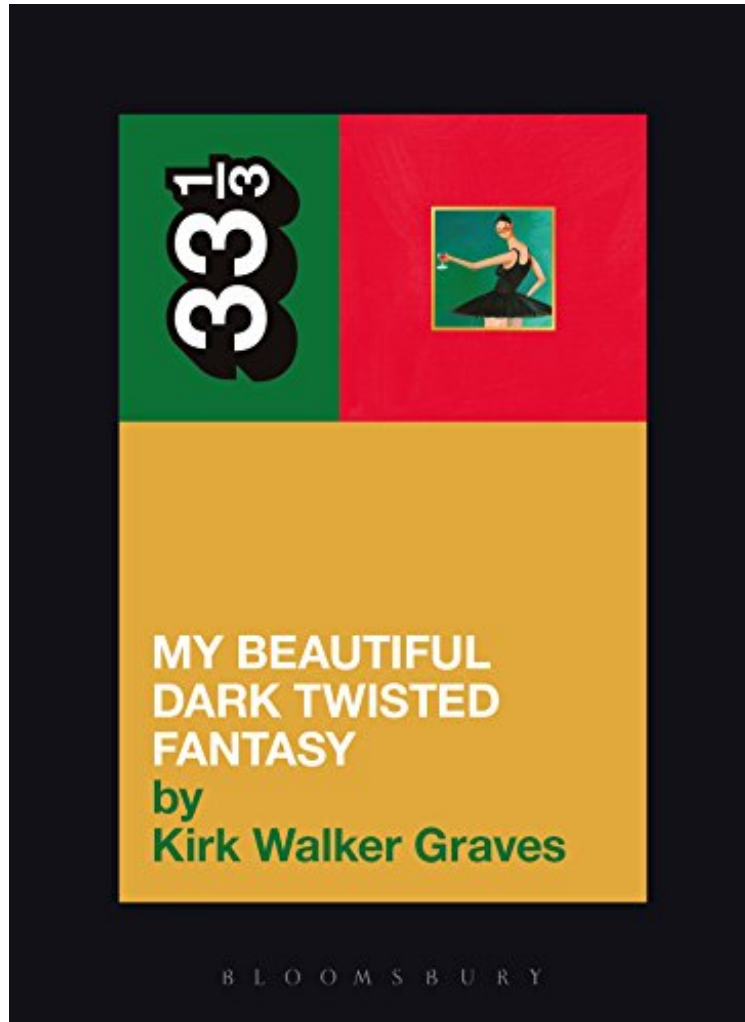


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Kirk Walker Graves

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Kirk Walker Graves : Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (33 1/3) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (33 1/3):

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Generally every bad review of a 33 1/3 book starts out with ...By Customer Generally every bad review of a 33 1/3 book starts out with a sentiment along the lines of "this is very different work than the other books in the 33 1/3 series" - a point which probably proves that readers shouldn't expect a singular thing from a 33 1/3 title, a claim I think few reasonable readers of the series would dispute. All that to say, this is a very different work than the other books in the 33 1/3 series. Kirk Walker Graves does an amazing job of pulling apart the motivations and inspirations on each track, drawing parallels to similar works in popular culture, and

even (very capably) practicing some light pop psychology on the album's creator throughout; as well as his fans and critics. End to end, the album should please any Kanye fan (or 33 1/3 fan) capable of setting aside expectations or preconceived bias before reading. Which, I'm sure Walker would agree, is a big ask when talking about Kanye. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Good thoughts, no background By Ryan Williams Interesting thoughts, but hoping for more of a behind-the-scenes look at making the album, like others in the series. 6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Smart writing, exciting perspective By ruth haley Amazing perspective! This was such an exciting read. The content shows thoughtful insight and draws incredible connections within the world of the album. With fascinating perspective, Graves writes with an effortlessly engaging style and top-notch literary merit. Wonderfully entertaining and insightful.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Kanye West created the most compelling body of pop music by an American artist during the period. Having risen from obscurity as a precocious producer through the ranks of Jay Z's Roc-A-Fella records, by the time he released *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* (MBDTF) in late 2010, West had evolved into a master collagist, an alchemist capable of transfiguring semi-obscure soul samples and indelible beats into a brash and vulnerable new art form. A look at the arc of his career, from the heady chipmunk soul exuberance of *The College Dropout* (2004) to the operatic narcissism of MBDTF, tells us about the march of pop music into the digital age and, by extension, the contradictions that define our cultural epoch. In a cloud-based and on-demand culture - a place of increasing virtualization, loneliness, and hyper-connectivity - West straddles this critical moment as what David Samuels of *The Atlantic* calls "the first true genius of the iPhone era, the Mozart of contemporary American music." In the land of taking a selfie, honing a personal brand, and publicly melting down online, Kanye West is the undisputed king. Swallowing the chaos wrought by his public persona and digesting it as a grandiose allegory of self-redemption, Kanye sublimates his narcissism to paint masterstroke after masterstroke on MBDTF, a 69-minute hymn to egotistical excess. Sampling and ventriloquizing the pop music past to tell the story of its future - very much a tale of our culture's wish for unfettered digital ubiquity - MBDTF is the album of its time, an aesthetic self-acquittal and spiritual autobiography of our era's most dynamic artist.

In Graves' book, he not only breaks down each track on the record, but he also effectively lays out the context of the album's release, explaining why Kanye is deserving of an investigative book like this one (and hopefully soon, others), and what about Mr. West makes him the biggest and most off-putting rock star on the planet. Dan Buyanovsky, *Revolt TV* Kanye West is the millennial generation incarnate, or at least that's what Kirk Walker Graves would have us all think. Throughout the 150 or so pages of this book, Graves unpacks the enigma that is Kanye West's personality and art. This book isn't so much about the musical qualities of *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* as it is about how Kanye's ego and public persona can be used to explain modern 20-somethings. Graves finds meaning in West's music that I never would have picked out on my own. His fandom is clear, but he never steps into hyperbole in his praise of the music. Though, at times, it feels like his discussion of this album can get a bit too academic, I appreciate the thought that he has put into his analysis of Kanye's work. This book is some serious next-level music criticism I never realized how much Kanye's Gucci line meant to my life before this guy told me about it. *SLUG Magazine* West may be divisive enough to not win over his detractors, but Graves' mix of fanboy marvel and critical detachment is persuasive enough to convince even detractors to give *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* a close listen. At the end of its 132 pages, Graves makes a convincing argument that this four-year-old deserves a spot in the 33 1/3 series. But perhaps more important, he does something that great criticism should do: he makes you want to listen to the album. Sean McCarthy, *PopMatters* Kanye West's fifth album is only a few years old, but that didn't stop Kirk Walker Graves from writing a book proclaiming it an instant classic that perfectly captures the spirit of its era. Graves unpacks the cultural meaning and significance of West's famous ego and chaotic public persona, and examines the music both in the context of the rapper's brilliant body of work, and how it fits into the social media era. "14 Books From 2014 Every Music Lover Needs To Read", *Buzzfeed* Listed on *NYLON*'s 'Best Music Books to Read This Summer' *NYLON* About the Author Kirk Walker Graves is a writer from Tennessee at work on his first novel. A graduate of Princeton University, he lives with his wife and son in Nashville.