horus necklace and red Louis Vuitton shoes . During a live performance in New York , West joined Ross and performed " Devil in a New Dress " and " Monster " .

Minaj performed the song live at Britney Spears ' Femme Fatale Tour as one of the final songs in her setlist . On one occasion , West performed the track alongside Minaj on the tour , on August 2 , 2011 at the Nassau Coliseum in Long Island , New York , as a surprise guest . During his set at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival , West performed " Monster " during the first half of his setlist . The performance was accompanied by Vernon who provided his vocal hook on the song . West 's performance was described as " one of the most memorable performances in Coachella history . " The song was performed by West and Jay @-@ Z during their Watch the Throne Tour . Minaj has also performed her verse on the European and American legs of her debut concert tour , the Pink Friday Tour . She has also rapped her verse on her Pink Friday : Reloaded Tour .

= = Music video = =

### == Background and synopsis ==

An unfinished version of a music video , directed by Jake Nava leaked online before the official release on December 30 , 2010 . West was annoyed at the leak of the video , and nearly shelved the video altogether . A finalized version of the video was officially released on June 4 , 2011 on West 's official website . A promotional trailer for the music video was released online . When released , the video came with a disclaimer , stating " the following content is in no way to be interpreted as misogynistic or negative towards any groups of people . It is an art piece and it shall be taken as such . "

The music video is inspired by horror films and extensively features gothic and horror related imagery , including references to Michael Jackson 's *Thriller* . The video features references to horror cult films such as *Saw* and *American Psycho* and the supposedly haunted painting *The Hands Resist Him* . The *Hand Resists Him* is a painting created by artist Bill Stoneham in 1972 , depicting a young boy and female doll standing in front of a glass paneled door against which many hands are pressed . The painting became famous for apparently being haunted . The painting is referenced during a scene in the video where West attempts to hold a door closed , from the monsters outside attempting to enter . The video features mostly naked corpse looking models , some of which are decapitated . West 's role in the video is similar to Doctor Frankenstein , with the video set in a castle . Jay-Z appears in the video dressed in a tuxedo , standing in front of a nude corpse in a darkly lit library . The video contains two versions of Minaj ; a vampire version who is dressed in a gothic inspired outfit ( representing her alter ego Roman Zolanski ) , and a pink haired version ( representing her alter ego Barbie ) which the other half tortures during the video . Zombies also appear in the video , with hanging corpses and blood splattered furniture .

### == Reception ==

HitFix 's Melinda Newman called the video both " chilling " and " raw " and stated that the video captured the concept of the song well , expressing that it was a " brutal reveal of West 's psyche " . Simon Vozick-Levinson of Entertainment Weekly stated that the video should have been more creative and called it offensive , stating that Minaj 's appearance was the best part . Matthew Perpetua of Rolling Stone commented that the video was morbid , comparing it to " *Thriller* " , though noted that " instead of dancing zombies , he gives us undead , barely dressed and occasionally dismembered models " . Perpetua called Minaj 's appearance " cameo of the year " describing her appearance in the video :

" She switches up her delivery repeatedly over the course of 31 bars , veering between cartoonish sweetness and unhinged villainy . She dramatizes the jarring dynamic shifts in the clip by appearing as a fanged dominatrix torturing a far more innocent version of herself in a neon pink wig and frilly white dress . It 's a brilliant visual take on a breathtakingly badass verse , but really , they could 've just focused in on her incredible facial expressions and called it a day . She 's just that entertaining to watch . "

The music video for *Monster* was widely controversial , being banned on MTV . Ta-Nehisi Coates of The Atlantic questioned " what would have become of John Mayer , had he cut a video with dead black women strewn about and invoked black women throughout his lyrics in the manner Kanye does " and labeled the video both racist and sexist in nature . However , Brandon Soderberg of Spin argues that the video was simply a " surreal response to hip-hop misogyny " and a " knowing provocation " , and commented that the video was in fact inspired by horror films .

Daphne Bramham of the Vancouver Sun commented that " what 's entertaining about women in lingerie hanging by their necks on chains ? What 's artful about images of drugged , unconscious women about to be sexually assaulted ? " Mikhail Lyubansky of the Huffington Post had a negative opinion of the video , stating that the video " not so subtly suggests that complete female

passivity , lifelessness , and even death are erotic " , and interpreted the message of the video as being that " for women , what 's sexually desirable is passivity , lifelessness , and death . " The release of the video was received by American activist Ann Simonton with an internet petition seeking the preemptive removal of the full video from broadcast or promotion , criticizing the video as glorifying sexual violence against women .

= = Personnel = =

Produced by Kanye West

Additional Production by Mike Dean and Plain Pat

Recorded by Andrew Dawson , Anthony Kilhoffer and Mike Dean at the Avex Recording Studio , Honolulu

Mixed by Mike Dean at Electric Lady Studios and Glenwood Place Studios , Burbank - Assisted by Gaylord Holomalia , Christian Mochizuki and Pete Bischoff

Background Vocals : Justin Vernon

Piano : Jeff Bhasker

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =