

# Run This Town

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**"Run This Town"** is a song by American rapper Jay-Z. The song also features Kanye West and Rihanna. It was written by the performing trio, with assistance from Ernest Wilson and Jeff Bhasker. Production of the track was made by West and Wilson (also known as "No I.D.").<sup>[1]</sup> "Run This Town" was released as the second single from Jay-Z's eleventh studio album *The Blueprint 3*, and is used as the theme song of *Battlefield 4*.<sup>[2]</sup>

"Run This Town" received mixed reviews from music critics; some praised what each member of the trio brought to the track, whilst others thought that Kanye West and Rihanna outperformed Jay-Z. The song was a commercial success, reaching number two on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and topping the charts in the United Kingdom. It additionally made top ten chartings in ten other countries including in Australia, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

"Run This Town" won Best Rap Song and Best Rap/Sung Collaboration at the 52nd Annual Grammy Awards. The song's accompanying music video, directed by Anthony Mandler, depicts the trio in a post-apocalyptic environment, featuring scenes involving angry protesters surrounding them. "Run This Town" was performed by Jay-Z, West, and Rihanna on the series premiere of *The Jay Leno Show* in the United States.<sup>[3]</sup><sup>[4]</sup>

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### "Run This Town"



Single by Jay-Z featuring Kanye West and Rihanna

from the album *The Blueprint 3*

<b>Released</b>	July 24, 2009
<b>Format</b>	Digital download
<b>Recorded</b>	2009
	Avex Honolulu Studios (Honolulu, Hawaii)
	Roc The Mic Studios (New York City, New York)
	Westlake Recording Studios (Los Angeles, California)
<b>Genre</b>	Hip hop · R&B
<b>Length</b>	4:27 (album version)
<b>Label</b>	Roc Nation · Atlantic
<b>Songwriter(s)</b>	Shawn Carter · Kanye West · Robyn Fenty · Ernest Wilson · Jeff Bhasker
<b>Producer(s)</b>	West · No I.D.

#### Jay-Z singles chronology

"D.O.A. (Death of Auto-Tune)" (2009)	<b>"Run This Town"</b> (2009)	"Empire State of Mind" (2009)
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#### Kanye West singles chronology

"Make Her Say" (2009)	<b>"Run This Town"</b> (2009)	"Maybach Music 2" (2009)
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# Background



Rihanna singles chronology		
"Rehab" (2008)	<b>"Run This Town"</b> (2009)	"Russian Roulette" (2009)

"Run This Town" samples 1970s

Greek band The 4 Levels of Existence's song "Someday in Athens", appearing at the 1:02 mark, and lasting thereafter.<sup>[5]</sup> The second official single from the album, *The Blueprint 3* was originally planned to be "Off That" featuring Drake but "Run This Town" was decided upon instead. Jay-Z confirmed the release in an interview with Tim Westwood, saying, "We basically run this town. It's myself, Rihanna and Kanye. It's pretty much it."<sup>[6]</sup> The song made its radio debut on July 24, 2009 at 9:11am to coincide with the album's release date, September 11, 2009.<sup>[7]</sup> "Run This Town" was officially released to urban radios in the United States on August 9, 2009<sup>[8]</sup> and was released via iTunes worldwide two days later

on August 11. The CD single release followed on August 31, 2009 in the UK.<sup>[9]</sup> Rihanna's contribution was her first musical appearance following her February 8 altercation with her ex-boyfriend Chris Brown, earlier that year.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Reception

### Critical reception

"Run This Town" received mixed reviews from music critics. Following the leak of the song, Tom Breihan, *Pitchfork* gave a positive review. "The new Jay-Z/Kanye West/Rihanna track from 'The Blueprint 3', leaked this morning, and it bangs. Jay's 'D.O.A. (Death of Auto-Tune)' left the impression that The Blueprint 3 might be a cantankerous grumpy-old-man rap album, but 'Run This Town' totally obliterates that. Thanks to a molten motivational Rihanna chorus, it's pop-friendly as hell, without compromising Jay's fundamental hardness. And Jay is actually rapping like he cares, something he's only done intermittently over the last few years. Still, Kanye gets the hottest line on the song: 'What you think I rap for, to push a fuckin' RAV 4?'"<sup>[11]</sup> Following the album's release, Pitchfork made another review of the song, again praising the track. "There's something for everybody: Jay [-Z] sounds engaged in a way he rarely has since unretiring, Rihanna coos those "ay ay"s the radio loves, and Kanye West, as you may have read, once again upstages the guy he's producing. Rihanna's hook may not be Auto-Tune'd, but it's definitely autopilot."<sup>[12]</sup>

About.com felt that Jay-Z lacked presence, writing, "It looks like someone finally got tired of being bullied by 'Big Brother'. Roc Nation dropped the ball on the song credit though; it was supposed to read 'Kanye West Featuring Rihanna,' because 'Ye murdered Jay on his own track. But that's not saying much because Jay was running this race on one foot. In other words, Kanye didn't win, Jay lost'."<sup>[13]</sup> Digital Spy gave a mixed review of the song. "Boasting three of the biggest stars from the worlds of hip-hop and R&B, 'Run This Town' was never going to be a flop, but neither is it a roaring success. Kanye's slick rapping ("Reebok baby, you need to try some new things, have you ever had shoes without shoestrings?") and Rihanna's "hey-hey" chorus hook make Jay-Z seem surplus to requirements, which surely can't have been the aim. The chaotic military march beats are impressive – and hats off to Jigga for snubbing Auto-Tune – but this track still doesn't seem fitting of an artist considered a groundbreaking rap legend."<sup>[14]</sup>

## Accolades

Most notably, "Run This Town" was nominated for Best Rap Song and Best Rap/Sung Collaboration at the 52nd Grammy Awards in 2010. It eventually won both awards, marking Jay-Z's tenth, Kanye West's fourteenth, and Rihanna's third win at the ceremony awards in total. The song also managed to win an Emmy Award for 'Outstanding Music Composition/Direction/Lyrics', during Super Bowl XLIV.<sup>[15]</sup>

Year	Ceremony	Award	Result
2010	52nd Grammy Awards <sup>[16]</sup>	Best Rap/Sung Collaboration	Won
		Best Rap Song	Won
2010	BET Hip-Hop Awards <sup>[17]</sup>	Best Hip-Hop Video	Nominated
	International Dance Music Awards <sup>[18]</sup>	Best Hip-Hop Dance Track	Nominated
	People's Choice Awards <sup>[19]</sup>	Favourite Music Collaboration	Won

## Chart performance

"Run This Town" entered the *Billboard* Hot 100 at number 88. Following its digital release and debut at number three on the Digital Songs chart, it soared from number 66 to three in its third week on the Hot 100 for the week ending August 16, 2009.<sup>[20]</sup> The song eventually peaked at number two behind The Black Eyed Peas I Gotta Feeling, marking Jay-Z's second-highest charting song of his career as a lead artist. "Run This Town" reached number one on the Rap Songs chart on the date issued September 26, 2009, climbing from number four the previous week.<sup>[21]</sup> It remained atop the chart for seven consecutive weeks.<sup>[22]</sup> It also made an appearance on the R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart at number three.<sup>[22]</sup> Despite its genre of hip hop and R&B, the song managed to debut at number 38 on the Pop Songs chart on the issue dated September 12, 2009.<sup>[23]</sup> It eventually reached the top ten at number eight.<sup>[24]</sup> "Run This Town" additionally peaked at numbers two and three on the Radio Songs and Digital Songs charts.<sup>[24]</sup> As of June 2015, the song has sold 3,490,000 digital copies in the United States.<sup>[25]</sup>

In Australia, "Run This Town" entered the Australian Singles Chart at number 35 on September 6, 2009. The following week it fell to number 39 but rebounded to a new peak of 25 in its third week. It reached the top ten of the chart on October 11, 2009, and made its peak of number nine in its seventh week.<sup>[26]</sup> It has been certified Platinum by the Australian Recording Industry Association, denoting sales of 70,000 copies.<sup>[27]</sup>

In New Zealand, "Run This Town" debuted at number fourteen on the New Zealand Singles Chart on September 14, 2009, climbing to number ten the following week. In its third week, it fell to number thirteen but regained its peak position for the three weeks after. In its seventh total week on the chart, it made a new peak of number nine.<sup>[28]</sup> It has received a Gold certification from the Recording Industry Association of New Zealand, for sales of 7,500 copies.<sup>[29]</sup>

In Canada, the song peaked at number six on the Canadian Hot 100.<sup>[30]</sup>

In the United Kingdom, "Run This Town" entered at number one on the UK Singles Chart on September 6, 2009 — for the week ending date September 12, 2009 — with sales of 62,000 copies.<sup>[31]</sup> The feat gave Jay-Z his first number one single in Britain as a lead artist and fourth overall, following his feature on Rihanna's "Umbrella" (2007) and his wife Beyoncé's "Déjà Vu" (2006) and "Crazy in Love" (2003). It marked the third number one

singles in that country for both Rihanna and Kanye West. For Rihanna, "Run This Town" gave her number ones one the chart in three consecutive years, following "Take a Bow" (2008) and "Umbrella"<sup>[32]</sup> and followed West's chart leaders "American Boy" featuring Estelle (2008) and "Stronger" (2007).<sup>[33][34]</sup>

Throughout the rest of Europe, the song also performed well, reaching the top five in Ireland<sup>[35]</sup> and Norway<sup>[36]</sup> and the top ten in the Czech Republic,<sup>[37]</sup> Sweden<sup>[38]</sup> and Switzerland.<sup>[39]</sup> It also reached the top twenty in Denmark<sup>[40]</sup> and Germany.<sup>[41]</sup>

## Music video

### Background

The video for "Run This Town" was directed by Anthony Mandler and was filmed on August 6, 2009 at Fort Totten Park in New York City. Mandler explained the production behind the video saying:

"There's a tone and feeling to the song, there's a militia, a march and a kind of rambunctious energy to it that, for me, I immediately wanted to tap into. I showed [Jay] some references from the classic rebellious zones of the world. We live in very orderly society in America, but when you get into Brazil, you get into the Middle East, you get into Africa, you get into Eastern Europe, when you get into places like that, there's a different sort of 'we run this town' [going on]. There's less order and more chaos. So we looked at a lot of those references, new photos and historical photos, to capture that kind of falling-apart feeling." "We wanted you to feel uneasy throughout the piece," he said. "We wanted there to be a constant layer of tension through the piece. Even in the way I shot — where the camera comes by Jay, it doesn't stop on him, it goes to Rihanna — there's kind of this chaos of revealing and covering and concealing. And things happen offscreen that you don't see. I think people are really gonna flip on this".

The video was leaked on August 19, 2009, by MTV Germany. It premiered officially on August 20 on MTV, as well other MTV channels across the world. The video was released to iTunes on August 25, 2009.

### Synopsis and reception

The music video involves crowds of protesters in masks, holding torches whilst walking. Rihanna takes a bandanna from covering her mouth and performs the intro of the song in a park area with explosions firing around her. Jay-Z then begins the second verse while in a temple-like area. Kanye West sings his verse in a cave-like area holding a torch and having a bandanna cover his face like Jay-Z and Rihanna. Throughout the video, the trio are on a stage platform with the mob of protesters previously shown surrounding them.

Daniel Kreps of *Rolling Stone* called the video, "a civilization that takes Jigga's lyrical motif of 'all black everything' very seriously." He further added, "When we first heard 'Run This Town', we pictured Jay-Z and his posse staging a siege on Manhattan, or at least going to all the VIP spots most civilians only dream about like in the "D.O.A. (Death of Autotune)" video. Instead, we're introduced to a Mad Max-like landscape full of proto-biker gear, torches, face scarves and bombed-out buildings. Jay-Z and his gang of ruffians actually look like they're on a mission to slay Auto-Tune. Also, according to the video, Rihanna is the only female to survive the apocalypse, and West's verse about Reeboks, Rav4s and girls with two bee stings seem starkly out of place in the dismal future."<sup>[42]</sup> It ranked at number eleven on BET's *Notarized: Top 100 Videos of 2009* countdown.

# Remixes and cover versions

On July 20, 2010, an orchestrated version of "Run This Town" created by E.S. Posthumus was officially released to US iTunes under the Roc Nation imprint, in its studio format. This was eventually played before Super Bowl XLIV and Nashville Predators playoff games.<sup>[43]</sup> Metalcore band Miss May I covered this song for the compilation album Punk Goes Pop 3.

Lil Wayne Freestyled Run This Town on his highly acclaimed Mixtape No Ceilings.

## Track listing

- **Digital download**<sup>[44]</sup>
  1. "Run This Town" (featuring Kanye West and Rihanna) – 4:34
- **CD single**<sup>[45]</sup>
  1. "Run This Town" (featuring Kanye West and Rihanna) – 4:34
  2. "D.O.A. (Death of Auto-Tune)" – 4:15

## Charts and certifications

### Weekly charts

### Certifications

Region	Certification	Certified units/Sales
Australia (ARIA) <sup>[27]</sup>	Platinum	70,000 <sup>^</sup>
New Zealand (RMNZ) <sup>[29]</sup>	Gold	7,500 <sup>*</sup>
United Kingdom (BPI) <sup>[68]</sup>	Gold	406,000 <sup>[69]</sup>
United States (RIAA) <sup>[70]</sup>	2× Platinum	3,490,000 <sup>[25]</sup>
*sales figures based on certification alone <sup>^</sup> shipments figures based on certification alone		

### Year-end charts

Chart (2009)	Peak position	Chart (2009)	Position
Australia (ARIA) <sup>[46]</sup>	9	Australia (ARIA) <sup>[71]</sup>	60
Austria (Ö3 Austria Top 40) <sup>[47]</sup>	29	Hungary (Rádiós Top 40) <sup>[72]</sup>	126
Belgium (Ultratop 50 Flanders) <sup>[48]</sup>	28	Switzerland (Schweizer Hitparade) <sup>[73]</sup>	84
Belgium (Ultratop 50 Wallonia) <sup>[49]</sup>	32	UK Singles (Official Charts Company) <sup>[74]</sup>	60
Canada (Canadian Hot 100) <sup>[50]</sup>	6	US <i>Billboard</i> Hot 100 <sup>[75]</sup>	31
Czech Republic (IFPI) <sup>[37]</sup>	8		
Finland Download (Latauslista) <sup>[51]</sup>	19		
Denmark (Tracklisten) <sup>[52]</sup>	20		
Hungary (Rádiós Top 40) <sup>[53]</sup>	25		
Ireland (IRMA) <sup>[54]</sup>	3		
Israel (Media Forest) <sup>[55]</sup>	4		
Netherlands (Mega Single Top 100) <sup>[56]</sup>	30		
New Zealand (Recorded Music NZ) <sup>[57]</sup>	9		
Norway (VG-lista) <sup>[58]</sup>	5		
Slovakia (IFPI) <sup>[59]</sup>	33		
Sweden (Sverigetopplistan) <sup>[60]</sup>	8		
Switzerland (Schweizer Hitparade) <sup>[61]</sup>	9		
UK Singles (Official Charts Company) <sup>[62]</sup>	1		
US <i>Billboard</i> Hot 100 <sup>[63]</sup>	2		
US Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs ( <i>Billboard</i> ) <sup>[64]</sup>	3		
US Hot Rap Songs ( <i>Billboard</i> ) <sup>[65]</sup>	1		
US Mainstream Top 40 ( <i>Billboard</i> ) <sup>[66]</sup>	8		
US Rhythmic ( <i>Billboard</i> ) <sup>[67]</sup>	1		

## Release history

Country	Date	Format	Label
United States	July 24, 2009	Radio premiere	Atlantic Records
United States <sup>[8]</sup>	August 9, 2009	Urban radio	
Australia <sup>[76]</sup>	August 10, 2009	Digital download	
Austria <sup>[77]</sup>			
Belgium <sup>[78]</sup>			
Brazil <sup>[79]</sup>			
Canada <sup>[80]</sup>			
Denmark <sup>[81]</sup>			
Finland <sup>[82]</sup>			
France <sup>[83]</sup>			
Germany <sup>[84]</sup>			
Ireland <sup>[85]</sup>			
Italy <sup>[86]</sup>			
Mexico <sup>[87]</sup>			
Netherlands <sup>[88]</sup>			
New Zealand <sup>[89]</sup>			
Norway <sup>[90]</sup>			
Sweden <sup>[91]</sup>			
Switzerland <sup>[92]</sup>			
United Kingdom <sup>[93]</sup>			
United States <sup>[94]</sup>			
United Kingdom <sup>[9]</sup>	August 31, 2009	CD single	
Germany <sup>[95]</sup>	September 9, 2009		

## Usage in media

"Run this Town" has been used in video games, such as NBA 2K13 (whose music always featured Jay-Z) and the teaser for Battlefield 4. It was to be included in coverage of *Thursday Night Football* on CBS and the NFL Network in 2014, however, it was pulled from the opening segment in the first broadcast in the wake of a domestic violence controversy involving NFL player Ray Rice.<sup>[96][97]</sup> After Rihanna took to Twitter to complain, the song was removed from further games.<sup>[98]</sup>

## References

- Herrera, Monica (2009-08-08). "Run This Town" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090814164611/http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/music-reviews/run-this-town-1003999097.story>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Archived from the original (<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/music-reviews/run-this-town-1003999097.story>) on August 14, 2009. Retrieved 2009-08-09.