

## = Watch the Throne =

Watch the Throne is a collaborative studio album by American rappers Jay Z and Kanye West, released on August 8, 2011, by Roc-A-Fella Records, Roc Nation, and Def Jam Recordings. Before the album, Jay Z and West had collaborated on their respective singles and with West as a producer on Jay Z's work. As longtime friends, they originally sought out to record a five-song EP together, but the project eventually evolved into a full-length album. Recording sessions took place at various locations and began in November 2010. The album was produced by West, 88 Keys, RZA, Swizz Beatz, Jeff Bhasker, and Mike Dean, among others.

Expanding on the dense production style of West's 2010 album *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, Watch the Throne incorporates orchestral and progressive rock influences, unconventional samples, and dramatic melodies in its sound. Jay Z and West's braggadocio lyrics exhibit themes of opulence, fame, materialism, power, and the burdens of success, as well as political and socioeconomic context. The album expresses other topics such as Jay Z's thoughts on fatherhood, West's reflection on being deemed a social villain, and their legacy as performers. Music writers interpreted the subject matter to concern the rappers' plight as African Americans struggling with financial success in America.

The album produced seven singles, including "H.A.M.", "Otis", "Lift Off", "No Church in the Wild", and the Billboard Hot 100 top five "Niggas in Paris", which all received music videos. Jay Z and West promoted the album with the Watch the Throne Tour that spanned October 2011 to June 2012 and became the highest grossing hip-hop concert tour in history. Watch the Throne debuted at number one on the US Billboard 200 chart, selling 436,000 copies its first week. While some critics found the album's lyrical content uninspiring, its production and the rappers' performances were highly praised. Many critics and publications placed the album in their year-end best-of lists. It also earned Jay Z and West seven Grammy Award nominations. The album is certified platinum in the US.

## = Background =

Jay Z and Kanye West first worked together on the song "This Can't Be Life", from Jay Z's 2000 album *The Dynasty: Roc La Familia*, produced by West, then on Jay Z's 2001 album *The Blueprint*, which showcased West's distinctive style of hip-hop production at the time. West's early production work on Jay Z's music helped raise his profile in the music industry. While originally only viewed as a producer, West eventually was seen as both a viable rapper and producer thanks to the success of his debut album *The College Dropout* and its singles. West continued to be one of Jay Z's main producers on subsequent albums such as *The Black Album* and *Kingdom Come*. Jay Z appeared on Kanye's first two albums as well, and the two frequently collaborated. Further collaborative work by the two included singles such as "Swagga Like Us" from rapper T.I.'s *Paper Trail*, "Run This Town" from Jay Z's *The Blueprint 3*, and "Monster" from West's *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*.

During the promotional stages of West's *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, a remix of the song "Power" surfaced featuring Jay Z. Following this, West announced on Twitter his intention to drop a five-track EP with Jay Z, titled *Watch the Throne*. Also according to the rapper, the track "Monster" was intended for the EP, though that failed to surface. It was later revealed by West that the project had been expanded into a full-length album in an October 2010 interview for MTV. He said in the interview that they planned to record in the south of France.

## = Recording =

Recording sessions for the album took place at Avex Recording Studio in Honolulu, Hawaii; Barford Estate in Sydney, Australia; Electric Lady Studios; the Mercer Hotel; MSR Studios; and Tribeca Grand Hotel in New York, New York; Le Meurice in Paris, France; and Real World

Studios in Wiltshire , England . Production began in November 2010 in England and continued during available times in Jay @-@ Z 's and West 's schedules at locations in Australia , Paris , Abu Dhabi , New York City , and Los Angeles . In an interview for Billboard , Jay @-@ Z said that they often recorded in hotel rooms and that the album went through three iterations , as he and West had scaled back from their original musical direction . He noted difficulties in the recording process , including arguments with West regarding their direction . Following the release of lead single , " H ? A ? M " in January 2011 , Jay @-@ Z stated that the less @-@ than @-@ stellar reception caused a change in the production of the album . Jay @-@ Z announced that it was unlikely that the track would ultimately make the album . The issues at the beginning of production had caused a delay in the release . In an interview for Rolling Stone , Jay @-@ Z discussed their insistence on recording in person and attributed it to the delay in releasing the album , stating " If we were gonna do it , we were gonna do it together . No mailing it in " .

The album 's earlier sessions produced a little material that has made the final cut . West had brought a majority of his usual production crew onto the project , the same crew that had assisted in the creation of My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy . One of the main exceptions was producer No I.D. , who felt that the two artists weren 't pushing forward enough with the music . In an interview with Complex , No I.D. commented about the project that " you ? re going to sell , because you ? re already big . But you guys are important to push this forward . Push intelligence and decadence and all of the above forward in a creative manner . ? While his advice was acknowledged to a degree , he ultimately had very little part in the finished project . In January 2011 , they regrouped and rented a block of rooms at the Mercer Hotel in New York City and invited a select group of producers and recording artists . Chauncey " Hit @-@ Boy " Hollis , who produced the track " Niggas in Paris " , said of recording at the hotel , " There was music going on in every room . I had a room where I was cranking out beats , and then I ? d go into the main room with Jay and [ Kanye ] and play beats for them . Kanye is really hands @-@ on . I would come in with a beat and he ? d be like , ? Take this out , slow it down . ? It would make it sound 100 times better . Jay would then mumble different flows to the beat " .

Parts of the album were recorded in New York City 's Tribeca Grand Hotel . Recording artist and producer Ryan Leslie also confirmed his involvement in the recording of Watch the Throne . Producer 88 @-@ Keys reportedly played 20 of his beats to West and Jay , who only eventually used one on the finished album . The Wu @-@ Tang Clan 's RZA , who had worked on West 's previous album , is credited as a producer on the track " New Day " . Watch the Throne was mastered by producer and engineer Mike Dean at the Mercer Hotel .

Jay @-@ Z and West worked with several guest recording artists , including Beyoncé , Frank Ocean , and Mr Hudson . " No Church in the Wild " , the last song recorded for the album , was conceived by Jay @-@ Z , West , and the song 's producer 88 @-@ Keys throughout most of June . Producer and recording artist The @-@ Dream sings a verse on the track using AutoTune . The song features R & B singer Frank Ocean , who released his debut mixtape nostalgia , ULTRA in early 2011 to critical acclaim . The release of the mixtape interested Jay @-@ Z and West . Jay @-@ Z 's wife Beyoncé recommended the involvement of the singer in particular , who appears on both " No Church in the Wild " and " Made in America . " Ocean admitted that Jay @-@ Z has intentionally intimidated him during recording sessions but declared his enjoyment of working with the two . Ocean mused about the project :

? I rarely do collabs , so that ? s just one of the ones you absolutely do . It ? s like a no @-@ brainer . I didn ? t really think about any of it . The last thing on my mind was working with artists who I ? ve held in high esteem for years . [ ... ] I worked with Jay on his solo album before I did the Watch the Throne sessions . The second time I went it was Barry Weiss , Jay , Beyoncé , Kanye , couple other people , it was a pretty heavy room . ?

" Lift Off " was recorded in Sydney , Australia . In early May 2011 , rumors arose that " Lift Off " was to feature Bruno Mars who had recorded vocals . It was reported that the song would be released as the lead single from the album . However , Mars never appeared on the song and Knowles sang several lines during the chorus instead . Additional vocalists Elly Jackson , " Uncle " Charlie Wilson , Connie Mitchell , and Justin Vernon provide the hook on " That 's My Bitch . " Swizz Beatz , who

produced " Welcome to the Jungle " , also provided background vocals to the track , and Kid Cudi contributed additional vocals to " The Joy " and " Illest Motherfucker Alive , " bonus tracks on the album 's deluxe edition . One of the tracks that was recorded but didn 't make the cut for the album was " Living So Italian . " It apparently sampled Andrea Bocelli 's " Con te partirò " and was described as catchy but for unknown reasons , the song never made it onto the album .

In 2013 , Jay @-@ Z released his twelfth studio album Magna Carta ... Holy Grail , in an interview he revealed that two songs on the album were initially recorded for Watch the Throne , the song " Oceans " which features Frank Ocean and the song " Holy Grail " which went on to feature Justin Timberlake ( Although Timberlake 's contribution to the track was not anticipated at the time , until the duo collaborated on Timberlake 's 2013 comeback single " Suit & Tie " and " Murder " from The 20 / 20 Experience and The 20 / 20 Experience 2 of 2 respectively ) . West and Jay @-@ Z argued for four days about having them included on the Watch the Throne , however West eventually relented and the duo recorded " No Church in the Wild " and " Made in America " . In an interview with Zane Lowe , Jay @-@ Z said : " [ There were ] no lyrics on ' Holy Grail ' and I recorded ' Oceans ' and I played those records for Kanye , ? Jay explained . ? And he was like , ' No those have to go on Watch the Throne , ' so we spent four days arguing about those records and I was explaining to him why it wasn 't right for this project and I had a whole idea for making this album called Magna Carta ... Holy Grail , the " Holy Grail " part of the name came after . "

= = Music = =

Julian Benbow of The Boston Globe writes that the album 's music is as " massive , dour , and relentlessly unconventional " as that of West 's previous 2010 album My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy . Music writer Robert Christgau describes West 's production as " a funkier and less ornate variant of the prog @-@ rap of 2010 's acclaimed My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy " . Music journalist Jody Rosen characterizes the music as " vast , dark and booming , " commenting that West " continues in the sonic vein he introduced in My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , lacing the songs with rock dynamics , layering his beats with eerie vocal chorales , piling on proggy flourishes . " Conversely , Matthew Cole of Slant Magazine finds West 's " knack for dramatic , melodically sophisticated tracks [ ... ] channeled away from the Olympian scale " of his previous album " and toward the more commercial vein of Jay @-@ Z 's recent work , " which he attributes to West splitting production work with several other producers . On the songs ' structure , Cole states , " every track eschews the standard verse @-@ hook @-@ repeat format in favor of more dynamic material . "

Music journalist Alexis Petridis comments that the album incorporates " unlikely samples . " Jon Caramanica of The New York Times writes that its production " can be roughly segmented into three categories , " noting " Southern @-@ inflected tracks " such as " Niggas in Paris " and " H ? A ? M " , " moody and harsh numbers " like " Who Gon Stop Me " and " Why I Love You " , and " the nostalgia that creeps over much of this album , giving it a sonic through @-@ line and mission statement . " Pitchfork Media 's Tom Breihan perceives " pure orchestral excess " on some of its songs and describes the album 's musical scope as " a tribute to [ West 's ] distinctive taste and sense of style . " An interlude that appears after " No Church in the Wild " , " New Day " and " Welcome to the Jungle " , as well as before " Illest Motherfucker Alive " on the deluxe edition , samples the 1979 song " Tristessa " by Italian jazz @-@ rock fusion band Orchestra Njervudarov .

= = Lyrics = =

The album features themes of opulence , fame , materialism , power , and the burdens of success . Jay @-@ Z 's and West 's lyrics include boasts of obscene wealth , grandiosity , and social commentary . Sputnikmusic 's Tyler Fisher describes Watch the Throne as " an album centered around larger @-@ than @-@ life egos . " Robert Christgau notes " regal grandiosity " and " glory " as primary themes on the album . Andy Kellman of Allmusic characterizes much of the album 's lyrical content as " ruthless flaunting of material wealth and carte blanche industry resources . "

Ross Green of Tiny Mix Tapes describes it as "luxury rap", noting Jay @-@ Z's and West's "whimsy and braggadocio". Rob Harvilla of Spin views that their lyrics express elitism, narcissism, "relentless capitalism," and "smug yet undeniable greatness".

Music critic Greg Kot views that the album is about "mutual admiration" and writes of the rappers' respective personas, "Jay @-@ Z is about imperious flow, bridging his gritty past life on the streets with his current status as a cultural tastemaker and business mogul. [...] West is more desperate, transparent, awkward, vulnerable." Music critic Nathan Rabin states that Jay @-@ Z and West "are a study in contrasts: the businessman and the bohemian, the faithful husband and the drugged @-@ up playboy, the walking press release and the loose cannon. Jay @-@ Z is tidy. Kanye is nothing but rough edges." Jon Caramanica writes similarly, "breaking [...] old barriers is a means to acceptance and stability" for Jay @-@ Z, while "West sounds lonely" with his fame, adding that "For Mr. West every flash of Dionysian extreme is tempered by the realization of its hollowness." In his article "Brag Like That" for Barnes & Noble, Robert Christgau comments that "Jay @-@ Z is a grown man and Kanye West is not" on the album and elaborates on their lyrics, stating:

Both co @-@ kings flaunt their arrogance even by the standards of a genre where braggadocio is the main event, and neither is shy about pretending that the line of succession from Otis Redding and Martin Luther King is paved with their gold. [...] One could venture that maybe Watch the Throne divvies up the way it does for rhetorical purposes? that one king plays the hero and the other the hedonist, two equally royal hip @-@ hop archetypes.

Their lyrics also exhibit political and socioeconomic context, which Jody Rosen denotes as "serious, sober, weighty." Nitsuh Abebe of New York views that the album is "about the relationship of black American men to wealth, power, and success. [...] a portrait of two black men thinking through the idea of success in America." He compares it to Yinka Shonibare's 1998 piece *Diary of a Victorian Dandy*, "in which the artist luxuriates in all the genteel pleasures of the time." Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times notes "musings on the spoils of riches and the chaos that accompanies it," adding that "[the] tension between worshipping the spirit and celebrating the bounty drives Watch the Throne [...] The record questions faith while clinging to heritage and family, places this moment in an historical context, wonders on the mystery, power and confusion of the gilded life? while rolling around in amulets." Writer Kitty Empire interprets it to be about "black power [...] conceived as a swaggering taunt of achievement, in line with both men's previous works, which routinely double as shopping guides. [...] [T]hey need to humanise all the conspicuous consumption." Claire Suddath of Time views the rappers' "bacchanal celebration of the finer things in life" as secondary to the theme of "two men grappling with what it means to be successful and black in a nation that still thinks of them as second class."

= = Songs = =

The opening track "No Church in the Wild" features a cinematic production style. Singers Frank Ocean and The @-@ Dream lend their voices to the album's grim opener, which sets the mood with a gnarled guitar sample. Over the rock @-@ centric, rolling production, both rappers muse over familiar themes of loyalty, sexuality and maternal solidarity. The pop @-@ oriented "Lift Off" features baroque strings and a chorus sung by Beyoncé Knowles, accompanied with synthesizers. The song contains horns and martial drums as Knowles sings, "We gon' take it to the moon / Take it to the stars." "Niggas in Paris" incorporates staccato orchestration and fizzing industrial noise, topping it all off with a menacing beat and icy synthesizer notes. The track features an unusual sampling of dialogue from the 2007 film *Blades of Glory*, notably the "we're gonna skate to one song and one song only" line. West and Jay @-@ Z's lyrics frame their rags to riches story on the song.

"Otis" samples Otis Redding's 1966 song "Try a Little Tenderness", manipulating it into a rhythm track with Redding's vocals and grunts. The sample is used in a way that is reminiscent to past Kanye productions, like the tracks found on his album *The College Dropout*. Redding's vocals are chopped up so thoroughly that his voice serves as a mere melodic riff on the track, with both rappers promptly rapping over it in a braggadocio fashion. "Gotta Have It", produced by The

Neptunes , incorporates chopped @-@ up James Brown vocal samples and Eastern flute melodies . The song contains haunting backing vocals and an accompanying tambourine with the two rappers trading verses with the vocal riff playing over them . Much like " Otis " , the track features sliced @-@ up vocal snippets and an aggressive bass backing , with the two rappings trading lines and making references to the Yung Chris song " Racks " and other contemporary rap trends .

On " New Day " , they address future sons about fame . It references the line " me and the RZA connect " from Raekwon 's 1995 song " Incarcerated Scarfaces " , which was also produced by RZA . The track incorporates a sample of Nina Simone 's 1965 song " Feeling Good " through an Auto @-@ Tune voice processor . Both rappers discuss their futures as fathers on the track , flowing smoothly over mellow , lightly psychedelic synthesizer tones . Both Justin Vernon and La Roux appear on " That 's My Bitch " , spitting off hooks over a quick , melodic beat , with West at his most abrasive lyrically . On " Welcome to the Jungle " , Jay @-@ Z laments personal losses and overcoming struggles . Sharing the name with a Guns N ' Roses track , Jay describes himself as the " black Axl Rose " over a jittery , treble @-@ heavy Swizz Beatz production .

" Who Gon Stop Me " features bombastic production and samples Flux Pavilion 's 2011 song " I Can 't Stop " , reinforced with heavy synthesizer and tone shifts . The song utilizes an often experimental , bass @-@ driven and dub @-@ step influenced style of composition , with West forcefully rapping lines like " this is something like the Holocaust " . " Murder to Excellence " addresses black @-@ on @-@ black crime and limited social mobility for African Americans . Midway through the song the beat switches up , with Kanye musing over the horrors of black @-@ on @-@ black violence in the first half , and Jay @-@ Z delivering equally meditated comments on black excellence on the more choir heavy second half . A sample from Indiggo 's " LA LA LA " can be heard on the song . At 5 minutes in length , the complete " Murder to Excellence " is the longest track on the album .

" Made in America " has themes of family life and the American Dream , with Jay @-@ Z and West discussing their respective rises to fame , while acknowledging those who helped and inspired them . The song has been described as an understated soft @-@ pop track with influence from Michael Jackson and his 1985 charity single " We Are the World " . Ocean 's hook pays tribute to Martin Luther King , Jr . , Coretta Scott King , Malcolm X , Betty Shabazz and Jesus on one of the album 's more serene tracks . Jay @-@ Z muses on his drug @-@ dealing past with lines like " our apple pie was supplied by Arm & Hammer " , with West 's verse describing his conflict with fame . " Why I Love You " has Jay @-@ Z lamenting betrayal and how his past protégés failed to maintain without him . The track contains a " sledgehammer beat " which is built around French house duo Cassius ' 2010 single " I < 3 U So " . West 's production continues in the sonic vein he introduced in My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , lacing the song with rock dynamics , layering the beat with eerie vocal chorales in the style of progressive rock songs .

= = Release and promotion = =

Watch the Throne was released by Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella Records , Roc Nation , and Def Jam Recordings , Jay @-@ Z 's and West 's respective record labels . On July 4 , 2011 it was made available to pre @-@ order on Life + Times , Jay @-@ Z 's lifestyle webzine , which redirected to Island Def Jam 's website that featured the deluxe version available for \$ 16 @. @ 99 , standard CD for \$ 13 @. @ 99 , a deluxe digital version for \$ 14 @. @ 99 , and standard digital album for \$ 11 @. @ 99 . On July 22 , its pre @-@ order was made available on the iTunes Store . Internationally the album was released digitally on August 8 exclusively through iTunes , while its physical release was made available on August 12 . Its deluxe CD edition was sold exclusively by Best Buy through August 23 , when it became available at other retailers . The sales strategy received criticism from other retailers , who accused the labels of giving preferential treatment to iTunes and Best Buy . One of the most anticipated releases in 2011 , Watch the Throne became one of the few major label albums in the Internet age to avoid a leak .

On July 7 , 2011 , Jay @-@ Z hosted a private listening session at the Mercer Hotel in New York City , previewing the album 's songs from his MacBook Pro for a select group of reporters and music

journalists . It was also exclusive to two teenage fans who had won access to the session for being the first people to pre-order the album through Jay-Z's Life + Times website . The album's cover and artwork , both designed by Italian designer Riccardo Tisci , were also premiered at the session . Benjamin Meadows of Ingrim of Billboard , who attended the session , said of the previewed material , " The songs were dramatic and boastful , with Jay-Z often taking the lead lyrically , and the collection showcased the differences between the two artists - Jay-Z , the technical marksman , and Kanye , the emotive chest beater . " On August 1 , Jay-Z and West held a listening session for the album at the Rose Center for Earth and Space in New York City 's American Museum of Natural History . The session premiered the album in its entirety and featured attendance from journalists , models , industry types , and recording artists such as Busta Rhymes , 88 Keys , and Beyoncé Knowles .

Jay-Z and West promoted Watch the Throne with a 34-date , North American concert tour produced by Live Nation , which began on October 29 and concluded on December 18 , 2010 . By the end of 2011 the tour had grossed \$ 48 . 3 million making it the highest grossing hip-hop tour and the eighth highest grossing tour of 2011 . By its conclusion , the tour had become the highest grossing concert tour ever by a hip-hop act .

= = Singles = =

Watch the Throne spawned seven official singles , with varying degrees of success . Following West 's announcement via his Twitter account , " H ? A ? M " was officially released as a digital download in January 2011 as the lead single . It charted at number 23 on the US Billboard Hot 100 . In July 2011 , " Otis " became the second single when it was premiered on Funkmaster Flex 's Hot 97 radio show and subsequently leaked to the Internet . It was sent to rhythmic contemporary and urban contemporary radio on August 9 . Its cover art was created by Riccardo Tisci . " Otis " reached number 12 on the Hot 100 . A music video for the song was filmed by director Spike Jonze in Los Angeles . Third single " Lift Off " was sent to US urban radio on August 23 of the same year . The track peaked on the US Bubbling Under Hot 100 Singles at position 6 .

The album 's fourth and fifth singles were released simultaneously ; in September 2011 , " Why I Love You " was sent to US rhythmic radio , and " Niggas in Paris " was sent to both rhythmic and urban radio . " Why I Love You " served as a European-centric single while " Niggas in Paris " was promoted as a domestic single . " Niggas in Paris " peaked at number five on the Hot 100 . " Niggas in Paris " was sent to Top 40 / Mainstream radio on November 8 . By February 2012 , it had reached digital sales of two million in the US . The song was promoted with a music video directed by West himself , featuring concert footage .

The sixth single was " Gotta Have It " , which impacted Urban radio on December 6 , 2011 , and Rhythmic radio on January 31 , 2012 . Seventh and final single " No Church in the Wild " impacted Urban radio on March 20 , 2012 . Romain Gavras directed a music video for " No Church " though it featured none of the featured performers . " Gotta Have It " peaked at position 69 on the Hot 100 , with " No Church in the Wild " peaking at 72 . Though not released as a single , " Who Gon Stop Me " peaked at 44 on the chart .

= = Critical reception = =

Watch the Throne received generally positive reviews from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a weighted mean rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 76 , based on 42 reviews . Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club wrote that " exhilarating messiness and go-for broke spontaneity infect Jay-Z and push him outside his comfort zone and into a realm of intense emotional reflection . " Pitchfork Media 's Tom Breihan felt that it " works best when Jay and Kanye are just talking about how great they are , " adding that " Kanye is this album 's obvious guiding force ... He displays levels of unequaled audacity . " Claire Suddath of Time called it " a beautifully decadent album by two of hip-hop 's finest artists ? men with a lot of things to say and a lot of money to spend . " Neil McCormick of The

Daily Telegraph praised West's "attention to detail" and found their "wit and absurdity [ ... ] entirely suited to the epic scale of productions." Kitty Empire of The Observer stated, "Some find this sort of branded gloating distasteful, but at their best both rappers can still make you laugh."

Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times found its production "captivating", despite "a relative lack of structural variety within the songs," and called the album "a cocksure, fiery, smart, if problematic, collaboration that showcases the pair's distinct lyrical skills." Julian Benbow of The Boston Globe observed "an undeniable synergy that they embraced for this project." Slant Magazine's Matthew Cole praised West's "powerhouse production" and called it an album "that requires you to tolerate the artists' self @-@ mythologizing and put up with their sometimes awkward attempts at experimentation." Despite noting a "lack of thematic consistency," David Amidon of PopMatters commended "the entire conceit of the album's framework" and added that it "succeeds [ ... ] in giving us both sides of both artists: the braggadocio and the social consciousness in nearly equal measure." Allmusic editor Andy Kellman called it "an audacious spectacle of vacuous pomposity as well as one of tremendous lyrical depth."

In a mixed review, Andy Gill of The Independent found their rapping "pretty mediocre" and stated, "Too often here their complacent, back @-@ slapping laxity leaves tracks floundering." Chicago Tribune writer Greg Kot criticized Jay @-@ Z and West's "self @-@ regard", writing that "they urge listeners to 'watch the throne,' and gaze in awe on their good fortune." Jody Rosen of Rolling Stone felt that "on a record this ambitious, this sonically bold, it's a shame two of music's greatest storytellers don't extend their gaze beyond their own luxe lives." Rob Harvilla of Spin commented that "fame and wealth and pissed greatness [ ... ] permeate [s] everything" and called the album "garish and glorious, exquisite and exasperating." Jon Caramanica of The New York Times wrote that "as a whole it's not totally legible; there are too many ideas ... an album with several phenomenal moments, even if it doesn't quite add up to a phenomenal album." Sasha Frere @-@ Jones of The New Yorker stated, "Weed the album down to a healthy ten, and [it] doesn't become either classic or coherent, but it does work as an entertaining document of two wildly creative, not particularly wound @-@ up friends."

== = Accolades == =

Watch the Throne was one of the top @-@ ranked albums in year @-@ end lists by music critics and publications. Q ranked the album number six in its list of the Top 50 Albums of 2011. Rolling Stone named it the second @-@ best album in its year @-@ end list, commenting that "What could have been a crash @-@ and @-@ burn anticlimax turned out to be as fun as any record in a dog's age. From the cinematic 'No Church in the Wild' to the Stax @-@ soul update 'Otis,' Throne testifies to Kanye West's talent for beats both iconoclastic and pop @-@ savvy." Claire Suddath of Time ranked it number three on her top @-@ 10 albums list and called it "a beautifully decadent album." Chris Richards of The Washington Post ranked it number two on his list and stated, "Instead of blushing over their embarrassment of riches, pop's most intriguing partnership delivered a self @-@ congratulatory opus that was adventurous enough to remind us that they're rap visionaries first, 1 percent bazillionaires second. The A.V. Club ranked it number nine on its year @-@ end list, commenting that "Watch The Throne thrives on the bristling tension between Kanye's live @-@ wire energy and rule @-@ breaking abandon, and Jay @-@ Z's innate cautiousness. It's an album of the moment: a point underlined by the presence of Frank Ocean on two tracks: yet it has the substance to endure." Stereogum placed Watch the Throne at number 10 on its list of the "Top 50 albums of 2011" while Pitchfork Media placed the album at number 21 on its list. In 2012, Complex named the album one of the classic albums of the last decade. In January 2015, the album was placed at number 8 on Billboard's list of "The 20 Best Albums of the 2010s (So Far)".

Watch the Throne was nominated for Grammy Awards for Best Rap Album and Best Recording Package, presented at the 54th Grammy Awards in 2012. It lost the award to West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy, which took home three of the awards for which it was nominated. The song "Otis" was nominated for Best Rap Performance and Best Rap Song, winning the former. "Otis"

lost the latter award to West 's Twisted Fantasy single " All of the Lights " . At the 55th Grammy Awards in 2013 , the album received three additional nominations , with the song " Niggas in Paris " winning awards for Best Rap Performance and Best Rap Song , and " No Church in the Wild " winning Best Rap / Sung Collaboration .

= = Commercial performance = =

The album debuted at number one on the US Billboard 200 chart , with first @-@ week sales of 436 @,@ 000 copies in the United States . It serves as Jay @-@ Z 's 12th number @-@ one album and West 's fifth number @-@ one album in the US . Its debut week serves as the second highest debut week of 2011 , while its first week digital sales of 321 @,@ 000 downloads serve as the second highest one @-@ week sales tally in digital history . Watch the Throne had the biggest one @-@ week digital tally ever for a rap album and broke the United States iTunes Store 's one @-@ week sales record when it sold nearly 290 @,@ 000 downloads in the first week via the retailer . It reached number one on Billboard 's Top R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Albums and Top Rap Albums charts . The album remained at number one on the Billboard 200 and sold 177 @,@ 000 copies in its second week . It sold 94 @,@ 000 copies in its third week . In its fourth week , the album sold 80 @,@ 000 copies . On September 15 , 2011 , Watch the Throne was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) , for shipments of one million copies in the US . As of July 2013 , it has sold 1 @,@ 573 @,@ 000 copies , according to Nielsen SoundScan .

In Canada , it debuted at number one on the Canadian Albums Chart , selling 25 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . In its second week , it remained at number one on the chart and sold 15 @,@ 900 copies . In addition , Watch the Throne peaked at number one on the Australian Urban Albums Chart , the Norwegian Albums Chart , the Swiss Albums Chart and on the UK R & B Albums Chart . By September 2011 , the album had shipped 35 @,@ 000 copies in Australia . The album peaked at number two on the Australian Albums Chart , the German Albums Chart the Danish Albums Chart , and at number three on both the Scottish Albums Chart and the UK Albums Chart . It debuted within the top 10 on the Belgian Albums Chart , the Dutch Albums Chart , the French Albums Chart , the Irish Albums Chart , the Russian Albums Chart and the New Zealand Albums Chart .

= = Track listing = =

^ [ a ] signifies a co @-@ producer .

^ [ b ] signifies an additional producer .

^ [ c ] signifies an additional vocal producer .

Sample credits

" No Church in the Wild " contains samples from " K @-@ Scope " performed by Phil Manzanera , " Sunshine Help Me " performed by Spooky Tooth and " Don 't Tell a Lie About Me and I Won 't Tell the Truth About You " performed by James Brown .

" Niggas in Paris " contains samples from the Rev. W.A. Donaldson recording " Baptizing Scene " and dialogue between Will Ferrell and Jon Heder from the film Blades of Glory .

" Otis " contains samples from " Try a Little Tenderness " performed by Otis Redding , " Don 't Tell a Lie About Me and I Won 't Tell the Truth About You " performed by James Brown and " Top Billin ' " performed by Audio Two .

" Gotta Have It " contains samples from " Don 't Tell a Lie About Me and I Won 't Tell the Truth About You " , " People Get Up and Drive Your Funky Soul " and " My Thang " performed by James Brown .

" New Day " contains samples from " Feeling Good " performed by Nina Simone .

" That 's My Bitch " contains samples from " Get Up , Get Into It , Get Involved " performed by James Brown and " Apache " performed by Incredible Bongo Band .

" Who Gon Stop Me " contains samples from " I Can 't Stop " performed by Flux Pavilion .

" Murder to Excellence " contains samples from " La La La " performed by Indiggo Twins and " Celie Shaves Mr. / Scarification " performed by Quincy Jones .



" Why I Love You " contains samples from " I Love You So " performed by Cassius .

" Primetime " contains samples from " Action " performed by Orange Krush .

" The Joy " contains samples from " The Makings of You ( Live ) " performed by Curtis Mayfield and

" Different Strokes " performed by Syl Johnson .

The interlude on each of these track was found , after " No Church in the Wild " , " New Day " and " Welcome to the Jungle " , as well as before " Illest Motherfucker Alive " contains samples from " Tristessa " performed by Orchestra Njervudarov .

Additional notes

" Lift Off " features additional vocals by Seal , Mr Hudson , Don Jazzy , Bankulli and Ricardo Lewis .

" Gotta Have It " features additional vocals by Kid Cudi .

" That 's My Bitch " features additional vocals by Elly Jackson , Connie Mitchell and Justin Vernon .

" Welcome to the Jungle " features additional vocals by Swizz Beatz and Acapella Soul .

" Who Gon Stop Me " features additional vocals by Mr Hudson , Swizz Beatz and Verse Simmonds

" Murder to Excellence " features additional vocals by Kid Cudi .

" Illest Motherfucker Alive " features additional vocals by Kid Cudi , Bankulli and Aude Cardona .

" H ? A ? M " features additional vocals by Aude Cardona and Jacob Lewis Smith .

" The Joy " features additional vocals by Kid Cudi , Charlie Wilson and Pete Rock .

= = Personnel = =

Credits for Watch the Throne adapted from liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =