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DAMN.

**10 Reasons Why Kendrick
Lamar's 'DAMN.' Album
Solidifies His Legacy**

May 2017



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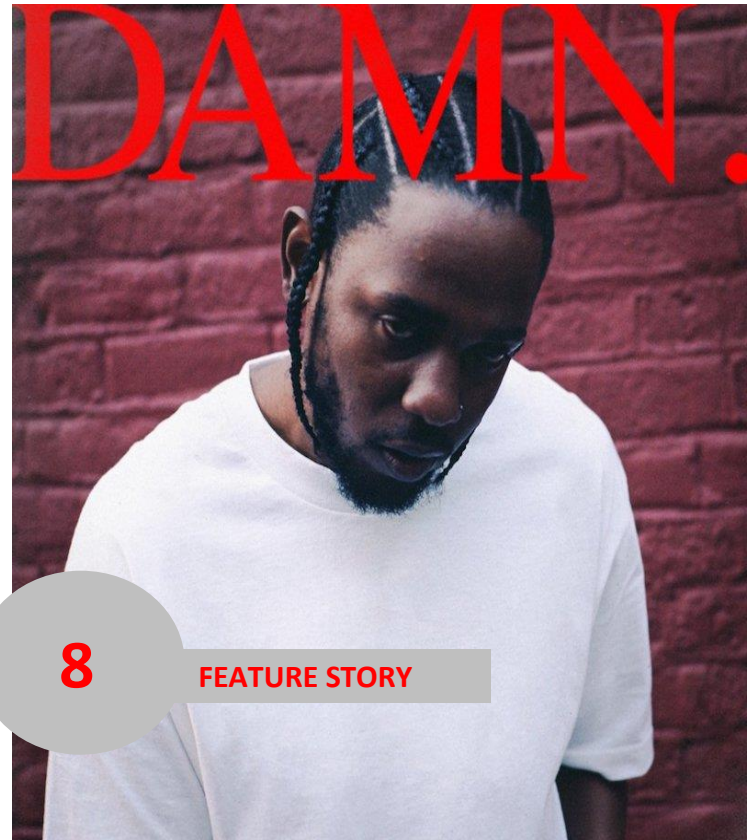
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THE FATE OF THE FURIOUS



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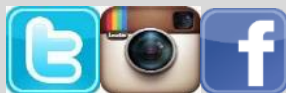


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The Undertaker goes straight from WWE to the hospital

by Jamie Gordon

The Undertaker at the Hospital for Special Surgery with his wife. WWE star The Undertaker has been seen entering a New York hospital with his wife, Michelle McCool.

The Wrestling legend — real name Mark William Calaway — was visiting the Hospital for Special Surgery amid a Wrestling Observer report that he would require hip replacement surgery.

The Undertaker, 52, retired after his loss to Roman Reigns at WrestleMania 33.

It is believed he had been delaying the operation until he quit the squared circle and is now expected to undergo a number of procedures.

Fans were left in floods of tears after he called time on a 27-year career.

The Phenom was involved in a brutal final match, a loss to Reigns that ended his Wrestlemania record at 23-2.

Modal TriggerG.N. Miller/NY Post.

After the defeat, he took off his hat, coat and MMA-style gloves and placed them in the middle of the ring — a sign that he has ended his in-ring career.

The Undertaker then made his way up the long ramp, raised his arm in the air and disappeared slowly down the trap door he came from earlier.

Alanis Morissette's Ex-Manager Gets Six Years In Prison For Stealing Millions

Jonathan Todd Schwartz stole around \$5 million from the singer to support his lavish lifestyle.

by Jillian Capewell

After admitting in January that he had embezzled millions of dollars from celebrity clients, including Alanis Morissette, Jonathan Todd Schwartz is headed to jail. The former entertainment and sports manager was sentenced Wednesday to six years in prison, CNN reported, the conclusion to a suit first leveled by Morissette in 2016. He stole around \$5 million from the Canadian singer during a time period between 2010-2014 to support a lavish lifestyle, according to court documents. Schwartz worked under the firm GSO Business Management in Los Angeles.

"Mr. Schwartz used his clients' funds as a personal ATM machine," Deirdre Fike, assistant director for the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office, told CNN. Schwartz owes approximately \$2 million in unpaid taxes. According to The Associated Press, Morissette appeared at the sentencing and said Schwartz had misled her about his net worth while secretly taking money from accounts she had left in his trust.

"He did this in a long, systematic, drawn-out and sinister manner," the singer said. Schwartz attributed an addiction to gambling as the reason for the thefts. He detailed his "double life" in an April guest column for The Hollywood Reporter.

Morissette's new money manager had discovered the embezzlement, which Schwartz would conceal by reporting withdrawals as "sundry/personal expenses," according to CNN. When GSO was contacted about the missing funds, Schwartz falsely claimed it was used to invest in the medical marijuana business.

While in court, Schwartz expressed that he alone was "responsible for this devastation," saying, "I will spend the rest of my life asking for forgiveness." Court papers list Schwartz's salary as \$1.2 million. Though prosecutors were seeking a sentence of five years in prison, U.S. District Court Judge Dolly Gee sentenced Schwartz to six, citing the "sheer audaciousness of this conduct" as the reason for additional time. Gee also ordered that Schwartz pay \$8.6 million in restitution. E! reports that Morissette and Schwartz's other clients were reimbursed by the firm or through insurance.



Happy Mother's
Day

LLEMAG INDIE SPOTLIGHT



Lillie Mae

Nashville-based singer-songwriter Lillie Mae has been performing since she was three years old. Her father, Forrest Carter Rische, fronted the traveling Forrest Carter Family Band, a country, gospel and bluegrass group that included Lillie Mae and her four siblings. Later, the Rische kids would form Jypsi, scoring a 2008 Top 40 Country hit with “I Don’t Love You Like That.”

Today, Lillie Mae stars in her own story: Her Third Man Records debut, *Forever and Then Some*, was produced by GRAMMY-winning Jack White III, who she had collaborated with on mandolin and vocals as part of his ensemble The Peacocks.

Rolling Stone had high praise for the album’s first single: “Melding unique old-time vocal breaks, a rich sonic chug that evokes some Seventies rock psychedelia and evocative storytelling, ‘Over The Hill and Through The Woods’ sets the tone for an album that, like labelmate Margo Price, uses the richness of the American musical catalog to pave new ground.”

Website - www.lilliemaemusic.com
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The New Respects

It’s easy to see why The New Respects have quickly won the loyalty of both fans and Credential Recordings, who recently signed them. (Their five-song EP, *Here Comes Trouble*, was released in March.) NPR called their music “a bright-eyed take on throwback rock ‘n’ roll, peppered with blues and soul references and calibrated for maximum pop effect.” Based in Nashville, the band is made up of twins Alexandria and Alexis Fitzgerald, brother Darius and their cousin Jasmine Mullen.



They strike a delicate balance of honoring their musical legacy—Jasmine’s mom, Nicole C. Mullen, is a popular Christian singer-songwriter—while also creating a distinctive sound characterized by tight harmonies and infectious melodies. They’ve grabbed the attention of magazines like *Nylon* and *Interview*, each of whom premiered their music videos, as well as *Rolling Stone*, who named them one of “10 New Artists You Need to Know.”

As Alexis told NPR recently, “Our music isn’t set up to be a specific idea of something, but freedom — freedom and fun and family. Wherever that will be welcome, that’s where we want to go.” And they are certainly going places: The band will be touring through the U.S. until June, stopping in cities like New York, Philadelphia and Dallas.

Website - www.thenewrespects.com/
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FEATURE STORY

‘DAMN.’ Proves Kendrick Lamar Doesn’t Make “Fun” Music, So Is Drake Better?

by Shenequa Golding @GoldingGirl617

I don't listen to new music with the rest of you, and by the "rest of you" I mean the Internet. The Internet speeds everything up and an accelerated digestion of an album that took an artist months, (sometimes years) to make will only spawn surface-level reactions. If a musician took the time to craft a sound independent of their previous work then you as the listener should at least listen, like really listen. Kendrick Lamar's third full-length studio album DAMN. will be reviewed, dissected and think-pieced from now until next year's Grammy nominations are announced and, if tradition persists, until Kendrick is robbed once again of the prestigious Album of The Year award. The lust to crown an LP a classic, most times before anyone has pressed play, is trendy and while K.Dot has solidified himself as one of hip-hop's premiere artists, he's not above thoughtful criticism.

Before the release of Drake's *Views*, the record was heralded as what would be his shining moment. *Views* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 200 earning 1.04 million equivalent album units in the week ending May 5, but let "the streets" tell it, Aubrey could've kept that.

So a few days after box-braid Kenny released *DAMN.* and just hours before Don Cheadle's rapper hands in "DNA" earned him a hood nomination for "Best Supporting Actor In A Music Video," I finally listened to the hour-long LP and found myself in the same place I always am whenever Mr. Duckworth releases new music. I was excited, intellectually enticed and needing of the time and space to listen to the new themes, Kenny's evolution as a man, and the lyrics and production he chose to showcase it all. Listening to *DAMN.* I was implored to think, which in 2017 is an accomplishment in and of itself.

Just a month prior however, Drake released *More Life*, which according to fans and critics was what they hoped *Views* was going to be. The self-described playlist, which boasted features from Skepta, Giggs, 2 Chainz and a lyrically decipherable Young Thug, earned 505,000 equivalent album units its first week (a huge debut for any artist, but half of what *Views* sold). Unsurprisingly, Kung-Fu Kenny not only met the marker, but surpassed it moving 603,000 equivalent units in the week ending April 20.

So, with the Canadian and the kid from Compton at the top of the charts, comparisons are expected despite how different both have presented themselves to be. But a debate still looms around Kendrick and whether or not he can truly consider himself one of the greatest of all time.

Could it be his production?

Nah, that's not it.

Is it his lyrics?

Really dude? You're really gonna ask that?

Then what is it that holds the title from him?

Kendrick musically isn't "fun."

Please take note to the quotation marks as I'm fully aware fun is subjective. Fun is fun, but fun can also be meaningful and while Kendrick has created meaningful music that isn't fun, Drake has made fun music that isn't meaningful. Both their weaknesses are the other man's strength.

"Fun" also shouldn't be confused with Kendrick's ability to make you feel real emotions as you blast "Alright," "DNA," "Backseat Freestyle" or attempt for the millionth time to rap word-for-word the tongue-twisting "Rigamortis."

Also let the record reflect that listening to Kendrick is an entirely different experience than seeing him perform live, so understand that to turn up with Mr. Duckworth at any festival may make this analysis null and void. But whether you're in a car, a crowd, a club or cleaning your bathroom, "Hotline Bling" "Madiba Riddim" and "Blem" feels like someone just handed you the spliff and re-upped your red cup. The vibes are abundant.

So why doesn't Kendrick create "fun" music?

Because being a black man in America—especially a dark skinned black man—isn't fun to begin with. When you grow up poor, surrounded by poverty and violence with the risk of being initiated into the prison system by way of the po-po, your art and you as an artist are different. The way you move in this world is different, the way you see the world is different and the way the world looks at you is different. Kendrick isn't a light-skinned foreigner with a dope beard from a land with free health care. He's a black motherf**ker from black a** Compton, beloved.

Kenny is the same man who weaved a heartbreaking tale of 17-year-old Keisha who used her body to make ends meet, only to be stabbed to death in a backseat. This is also the same wordsmith who admitted to being stomped out in front of his mama. Both valuable lessons in the human experience as it pertains to growing up in Compton, but neither one of them can be categorized as "fun." If his career didn't work out, Kenny's Plan B was going back to broke, as clearly described on "ELEMENT." Anthony "Top Dawg" Tiffith, TDE's founder and the man who helped change K. Dot's life, almost robbed and killed Kendrick's father at a local KFC. Ain't sh*t "fun" about that.

A debate emerged when Drake released the Mike Zombie-produced single, "Started From The Bottom." It's widely known Drizzy grew up in Toronto's 'burbs with his mother, and while Drake has come a long way many couldn't understand his experience he touted as challenging while being raised above the poverty line.

Your "bottom" and my "bottom" isn't the same and by no means is this a story about Kendrick taking the gold medal in the "Hard Knock Life" Olympics, but Kendrick remembers eating syrup sandwiches and not having a home at nine years old. There's a slight difference. What's more surprising is how has such a pro-black artist been able to achieve such success without watering his black nationalism down?

Beyonce's been in the public eye since the late 90s and the minute she created an album that spoke to the experience of

African-American women, particularly southern African-American women and presented that by way of African ancestral influences, America had a conniption. Promoting the love for a man with Jackson Five nostrils was too much.

Her sampling Malcolm X's 1962 speech about the plight of the black woman was too controversial. Owning her daddy's Alabama roots and Miss Tina's Louisiana heritage was also too taboo. Why? Because you can be a black artist, but you can't as a black artist use your art to acknowledge your blackness or uplift black people with your blackness. Kenny has been known to do both.

It's a lot easier to relate to an artist who sometimes professes to be a victim of multiple things, including his own blockbuster success. America still hasn't taken full ownership of the systemic racism that Kenny was birthed into, and alleges to not understand the anger that comes with it.

Kendrick doesn't make music for the listener who wants to escape the realities they're in, rather he makes records to help you cope with where you are. I don't always want to hear about someone fighting their inner demons or learning your pahtnahs got locked up or worse.

Sometimes, I want to whine up my waistline with a cute boy, get blem and pretend the rent isn't due. Other times I want to get drunk, and drunk text another cute boy sexually inappropriate things. Drake provides that escape more than Kendrick.

I dig Aubrey. I also f**k with Kenny and more than anything, I respect the spaces they occupy and don't want either to forcefully attempt to do what the other has mastered.

But if we're still debating Kenny's greatness and can acknowledge that Drake has solidified his own place on hip-hop's Mount Rushmore then the conversation is bigger than beats, lyrics and album sales. Just ask yourself, when's the last time mainstream anything ever gave a black a** motherf**ker in love with his blackness his just due for his greatness?

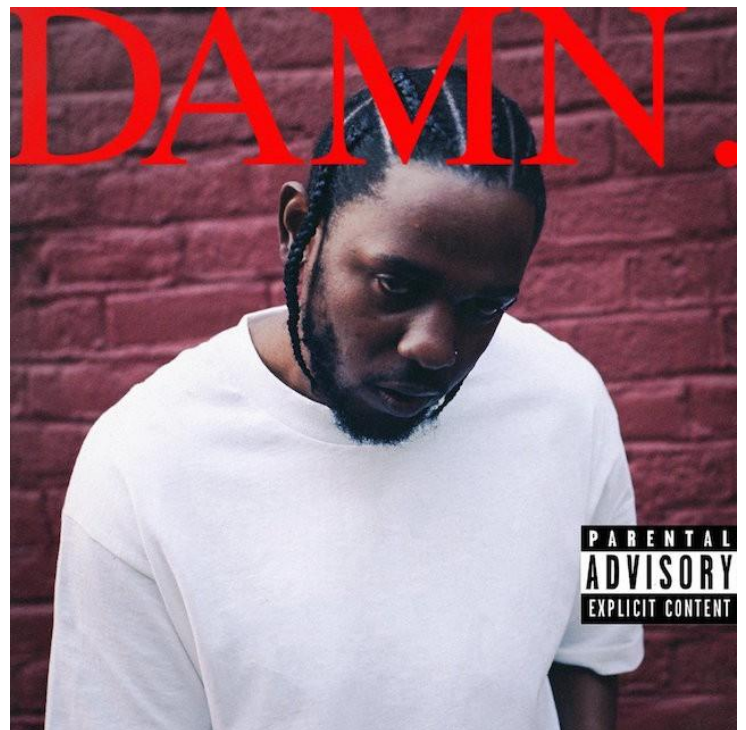
In this conversation fun means carefree, bliss, a detour from reality and responsibility. Kenny doesn't always give fans that like Drake willingly does and that's okay.

I promise, it's okay. This isn't a quantifiable argument so dissenting opinions are welcomed and expected. My mentions are always open for anyone wanting to shoot the intellectual fair one.

10 Reasons Why Kendrick Lamar's 'DAMN.' Album Solidifies His Legacy by Preezy Brown

The role of the messiah is one that's been cast upon rising rap phenoms for quite some time. Having that weight on an artist's shoulders can make their career, just as it has for legends like Rakim, Ice Cube, Nas, and The Notorious B.I.G., who all garnered instant acclaim for their preternatural abilities on the mic. When it comes to carving out a place in the history books early on in their career, there very few wordsmiths who have solidified their legacies by the age of 30. On the other hand, those same expectations can also cripple an artist and make them wilt under the pressure, as a number of artists can attest to.

At the outset of the decade, when rap fans were looking for a new messiah to help move the culture forward, one of the prime candidates was Kendrick Lamar, a promising spitter hailing from Compton, California making noise with his mixtapes, *Kendrick Lamar EP* and *Overly Dedicated*. Then, a younger Kendrick began to catch the attention of transcendent figures like Dr. Dre — who eventually took the young rapper under his wing — and the spotlight turned to his major label debut album, *good kid, m.A.A.d. city*. Deemed an instant classic by many, *good kid, m.A.A.d. city* only raised the stakes for Kendrick's sophomore album, with the threat of the infamous sophomore jinx looming over it. However, Kendrick would later take his artistry to another level with *To Pimp a Butterfly*, follow-up to his *Aftermath/Interscope* debut album.



It's not often that an artist comes along and helps to shift the paradigm and the rules that the mainstream realm plays by, but Kendrick Lamar is one of those talents. With two critically acclaimed albums under his belt, as well as a pair of platinum plaques to show for his efforts, Kendrick is now generating chatter and debate surrounding what his place within the lineage of rap will be when it's all said and done.

With the release of the rapper's conversation-dominating album, *DAMN.*, we decided to explore the factors that could influence Lamar's legacy of arguably being the greatest rap artist of his generation.

1. *DAMN.* Could Be His Third Consecutive Classic Album

When looking back at the more revered rap artists in hip-hop history, one common denominator shared by those that have earned legendary status as MCs is being the creator of multiple classic albums throughout their career. Some artists don't release their best material until late in their career, but there have been a few to come out of the gate with a streak of classic albums, with three being the magic number.

From rap groups like A Tribe Called Quest, N.W.A., and Public Enemy, to soloists like Ice Cube, Eminem, and Scarface, there have been a select group of icons that were able to solidify their legacy solely off the strength of their first few albums. Kendrick appears to be the latest to join that pantheon, as *DAMN.* builds off the momentum set by *good kid, m.A.A.d. city*, and *To Pimp a Butterfly* and completes the rapper's trifecta of pivotal LPs.

2. The Album Showcases His Ability As A Hit-Maker

Upon Kendrick Lamar and Top Dawg Entertainment inking their partnership with Aftermath/Interscope, one of the questions that surrounded the signing was whether Kendrick's hype would translate into radio spins and record sales. Although he has seen some chart success with singles like "Swimming Pools (Drank)," which peaked at No. 17 on the Billboard 200, Kendrick had yet to deliver a smash hit prior to the announcement of *DAMN.* That quickly changed when the rapper unleashed the album's lead-single, "HUMBLE."

The song, produced by Mike Will Made It, debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200. It became the first rap song to achieve such a feat since 2010, giving Kendrick his biggest song to date and serving as proof of his ability to dominate with style and substance.

3. Comparisons To Tupac Shakur

Being a great rapper on the west coast while being compared to past legends is next to unavoidable, especially with the shadows of pioneers like Ice Cube and Tupac Shakur looming large over California. While there have been a few instances of rappers being groomed to step into those shoes, only to fail or falter under those expectations, Kendrick Lamar has not only risen to the occasion but he has embraced the challenge of building his own legacy while contextualizing his own place in rap history.

After ending his *To Pimp a Butterfly* album with an imagined interview with Shakur, Kendrick makes it a point to subtly compare himself to the slain icon various times on *DAMN.*, like on "ELEMENT.," where he raps "You know careers take off, just gotta be patient/Mr. One through Five, that's the only logic/Fake my death, go to Cuba, that's the only option" — a nod to the legend of Pac. Before name-dropping his rap deity on the subsequent track, "FEAR" and boasting "I feel like this gotta be the feelin' what 'Pac was," Cornrow Kenny puts himself in rare air on *DAMN.*, and follows a blueprint laid down by former greats and current ones alike.

4. Masterful Collaborative Efforts

A sign of a true musical legend is the ability to not only secure high-profile talents for collaborative purposes but by doing so in ways that are innovative and unexpected, which Kendrick Lamar accomplishes once again on *DAMN.* Upping the ante with contributions from Rihanna, who trades verses with Kendrick on the standout cut "LOYALTY.," and rock band U2 ("XXX.," the features showcase the rapper's willingness to veer right when others go left.

5. Rare Storytelling

Storytelling is among the more vital skills when it comes to the art of emceeing. Many of the more vaunted lyricists and songwriters that have come along over the years have spun spellbinding tales that have played huge roles in securing their legacy and separating them from the pack.

Kendrick Lamar has never been shy about incorporating true-to-life testimonials, recollections, and accounts into his music, dating back to his days as a rap blog darling pre-*good kid, m.A.A.d. city*. He carries on the tradition with a few of *DAMN.*'s premier offerings. "XXX," "FEAR.," and "DUCKWORTH." are all tracks that continue to give insight into the life and times of Kendrick Lamar, while touching on the formative years that molded him into the man that he is today.

6. Transparency

An ingredient for lasting success in the world of rap is having your story become synonymous with overcoming trials, tribulations, and other adversity. Kendrick Lamar has done so while making a name for himself beyond the borders of Compton. On *DAMN.*, these aspects are continued as the rapper gives fans a glimpse into his relationships with his family, fiancée, community, and most of all, himself. As opposed to his previous two LP's, which were largely built on narratives rooted in his experience, there's no overarching theme.

However, across the album's 14 songs, Lamar gives of himself in bits in pieces, but those occasional nuggets are worth their weight in gold and get the listener more familiar with what makes K.Dot tick beyond the beats and rhymes.

7. Respect From His Peers

Rap is by far the most competitive of all musical genres but is not devoid of reverence or respect — as Kendrick Lamar has shown over the past five years. Willing to take on any rapper in his path, the brash upstart that once threw down the gauntlet against his peers on the 2013 track "Control" has also gained fans in the very figures he's focused on eclipsing.

Rappers like The Game, Busta Rhymes, P. Diddy, and others upon praising K.Dot upon giving his latest long player a spin. It's one thing to be success and another to be acclaimed, but when you combine both and possess them in spades, you can't be stopped.

8. Kendrick Lamar and The Little Homies' Creative Vision

Music videos may not hold the same weight they once did in the past, but they are still a great way to visually convey a message or inspire thought in regards to the meaning of an artist's rhyme and reason. In his career thus far, Kendrick has shown a knack for matching his lyrical content with visual themes, resulting in some of the more memorable music videos in recent memory.

He has done it with the help of collaborator Dave Free, who he teamed up with to form The Little Homies and helped co-direct a majority of his music videos. With credits for videos like "Ignorance Is Bless," "i," and "Alright" under their belt, The Little Homies have pushed the envelope once again with the accompanying music video to "HUMBLE." & "DNA.," their two latest visuals to give today's rap fans a taste of quality music in the same way that legends like Busta Rhymes, Missy Elliott, and others did before becoming icons of the culture.

9. It's An Exercise in Variety

Making one classic album is an accomplishment in itself, but being able to create multiple albums with varying moods, themes, and sounds is pure magic and has only been pulled off by the rarest of talents. Lamar has proven himself to be one of the savants able to make the impossible look easy and leave the crowd to marvel, just as listeners did after taking a listen to *DAMN.*—a stark contrast to his previous albums. While *good kid, m.A.A.d. city* was distinctly steeped in California gang culture, and *To Pimp a Butterfly* was a funk defied tale of discovery and redemption, *DAMN.* is free-flowing in nature and comes off as Kendrick's most accessible offering to date. It doesn't sacrifice the substance and guile that has helped elevate him from a mere lyrical miracle into one of the most important voices in rap today.

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10. It Stamps Him As One of The More Successful and Acclaimed Rappers of All-Time

If you look at the lists of what many consider to be the best rappers of all-time, you will find a mix of those who were able to reach commercial success, but may have sacrificed artistically to reach those heights. You'll also find a number of more respected lyricists who failed to make an impact on the mainstream and considered unsung and underrated when their body of work is compared with that of more famous rap figures. However, Kendrick Lamar is on a short list of artists who have been able to check both boxes off, putting him in the conversation with the likes of The Notorious B.I.G., Jay Z, 2Pac, Scarface, and others who have earned platinum plaques while simultaneously releasing what is considered their best work to date. Reaching platinum certification with his first two major label albums. If early reports are any indicator, *DAMN.* is set to debut atop the Billboard 200 and is expected to yield Mr. Duckworth his third consecutive platinum plaque, as well as acclaim for what many are calling another instant classic, making this another reason why his distinction as a rap legend is all but a foregone conclusion.



Review by Matt Brunson @moviematt1

General Hospital has been on the air for 54 years, and yet I daresay that not even that long-running soap opera has employed as many recurring characters as the *Fast & Furious* franchise. Many of these players have returned for ***The Fate of the Furious***, which is just good enough to keep the engine revving a while longer on a series that was previously running on fumes for the first three sequels following the 2001 original.

The eighth installment in the deathless series (hence F + 8 in the title; get it?) again finds Dom Toretto (Vin Diesel) yammering about “family” with even more frequency than any given Walton, Ingalls or Ewing. Thus, it’s shocking when Dom betrays his girlfriend Letty (Michelle Rodriguez) and the other members of his tightknit group by joining forces with Cipher (Charlize Theron), a thoroughly despicable villain who’s collecting nuclear devices to achieve her endgame of total global domination. Did I say shocking?

I meant ludicrous (not to be confused with series co-star Ludacris), since Dom’s behavior toward his loved ones really makes no sense even considering the narrative at play. Nevertheless, his turncoat status — and the desire to bring him down — allows more people to join the auto club comprised of Letty, Hobbs (Dwayne Johnson), Tej (Chris “Ludacris” Bridges), Roman (Tyrese Gibson) and Ramsey (Nathalie Emmanuel) — these newbies include a by-the-books government agent (Scott Eastwood) and the team’s former nemesis, Deckard (Jason Statham).

For a series that has largely been about men comparing the sizes of their crankshafts with each other, the homoeroticism is generally kept under wraps, though there’s some amusement in watching Hobbs and Deckard try to one-up each other with boastful threats involving what they would like to do to each other. Naturally, though, it’s the autoeroticism that takes center stage, even as the franchise continues to expand beyond its more humble roots by swiping a page or 10 from the James Bond playbook.

The Fate of the Furious wallows in inanities with about the same frequency as it delivers excitement, and, like the other two films that followed the series-best *Fast Five*, it largely succeeds as a breezy and engaging lark (even if the death of one likable character proves to be too ugly for this generally lightweight series). With the exception of one poorly CGled set-piece involving hundreds of out-of-control cars, the vehicular stunts remain eye-popping, and, with the exception of Gibson (whose Roman remains one of the worst comic-relief characters of recent vintage), the actors have yet to wear out their welcome in these familiar roles.

As expected, *The Fate of the Furious* ends with at least one unresolved plotline dancing in the wind, so look for the ninth entry — *So Nine, So Fine, So Furious?* — to hit multiplexes in 2019.

THE FATE OF THE FURIOUS

****1/2** (out of four)

DIRECTED BY F. Gary Gray

STARS Vin Diesel, Dwayne Johnson



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Stop Worrying and Enjoy the Sex

by Dan Savage

I've read your column for as long as I had access to the internet and was interested in sex, so here goes: I'm a 27-year-old male with a 42-year-old girlfriend. We met at work; we were both going through divorce. At the beginning, holy moly! My dream girl in the bedroom. We've been together for a year, and the sex is still the best I've ever had -- she says she feels the same -- but it's vanilla.

I am assertive and in control in the bedroom, which works for both of us, as she prefers to be passive and wants me to make moves or switch it up. I want to do other things, but she doesn't want to do anything anymore other than missionary-position sex. Anal, oral, watching porn together, bondage, voyeurism -- she's not up for any of it. There's always an excuse: "I'm not young like you," "I'm not flexible like you," "I have done that before and don't like it, no, no, no." Do I just suck it up and be grateful for what I have or what?

She Hates Options Totally, Desires One Way Now

She wants you to be in control and switch it up but doesn't want to do any of the things you suggest when you take control and attempt to switch things wants up. Hmm. Either you're bad at everything you've attempted other than missionary, SHOTDOWN, or she has a very limited sexual repertoire and/or actual physical limitations or health issues she hasn't divulged to you.

Considering the age difference here, and considering that this is a post-divorce rebound relationship for you both, the odds are stacked against anything long term. I don't mean this relationship is doomed to fail. What I mean is this: You'll probably be together for another year or two before parting ways. While most people would define that as a "failed relationship," anyone who's been reading my column for as long as he's been interested in sex can tell you that I don't define failure that way.

If two people are together for a time, if they enjoy each other's company (and genitals), if they part amicably and always remember each other fondly and/or remain friends, their relationship can be counted as a success -- even if both parties get out of it alive and go on to form new relationships. In the meantime, SHOTDOWN, enjoy the amazing vanilla sex for as long as it lasts -- which could be forever. Anyone who's been reading my column for as long as he's been interested in sex knows that I'm not always right.

My BF and I have been dating for two years. He's 21; I'm 20 (and female). When I noticed my boyfriend wanted his ass played with and liked being submissive, I couldn't help but wonder if something more was going on. I snooped through his browser history (not my proudest moment) and found he was looking at pictures of naked men. Then I saw he posted an ad on Craigslist under "men seeking men." He responded to one person, saying he wasn't sure if he was straight or bi, but he had a car and could drive over! The guy responded saying how about tonight, and my BF never responded to him. I confronted him. He explained it was just a fantasy he had, he's totally straight, and he was never planning on going through with it. After the dust settled, he told me he never wanted to lose me. We then went to a sex shop and bought a strap-on dildo for me to use on him, which we both really enjoy. He bought me a diamond bracelet as an apology and promised never to fuck up again. A couple months have passed, and things are great, but I still feel bothered. He loves my tits, ass, and pussy. He eats me out and initiates sex as often as I do. Just cuddling with me gets him hard. Which is why I'm even more perplexed. He doesn't like to talk about the Craigslist incident and gets upset when I bring it up. Should I leave it alone? Is my boyfriend secretly gay?

Confused And Curious

Let's review: Your boyfriend digs your tits, cuddling you makes him hard, and he loves eating your pussy. You also discovered an ad your boyfriend posted to Craigslist where he said he wasn't sure if he was bi or straight, a discovery that created a crisis in your relationship, a crisis that was resolved with a strap-on dildo and diamond bracelet.

Your boyfriend isn't "secretly gay," CAC, he's "actually bisexual." You know, like he said he was -- or said he might be (but totally is) -- in that e-mail exchange.

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At this point, I'm required to tell you that bisexuals are just as capable of honoring monogamous commitments as monosexuals, i.e., gays, lesbians, and breeders. But since the data shows that monosexuals are bad at monogamy — the data says bisexuals are too — I'm not sure why I'm required to say that or how it's supposed to be comforting. But e Even if your boyfriend never has sex with a man, CAC, even if it takes him years to drop the "totally straight" line, you should accept that he is bisexual. Pretend to be shocked when he finally comes out to you — there might be a necklace in it — and then get busy setting up your first MMF threesome.

My girlfriend and I have been together for about 18 months. We're both 29 and are in the process of creating a future together: We live together, we have a great social life, we adopted a dog. We're compatible, and I do love her. However, our sex life could be a whole lot better. I like sex to be kinky, and she likes it vanilla. She is adamant about monogamy, while I want to be monogamish. I feel strongly that this is who I am sexually and my sexual desires are not something I can change. My girlfriend thinks I'm searching for something I'll never find and says I need to work through it. Because we are so compatible in every other aspect of our relationship, should I keep trying to work past the unsatisfying sex?

Needs Advice, Want Threesomes

Divorce courts are filled to bursting with couples who made the same mistake you and your girlfriend are currently making—a mistake that gets harder to unmake with every dog you adopt or lease you sign. You're not sexually compatible, NAWT—and sexual incompatibility is a perfectly legitimate reason to end an otherwise good relationship. The importance of sexual compatibility in sexually exclusive relationships (the kind your girlfriend wants) cannot be stressed enough. Sexual compatibility is important in open and/or monogamish relationships too, of course, but there are work-arounds in an open relationship.

The gaslight bar is set so low these days that I'm going to go ahead and accuse your girlfriend of gaslighting you: There are people out there who have the kind of relationship you would like to have—it's a lie that no one has a GGG partner or a successful monogamish relationship—and I have it on good authority that many of these people are straight. You'll never find everything you want, NAWT, since no one gets everything they want. But you're too young to settle for the girlfriend you've got.

You've already made the dog mistake. Get out before you make the child mistake.

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Black Violin's persistence of vision by Bill Kopp

Against all odds, Kev Marcus and Wil B pull off a classic/hip-hop hybrid

RENAISSANCE: Wil B (from left) and Kev Marcus break stereotypes with hip-hop beats and violin strings. Colin Brennan Violinist Kevin “Kev Marcus” Sylvester likes to tell the story of the time Black Violin, the hybrid classical music/hip-hop duo he and Wilner “Wil B” Baptiste started in the mid 1990s, first appeared at the famed Apollo Theater in Harlem. The story illustrates the uphill climb they faced as well as the dogged determination Kev and Wil B needed to follow their inspired vision.

“We sent a tape to the Apollo in 2003,” Marcus recalls. “They called us back two years later!” Marcus was told that the post office box to which they had addressed the package was an old one, rarely if ever checked. But once he found it, the talent booker was impressed enough with the tape to put Black Violin on the schedule. What Kev Marcus and Wil B had created was unconventional, to say the least. Both men had studied classical violin and viola from childhood. Marcus had won a spot in a performing arts middle school, and eventually attended Florida International University on a full music scholarship.

But after graduation, the two longtime friends initially decided to go in different directions with their musical pursuits. They decided to do studio work, “like the big hip-hop producers of our day,” Marcus says. But in spare moments, their classical backgrounds crept in, and they found themselves almost effortlessly playing their classical instruments along with the beats they had worked up in the studio. Eventually, they realized they had struck upon something unique. Still, Black Violin had a tough time getting gigs in their hometown of Miami. They discovered

that explaining the concept — classical music and original songs in a classical style, all set against hip-hop beats — was challenging. But whenever they got the chance to demonstrate what they were doing, people were won over. So they employed guerrilla marketing techniques, setting up a car stereo tuned to a local rap station and playing along with whatever song came on the radio. It worked, and their fame grew locally. But taking things to the Apollo remained a long-term goal; success in that notoriously tough room could mean a higher profile. But they knew it was a risk. “This is Harlem, and they love to boo you off the stage,” Marcus says. “It’s their favorite thing to do. They wait for you to hit a bad note, and then the boos cascade from the balcony.” Adding insult to injury, a tap dancer escorts the humiliated performer offstage with a flourish.

That night in 2005, Black Violin were nearing their turn. They were the fifth act on the program, and the first four were all getting booed. “We were in the Green Room, which is right underneath the stage,” Marcus says. “We had our violins in our hands, and we were looking up at the ceiling. Dirt was falling a little bit from where the tap dancer was.”

Kev and Wil B were terrified as they headed toward the stage. But as they approached, the production manager stopped them. Sensing their fear, he told them, “I heard your sound check. You will have no problem at all.” And just like that, Kev says, their fears evaporated. “We went out there and won four straight times,” Marcus says. “We became 2005 Apollo Legends. It was a validation; that’s the hardest crowd in the world!”

Black Violin would go on to release three albums, 2015’s *Stereotypes* (Black Violin PS) is the latest, and now the duo tours the world, often scheduling additional daytime shows designed to inspire students. “Even if you’ve heard *Stereotypes*, when you see the live show, it’s going to take you someplace you couldn’t imagine,” Marcus says. “It’s about giving attention to the idea of ‘don’t judge a book by its cover.’ If someone says you can’t do something because you’re black, white, a woman, old, whatever ... that’s one more reason to prove them wrong.”



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21 Things You Didn't Know About *Nashville*

by Claire Heinichen

The Nashville cast and crew have created more than 100 episodes, and with each new episode has come new memories they will cherish forever. As we prepare for the June 1 return of the show's fifth season, we thought we'd fill you in on some of our favorite fun facts and set secrets from over the years.

Fun Facts and Secrets From the Set

1. Clare Bowen (Scarlett O'Connor) first learned how to do a Southern accent by watching American movies her pilot father would bring back to her in Australia. Her favorites were *Song of the South*, *Steel Magnolias* and *Fried Green Tomatoes*.
2. The building that houses the set for the concert stage/arena used to be a Dillard's department store warehouse.
3. Charles Esten played an original song and a Blake Shelton song when he auditioned for the role of Deacon Claybourne. He then met Hayden Panettiere in the waiting room, who had been listening to his audition and cheered for him when he walked out. He joked to her then that he would see her on the set, and a few months later, that was true!



4. Actor Tilky Jones, who played Juliette’s husband (a notoriously brief marriage) in season 1, described Hayden Panettiere as a “prankster”. She also once hosted an episode of *Punk’d*, where she played pranks on Dianna Agron, Zac Efron and Snooki.

5. The actors don’t typically know what’s coming for their character until they begin to shoot the episodes. According to Charles Esten (Deacon Claybourne), it helps them to “be in the moment.”

6. The set of Rayna’s home was built based off of a real home in Belle Meade, a Nashville neighborhood where the pilot of the show was shot. The cast and crew will still return to the real house for exterior shots. You can take an online tour of the real house [here](#).

7. The set of the Bluebird Café is an exact replica of the real cafe, and the real owner of the Bluebird is often asked to play the hostess on the show.

8. Some of the trucks the crew use to move equipment to their different sound stages are branded for the different characters, so they can also be background props when filming exterior shots when the characters are at a tour stop.

9. Jonthan Jackson’s dad was a singer and recorded a country album in Nashville.

10. Maisy Stella (Daphne Conrad) was the one who auditioned for the show, and she was auditioning for the role of the older daughter. Her sister Lennon had helped her memorize her lines and come to auditions with her, which is when the casting people met her. The Stella family then received a phone call asking if Lennon could come back and audition as well, and they changed the ages of the daughters to fit Lennon and Maisy.

11. Once Lennon and Maisy got the parts of Maddie and Daphne, they thought they wouldn’t be able to take them because they were Canadian and didn’t have the proper visas to work in the U.S. Once they posted their cover of “Call Your Girlfriend” (which they had prepared for their school talent show) to YouTube, the video went viral and the great press from it helped them to get the visas!

12. Sam Palladio’s first audition for *Nashville* was a tape he made in his bedroom at 4 a.m. He didn’t think he had much of a chance, but he thought it was worth a shot. The producers came back saying they loved him but asked him to resubmit a higher quality video.



13. Maisy was so worried about messing up her lines in season one, she remembers googling “Do people get mad when you mess up a line?”

14. After the cast got the news that ABC had cancelled the show after the fourth season, they got together with the producers and the writers to reminisce and listen to songs they had recorded for the show.

15. The crew uses curtains of high-res photos of the real city of Nashville outside of their sets, which can be seen through the windows on set.

16. Lennon and her mom Marylynn wrote the song “In Love” for Season 5 with Sarah Siskind, who co-wrote “A Life That’s Good”, which has been featured on the show several times.

17. When Jonathan Jackson auditioned for the role of Avery Barkley, he sang and played guitar on two U2 songs, “Desire” and “One.”



18. An artistic crew member drew a caricature on the exterior of the set of Scarlett and Gunnar's original house to show how many different characters had lived in the house over the course of the show.

19. It's rumored that nearly every man on the show that Juliette has slept with has been dressed with the same watch.

20. Chris Carmack auditioned for the role of Will Lexington by playing the song "City Boy" by Keb' Mo'. He also did not know that the character Will was gay at the time of the audition. Show creator Callie Khouri called him after he was offered the part to explain Will's story arc, which he was really excited about.

21. Sam Palladio (Gunnar Scott) and Clare Bowen (Scarlett O'Connor) first met in the lobby of the Hutton hotel in Nashville, where they met with Buddy Miller, the show's then executive music producer. They then went to a conference room in the hotel and immediately began rehearsing "If I Didn't Know Better." The duo recorded the song the next day, which was the first time Bowen had used a recording microphone.

Don't miss the mid-season premiere of Nashville June 1 at 9 p.m. ET/PT. For all the latest news and information, head over to the official Nashville Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and join the conversation using #NashvilleCMT.

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The Critical Difference Between Gain and Volume

By Aaron Staniulis



Let's say you're at a show or rehearsal and you turn to your amp, or perhaps your mixer, and you need to make something louder. You'll more than likely be confronted by a set of knobs or maybe even a fader that might have any of the following labels: gain, trim, level, volume, master, or a similar moniker. So which one are you supposed to reach for and when? The difference between gain and volume, in particular, confuses many people. As is my usual goal, I'll hopefully help to clear things up a little for those of you who may not fully understand what each knob accomplishes.

Gain - In general and in its simplest form (I say that because sometimes these terms get somewhat misapplied in miscellaneous circumstances), gain is the parameter for the amount that some sort of amplifier circuit is going to increase the amplitude of an input signal (amplifier, amplitude... I think I see where this is going). Usually when you're adjusting gain, you're manipulating some sort of preamp and how it's going to handle the incoming signal. *Typically, gain is the control for what comes "in" to a piece of gear.*

Volume - Volume level, or loudness, is typically manipulated by a knob or fader of some sort, and this affects the output headed from that channel of the mixer to whatever bus you've assigned it to, whether that's a group, an aux send, or the master bus. In the case of your guitar or bass amp, it's affecting the power amp level. **Typically, volume is the control for what comes "out" of a piece of gear.** Relating the two A simple and relatively visual way to think of these from a mixing perspective is that your gain is going to be your sensitivity.

Need a mic to be more "sensitive"? Turn the gain up. That being said, this is usually a "set and forget" setting. **If you're mixing via the gain knob, you're doing it wrong, save for making on-the-fly adjustments in the live environment.** Your balancing and level control should be done via the faders or knobs assigned to that function.

Another reason to not ride your gain control is that as you increase the gain, your noise floor will increase with it. This is the audible noise of a signal, usually self-noise of components in the signal chain. Ideally this noise floor will be below the threshold of hearing, but as you bring your gain up, this floor comes with it. When relating to amp settings, your gain or drive is going to control how hard that signal is hitting your preamp; this is where your "overdrive" will come from as you literally overdrive the preamp stage. **This should be adjusted for tonal purposes, and then your level or volume control should be used to increase the level of the power amp to actually bring your signal to the volume desired.** Again, doing this the other way around can bring unwanted noise into your signal.

What about gain staging?

Another term that gets kicked around is "gain staging." What does it mean? Why is it important? **Gain staging is, in its basic form, making sure that the level of signal at each part in your signal chain is adjusted or "gained" appropriately. This is more important today in the digital age than ever before.** With analog setups, overdriving the input gain often (but not always) results in that ever-so-sought-after "saturation" of the sound. (This is actually a form of distortion, but a pleasing one.) Digital is a cruel and unkind mistress; when you run out of bits to store data, the result is brutal, anharmonic clipping. While analog can be more forgiving to some extent, the practice of proper gain staging is just as critical as ever. Not enough gain earlier on in the chain, and you'll have issues with your noise floor as that noise is amplified further and further down the line. Too much, and you'll soon be living life in the red. This is another reason that you shouldn't "ride" gains, whether you're recording or mixing live: as you change gain at one part in the chain, it creates a sort of butterfly effect as you go down the line. Adjustments in perceived volume should always be made via the fader or assigned level control.

Aaron Staniulis is not only a freelance live sound and recording engineer, but also an accomplished musician, singer, and songwriter. He has spent equal time on both sides of the microphone working for and playing alongside everyone from local bar cover bands to major label recording artists, in venues stretching from tens to tens of thousands of people. Having seen both sides at all levels gives him the perfect perspective for shedding light on the "Angry Sound Guy." You can find out more about what he's up to at aaronstaniulis.com.

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