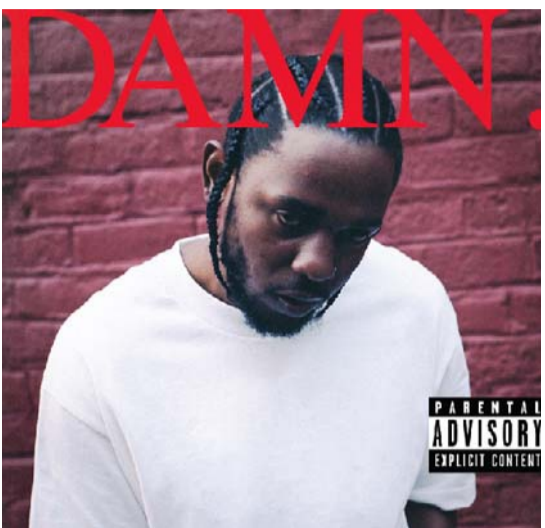


Review

Kendrick Lamar is darn good on new album



This cover image released by Interscope Records shows "DAMN" the latest release by Kendrick Lamar. — AP

Two years since the release of his Grammy Award-winning "To Pimp a Butterfly," Kendrick Lamar is back with an album as bold and declarative as its title: "DAMN." And while Lamar grapples with familiar subject matter - God, violence, survival and self-worth among them - the energy has shifted away from the jazz, funk-filled sound of his previous studio set. Sonically, that much is clear with lead single "HUMBLE," which begs repeat play, thanks in part to an irresistibly dark piano and bass-heavy beat from producer Mike WILL Made It, who also has a hand in the new album's "DNA" and U2-assisted "XXX."

The latter is one of the album's most gripping tracks, and finds Lamar on the receiving end of a call from a friend, whose only son has been shot and killed. "He was lookin' for some closure/ hopin' I can bring him closer/ to the spiritual," Lamar raps. "But I told him I can't sugarcoat the answer for you . if somebody kill my son/ that mean somebody getting killed." And, then, like a punch to the gut, Lamar adds: "Ain't no Black Power when your baby killed by a coward." The line is unexpected and, overall, "FEAR" is brave, in that it puts Lamar in a position to be criticized, just as he was for lyrics from 2015's hope-filled anthem "Alright." (On "DAMN" track "BLOOD," Lamar includes audio from a FOX news segment in which anchor Geraldo Rivera and a colleague take issue with the rapper's bars about police brutality.)

To his credit, Lamar continues to speak his mind, and his rawness is what makes "DAMN" so damn good. When Lamar raps, "I'll prolly die tryna buy weed at the apartments/ I'll prolly die tryna diffuse two homies arguin'/ I'll prolly die, 'cause that's what you do when you're seventeen," it's hard not to be moved. "DAMN" has the power to resonate, with tracks provoking thought without coming across as preachy. The set has its lighter moments, too. And guests make their contributions count, with Rihanna bringing a slinky vibe to the sexy (but not about sex) "LOYALTY." Up-and-coming singer Zacari also plays his part, teaming with Lamar, who sings his way through the pillowy soundscape of "LOVE," produced in part by longtime collaborators Sounwave and Top Dawg Entertainment label-head Anthony "Top Dawg" Tiffith.

Those two are joined by producers DJ Dahi and Bekon for the easygoing groove of "YAH," in which Lamar exhibits one of his greatest strengths: the ability to speak of higher things in one breath, then acknowledge his humanity in the next. ("And Deuteronomy say that we all been cursed/ I know He walks the Earth/ But it's money to get, b(asterisk)(ches to hit.") It's clear that Kendrick Lamar isn't perfect. But his latest set "DAMN" gets pretty close. — AP

'Groundhog Day' show will go on, star a question mark

Producers of the Broadway musical "Groundhog Day" say it will open as planned, but injured star Andy Karl's status is unclear. Karl hurt himself during a preview performance Friday, forcing the cancellation of Saturday's matinee. Understudy Andrew Call was to fill in for Karl at the Friday night performance.

In a statement Saturday, producers said the musical is scheduled to open today, with further performance information to follow. They declined to address the question of whether Karl would appear. On Instagram, Karl posted that he tweaked his knee after a "poorly landed leap frog" and intended to see a medical specialist before going back on stage. He finished Friday's performance despite the injury, with help from a cane and his fellow actors. — AP

Lady Gaga, sensual and acrobatic, debuts song at Coachella



US pop singer Lady Gaga performs on stage at the Coachella Valley Music And Arts Festival on April 15, 2017 in Indio, California. —AP/AFP photos



US pop singer Lady Gaga performs on stage.

Lady Gaga debuted a R&B-tinged love song Saturday as she headlined the Coachella festival, where the pop diva cast herself as sensual rather than sensational. The first woman in a decade to top the lineup at the premier music event, Lady Gaga unleashed an action-packed spectacle of acrobatic choreography that culminated in confetti, fireballs and fireworks on her dance anthem "Bad Romance." Gaga seized upon the spotlight to introduce a new song, "The Cure," that is built off an unadorned R&B rhythm before rising into a pop chorus with the lines, "If I can't find the cure, I'll fix you with my love."

She released the song commercially as she left Coachella in the California desert, marking her first new music since her latest album "Joanne" came out in October. Coachella offered a preview of the global tour the pop superstar will launch in August for "Joanne," an album that brought a more classic pop and even country sound to the 31-year-old artist long associated with synthpop. Gaga made clear at Coachella that her old spirit remained undiminished. On "John Wayne," one of her most country-driven songs in which she admits an attraction to rugged masculinity, Gaga paradoxically sang astride a human pyramid of her sweaty, topless and ethnically diverse crew of male dancers. Sensuality oozed throughout Gaga's set. She beckoned one dancer by grabbing his jeans in the waist, as both male and female dancers rubbed her leotard-clad body seductively. "Have you all found someone you want to sleep with yet?" she teasingly asked the 100,000-strong crowd, most of them young and many of them clad only in the bare minimum of clothing after a long day in the sun. Yet for a singer once talked about as much for her outrageous outfits as her songs, she stepped back and put the emphasis on her music-giving herself space to show off her glowing, rich voice on tracks such as "The Edge of Glory." Her biggest fashion message may have come as she played piano. She struggled to take off her sweater mid-song, in an endearing display of authenticity.

Surprise guests

Lady Gaga played her first Coachella after original headliner Beyonce canceled on doctors' orders as she expects twins. One of the most lucrative events on the global cultural calendar, Coachella takes place over back-to-back three-day weekends with identical lineups. In a Coachella hallmark, Saturday saw a slew of surprise performers-delighting fans who avidly posted to social media. The rap-

per Future, who recently made history with back-to-back albums debuting at number one on the US chart, drew cheers when he brought to stage Migos, the Atlanta trio behind the hit "Bad and Boujee." But an even bigger name soon came on-rap superstar Drake, a sometime collaborator with Future, who turned the crowd into a sea of waving arms as he performed his hit "Fake Love." Migos then crossed the lawn to make a cameo with DJ Snake, the successful but largely behind-the-scenes force behind megahits such as "Lean On." The French DJ pulled off a second surprise as Lauryn Hill walked on, singing the Fugees emblematic song "Killing Me Softly."

Non-Gaga fashion

Bon Iver, once a crowd favorite with indie folk tunes such as "Skinny Love," brought to stage the band's turn into deep experimentation in a set of loop effects and refer-

ences to numerological riddles from its latest album, "22, A Million." Frontman Justin Vernon performed in headphones at a soundboard but by the end of the set brought the crowd into a frenzy as he knelt before his sound pedals and clamped aggressively onto his electric guitar's bridge as abstract images flashed on screen.

While Lady Gaga toned down her outfits, one artist who embraced costumes was Róisín Murphy. The Irish trip-hop singer took the stage with her face covered by a mask made of interjoined dolls and later carried over her head a faceless, zebra-colored dummy. If Coachella handed out fashion awards, one could also go to frontman Will Toledo of Car Seat Headrest, the prolific indie rockers with a unique talent to work songs down to quiet and back up to intensity. The 24-year-old Toledo, long pictured as a scraggly younger, donned a tight, sky-blue suit with a black shirt and necktie. — AFP



Rappers Future (left) and Ty Dolla Sign perform on stage.

'CASH ME OUSSIDE' STAR CASHES IN AS VIRAL VILLAIN

When Barbara Ann Bregoli appeared on CBS's "Dr Phil" show in December to get advice about how to control her car-stealing teenage daughter, nobody could have predicted she would be giving birth to a villainous viral star.

In just a few months, daughter Danielle, now 14, has garnered 8.8 million Instagram followers. She has racked up brand sponsorships and become regular fodder for the tabloids with provocative poses and viral videos, despite her self-confessed penchant for stealing cars and using foul language in an accent she said she picked up "from the streets." She even has a catchphrase, "Cash me ousside, how bow dah?" (Catch me outside, how about that?) that she regularly includes in social media posts after she challenged the audience to fight her while on Dr Phil's show.

Danielle Bregoli's infamy, including her catchphrase, has drawn endorsements from brands that experts say are likely paying her thousands of dollars to post about their products, a personal line of emojis and a deal for a reality TV show. A representative for Bregoli declined requests for an interview. Attempts to reach her mother by phone were unsuccessful.

"Danielle is the first of her kind in that she rode this singular TV experience and the catchphrase and profiles and memes that ensued have built a revenue-generating business," said Jonathan Davids, chief executive officer at influencer marketing platform Influicity. Yet, viral stars who become magnets for brands looking to quickly increase eyeballs may find that it is hard to find financial longevity in being a villain on social media, said Davids and other experts. So far, Bregoli's fan base has only grown after a slew of misdeeds, including an undated home video of Bregoli and her mother in a physical altercation, which started circulating last month and has now caught the attention of her hometown police in Boynton Beach, Florida.

Bregoli has endorsed products such as clothing company FashionNova, teeth grills and weight loss drink FitTea. Brands could be paying her up to \$50,000, said Rishabh Sharma, CEO of Poletus, which provides marketing tools to brands and influencers. Los Angeles-based clothing brand PizzaSlime, helmed by creative directors Nick Santiago and Matthew Hwang, partnered with Bregoli to create a line of merchandise that featured her catchphrase. "We



just thought she was funny," Hwang said of Bregoli. Most of PizzaSlime's nine Bregoli items, including t-shirts, blankets and totes bearing her face, are sold out online. Hwang said it was unlikely they would work with Bregoli again. "We like to work with interesting ideas and



people, and once we work together, we move onto the next thing," he said.

The longevity of controversy

Bregoli is not the only star to cash in on being a rebel but if she hopes to achieve long-

term social media success, she has to evolve beyond the controversy, said Sharma. Corinne Olympios, 24, a contestant who divided opinion on the recent season of ABC reality show "The Bachelor" for tactics that included going topless, walked away from the show with more than 720,000 Instagram fans.

The Miami native is moving on from "The Bachelor" with a clothing line launched this month and plans to write a book, create a beauty line and star in her own reality show. "I'm just trying to really build my brand right now," she told Reuters. For Bregoli to outpace her 15 minutes of viral fame, she would have to embark on a coming-of-age journey and perhaps transition from a rebel without a cause to a rebel with a cause, Sharma said. One such cause could be to speak out against cyber bullying, Sharma said.

Last month, Bregoli posted an image of the barrage of negative comments and insults she received on Instagram, captioning it, "Everyone want to point the finger at me." "Danielle can still retain the rebel side, but instead of rebelling against her mother, she can rebel against some of the social injustice being done," Sharma said. — Reuters