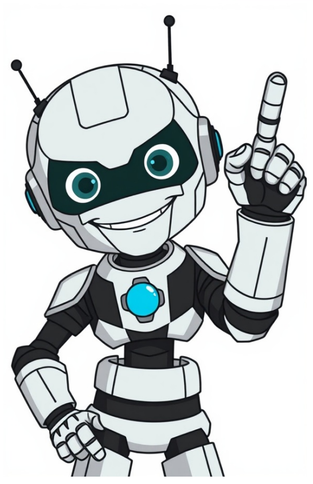
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Page 2 Page 3 [As an Amazon affiliate partner, Albumism earns commissions from qualifying purchases.] Happy 25th Anniversary to Jay-Z's fourth studio album Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter, originally released December 28, 1999. Three decades into his prolific recording career, Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter is in a rarified air. Few, if any, rappers have achieved the level of success, fame, and wealth that he has earned.Jay-Z has recorded an impressive catalogue, both artistically and commercially. He's spent time as a minority owner of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets franchise. He's helped push TIDAL, one of the major music streaming services available. He founded Roc Nation, a major entertainment umbrella that operates a record label and has its arms in music management, sports management, film, and concert promotion. And yes, he's married to arguably the biggest pop star of the current millennium. Jay-Z is indeed a business, man.But even now, as one of hip-hop's first billionaires, Jay-Z makes efforts to remind everyone that he's still the same guy that grew up in Brooklyn's Marcy Projects. He's rarely photographed without wearing a Yankee hat over his mop of short dreads. The message is always clear: even if he's not on the corners in Brooklyn pushing weight, he's never forgotten where he came from. Jay-Z found himself at a similar crossroads two decades ago, in the wake of In My Lifetime Vol. 2: Hard Knock Life (1998), which is still the most successful album of his career. The album is certified five times platinum and "Hard Knock Life" and "Can I Get a…" remain two of his most iconic singles. But with all the success that Vol. 2 brought him, it was clearly important for Jay to remind people that he wasn't going to let his fame change him. His fourth full-length, Vol. 3… Life and Times of S. Carter represents these sentiments. Released 25 years ago, Jay used the album to show that while his music might be played on the radio and in the clubs, his success was still defined on his own terms.Even with early bootlegging of the album (more on that later), Vol. 3 was a massive commercial success, ultimately garnering a triple platinum certification. Its release was part of and end-of-year/decade/century/millennium push by Def Jam Records. In back-to-back weeks, they dropped DMX's …And Then There Was X and Vol. 3. Word has it that this was a coordinated effort by the label to end the 20th century and begin the 21st with #1 charting albums. The plan paid off, and Jay's release remains one of the strongest of his career. Jay-Z is arguably the best at finding a way to walk the line between street hip-hop champion and widespread accessibility. He found a way to navigate his career in such a way that he was able to make his core audience and the wider population enjoy his music. He had the ability to bring out the best in commercially friendly producers and "real" hip-hop icons with his rhymes. Watch the Official Videos: For the most part, Vol. 3 is at its strongest when Jigga keeps things grimy. "So Ghetto" functions as Jay-Z's mission statement for the album. Produced by DJ Premier, it's Jay's dissertation on how he'll remain "street" to the end of his days, rocking a doo-rag, talking shit, and "bringing guns to the GRAMMY's." Hova oozes confidence here, as his cadence mimics the stuttering piano and guitar sample from Ennio Morricone's soundtrack to Le Ruffian. He raps, "I spit that murder-murder-murderous every time a verbalist / Iller than Verbal Kint is or O-Dog in Menace / I'm ill, start to finish, I rip apart contenders." Sadly, to this day, this is the last time a Preemo-produced track appeared on one of Jay's albums. Jay flexes his true school bona fides by working with the legendary DJ Clue on a pair of tracks. Clue had gone from mixtape DJ to producer in the late '90s, and had recently released his first official album, The Professional (1998). Here he produces "Dope Man," an underrated track where Jigga is put on "trial" for spearheading the Roc-A-Fella movement.Clue also puts together "Pop 4 Roc," a catchy posse cut where Jay is joined by Beanie Sigel, Amil, and Memphis Bleek. All four emcees brag about their flashy lifestyles over an infectious electric guitar sample. The track would serve as a preview to The Dynasty: Roc La Familia (2000) which Jay would release the following year as a way to showcases the talents of emcees and producers under the Roc-A-Fella umbrella.Sigel and Amil join Jay on Vol. 3's first single, "Do It Again." It's one of Jigga's best club tracks, a bouncy yet rugged anthem produced by Rockwilder. Sigel first explains how he rolls into the club, soaking up attention, and holding court. Hova shines on his verse, where he lambasts studio gangsters and unoriginal rappers. "Don't talk to me about 'Emcees got skills,'" he proclaims. "He's all right, but he's not real." The album's more overtly commercial tracks are also winners. Jay-Z helped put Swizz Beatz on the map with "Money, Cash, Hoes," a single on Vol. 2. The beat-maker, who spent his late '90/early '00s heyday associated with the Ruff Ryders collective, joins Jay-Z to produce three tracks on Vol. 3. The best of the trio is "Things That You Do" featuring Mariah Carey. The track should and could have been easily-digestible commercial pap, but instead, Jay flows smooth over low-key flute and string simples, while Carey contributes subdued vocals that complement the beat.Although not released as an official single, "Watch Me" seems like it could have been another of the album's more radio-friendly tracks, as Jay teams up with Dr. Dre, who appears on the song's chorus. Produced by DJ Irv, "Watch Me" definitely channels Dre's late '90s musical aesthetic, with its dirge-like keys and haunting strings. Much like Dre on "The Watcher" from his own 2001 (released just weeks earlier), Jay rhymes from the perspective of an O.G. who's already seen and done it all, pledging to remain true to himself for the rest of his career. "Still with the same soldiers," he raps. "Still getting brain and it's plain ain't a thing gonna change Hova."Vol. 3 also features extensive production from Timbaland, who was in his prime during the late '90s. The Virginia producer has always been best producing for R&B artists (such as Aaliyah and Ginuwine), but he created some of his masterpieces for Jay-Z on Vol. 3."Big Pimpin'," Vol. 3's most successful single, samples liberally from Hossam Ramzy's version of the belly-dance standard "Khosara Khosara." The song is also notable for introducing the hip-hop audience at large to Bun-B and Pimp-C of U.G.K. Although the Port Arthur, Texas duo had already built a strong following in the south and was signed to Jive Records, "Big Pimpin'" helped turn them into household names, earning them acclaim for their distinct and memorable styles and deliveries. Enjoying this article? Click/tap on the album covers to explore more about Jay-Z: Timbaland provides the "East Coast" sounding track with "Come and Get Me," one of the best songs on Vol. 3. For a song released in the winter, Jay-Z transforms the track into a six-minute ode to late summer grittiness, as he reminds anyone who wants to test him to not be fooled by the platinum chain because "S Dot Carter turn rappers into martyrs." After a well-executed beat switch, the track adopts the tone of a '70s Blaxsploitation flick, as Jay details his upbringing. "Imagine being skinny growing up around brolic cats," he raps. "The quiet assassin, demeanor of them college cats."Jay overtly wrestles with who he started off as versus who he's become on the soulful "There's Been a Murder." Jigga is at his most contemplative here, as he considers how to properly honor his roots, with the Shawn Carter side of his personality considering "killing" his Jay-Z persona so he can get back to a life of hustling. He raps, "See my life is like a see-saw / And until I move this weight it's going to keep me to the floor / Travel with me through my deep thoughts / Y'all can't learn Jigga by the shit y'all be reading in The Source."Vol. 3. is one of the last albums where Jay-Z details his street credibility. Much of this may have to do with events that took place just weeks before Vol. 3's release. Much to Jay's chagrin, a bootleg version of the album became available nearly a month before its official release date. The story goes that Jay was told that his friend and colleague Lance "Un" Rivera was the source of the leak. On December 2, 1999, he went to the Kit Kat Club, which was playing host to the album release party of Q-Tip's debut solo LP Amplified (1999), to confront Rivera. A melee ensued, and Rivera was stabbed, resulting in Jay-'s arrest and felony assault charge. There was a distinct possibility that he would face up to ten years in prison. Thanks to astute maneuvering by his attorney, Jay ended up taking a plea deal and was sentenced to three years of probation. Just last year, Rivera clarified that Jay-Z was not the assailant that evening back in 1999.In the episode's aftermath, a presumably changed Jay-Z spent most of the next two decades rapping primarily about his fame and status. There are a few exceptions, like the American Gangster (2007) concept album, but Vol. 3 arguably represents the end of his tales as a street soldier, as Jay-Z ended up killing Shawn Carter the hustler. Editor's note: this anniversary tribute was originally published in 2019 and has since been edited for accuracy and timeliness. 1999 studio album by Jay-ZVol. 3... Life and Times of S. CarterStudio album by Jay-ZReleasedDecember 28, 1999Recorded1999Studio Baseline Studios (New York City) The Hit Factory (New York City) D&D Studios (New York City) Sony Music Studios (New York City) Manhattan Center Studio (New York City) Quad Studios (New York City) GenreHip-hopLength71:05LabelRoc-A-FellaDef JamProducerShawn Carter (exec.)Damon Dash (also exec.)Kareem "Biggs" Burke (also exec.)Darrell "Digga" BranchClueDJ PremierDUROIrv GottiK RobLil RobChauncey MahanP. SkamRockwilderRussell "Russ" HowardSean "SAF" FrancisSam SneedSwizz BeatzTimbalandLance RiveraJay-Z chronology Vol. 2... Hard Knock Life(1998) Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter(1999) The Dynasty: Roc La Familia(2000) Singles from Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter "Do It Again (Put Ya Hands Up)"Released: December 14, 1999 "Things That U Do"Released: January 11, 2000 "Anything"Released: February 15, 2000 "Big Pimpin'"Released: April 11, 2000 Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter is the fourth studio album by American rapper Jay-Z. It was released on December 28, 1999, by Roc-A-Fella Records and Def Jam Recordings. According to USA Today critic Steve Jones, the record marked a return to the street-oriented sound of Jay-Z's 1996 debut album, Reasonable Doubt.[1] Vol. 3... featured production from Swizz Beatz, Timbaland, K-Rob, DJ Clue, Rockwilder, DJ Premier, and Irv Gotti, among others. The album was well received by critics and debuted at number one on the Billboard 200, selling 462,000 copies in its first week. It has since sold over three million copies and been certified triple platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America. Professional ratingsReview scoresSourceRatingAllMusic[2]Chicago Tribune[3]Encyclopedia of Popular Music[4]Entertainment WeeklyA−[5]Los Angeles Times[6]NME7/10[7]Rolling Stone[8]The Source[9]USA Today[1]The Village VoiceA[10] Vol. 3... was released on December 28, 1999, and sold 462,000 copies in its first week, while debuting at number one on the Billboard 200.[11] The sales week was thirty-percent more than the first-week sales of Jay-Z's previous album, Vol. 2... Hard Knock Life (1998).[12] On February 14, 2001, it was certified triple platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).[13] In 2009, the album reached sales of 3,093,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.[14] In a contemporary review, Rolling Stone critic Kris Ex wrote that Jay-Z "has become a better architect of songs" while hailing Vol. 3... as "his strongest album to date, with music that's filled with catchy hooks, rump-shaking beats and lyrics fueled by Jay's hustler's vigilance".[8] Richard Harrington from The Washington Post found the record to be "full of reputation-building swagger, cataloguing of lyrical skills and autobiographical perspective".[15] Reviewing the album in Entertainment Weekly, Anthony DeCurtis said it reconnects with Jay-Z's urban demographic, "with flair",[5] while Steve Jones of USA Today was particularly impressed by his lyrics and flow, finding both to be "razor-sharp as ever".[1] In The Village Voice, Robert Christgau argued that Jay-Z has too much at stake commercially to depart from "playing the now-a-rapper-now-a-thug 'reality' game with his customers, thugs and fantasists both", but he impresses with "a rugged, expansive vigor, nailing both come-fly-with-me cosmopolitanism and the hunger for excitement that's turned gangster hangouts into musical hotbeds from Buenos Aires to Kansas City".[10] Fellow Voice critic Miles Marshall Lewis called Jay-Z "the best MC in hip hop" and Vol. 3… "the quintessential 2000-model hip hop album".[16] Soren Baker was less impressed in the Los Angeles Times, writing that the record lacks the "biting humor and spectacular wordplay" of his previous albums.[6] In The Rolling Stone Album Guide (2004), Jon Caramanica later wrote, "Life & Times of S. Carter took [Vol. 2's] combination of style and substance to its apotheosis. In addition to maintaining a strong lyrical presence, Jay also showcased his talents as a master of flow, changing cadences and rhyme patterns with impressive regularity and flexibility ... Nearly every track on this album was sonically unique, and Jay rode each one with aplomb and skill".[17] AllMusic's John Bush wrote in a retrospective review that a couple of overwrought productions ("Dope Man" and "Things That U Do") keep it from being among Jay-Z's best albums.[2] Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter track listingNo.TitleWriter(s)Producer(s)Length1."Hova Song (Intro)"Shawn CarterK RobJimi HendrixK Rob2:212."So Ghetto"CarterChristopher MartinSteve CropperBuddy MilesDJ Premier4:013."Do It Again (Put Ya Hands Up)" (featuring Amil and Beanie Sigel)CarterAmil WhiteheadDwight GrantDana StinsonKyambo JoshuaRockwilder4:394."Dope Man"CarterErnesto ShawKen IfillDarrell "Digga" BranchClueDURODiggaLance "UN" Rivera[a]Chauncey Mahan[b]4:035."Things That U Do" (featuring Mariah Carey)CarterMariah CareyKasseem DeanJoshuaSwizz Beatz4:526."It's Hot (Some Like It Hot)"CarterTimothy MosleyTimbaland4:167."Snoopy Track" (featuring Juvenile)CarterTerius GrayMosleyTimbaland4:018."S. Carter" (featuring Amil)CarterWhiteheadRussell "Russ" HowardSean "SAF" FrancisRussSAFMahan[b]4:149."Pop 4 Roc" (featuring Beanie Sigel, Memphis Bleek, and Amil)CarterGrantMalik CoxWhiteheadShawIfillClueDURO4:3610."Watch Me" (featuring Dr. Dre)CarterAndre YoungIrving LorenzoRobert MaysIrv GottiLil Rob4:3411."Big Pimpin'" (featuring UGK)CarterChad ButlerBernard FreemanMosleyTimbaland4:4412."There's Been a Murder"CarterHowardFrancisAlana DavisRussSAFMahan[b]3:4013."Come and Get Me"CarterMosleyTimbaland6:0914."NYMP"CarterStinsonBrian RussellBrenda RussellRockwilder4:0315."Hova Song (Outro)""Jigga My Nigga""Girl's Best Friend"CarterK RobHendrixCarterDeanCarterDeanK RobSwizz BeatzSwizz Beatz11:01Total length:71:05 Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter(European version)No.TitleWriter(s)Producer(s)Length1."Hova Song (Intro)"CarterK RobHendrixK Rob2:222."So Ghetto"CarterMartinCropperMilesDJ Premier4:013."Do It Again (Put Ya Hands Up)" (featuring Amil and Beanie Sigel)CarterWhiteheadGrantStinsonJoshuaRockwilder4:394."Dope Man"CarterShawIfillBranchClueDURODiggaUN[a]Mahan[b]4:035."Things That U Do" (featuring Mariah Carey)CarterCareyDeanJoshuaSwizz Beatz4:526."It's Hot (Some Like It Hot)"CarterMosleyTimbaland4:167."Snoopy Track" (featuring Juvenile)CarterGrayMosleyTimbaland4:018."S. Carter" (featuring Amil)CarterWhiteheadHowardFrancisRussSAFMahan[b]4:149."Pop 4 Roc" (featuring Beanie Sigel, Memphis Bleek, and Amil)CarterGrantCoxWhiteheadShawIfillClueDURO4:3610."Hova Interlude"CarterK RobHendrixK Rob1:3311."Big Pimpin'" (featuring UGK)CarterButlerFreemanMosleyJoshuaTimbaland4:4312."Is That Yo Bitch" (featuring Twista and Missy Elliott)CarterCarl MitchellMelissa ElliottMosleyTimbaland4:3413."Come and Get Me"CarterMosleyTimbaland6:4314."NYMP"CarterStinsonBri. RussellBre. RussellRockwilder4:0315."Hova Song (Outro)"CarterK RobHendrixK Rob1:1716."Anything""Jigga My Nigga""Girl's Best Friend"CarterSam AndersonJ. WrightLionel BartCarterDeanCarterDeanSam SneedP. SkamSwizz BeatzSwizz Beatz14:21Total length:74:15 Notes ^[a] indicates a co-producer ^[b] indicates an additional producer Credits are adapted from AllMusic.[18] Amil – performer Darrell Branch – producer Mariah Carey – performer Drawing Board – art direction Fingaz – keyboards Kyleddithis – design Jay-Z – performer Jonathan Mannion – photography Memphis Bleek – performer Tatsuya Sato – assistant engineer Beanie Sigel – performer UGK – performer Dr. Dre – performer, mixing Chart (2000) Peakposition Canadian Albums (Billboard)[19] 8 Swiss Albums (Schweizer Hitparade)[20] 75 US Billboard 200[21] 1 US Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums (Billboard)[22] 1 Chart (2000) Position Canadian Albums (Nielsen SoundScan)[23] 141 US Billboard 200[24] 23 US Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums (Billboard)[25] 5 Region Certification Certified units/sales Canada (Music Canada)[26] Gold 50,000^ United Kingdom (BPI)[27] Silver 60,000^ United States (RIAA)[28] 3× Platinum 3,000,000^ ^ Shipments figures based on certification alone. 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While his albums such as Reasonable Doubt, The Blueprint, and Black Album are seen as classics or his monumental releases, he has some great albums that tend to go slept on. Today, I wanted to talk about the two dope releases he put out before he created his classic The Blueprint, the 1999 triple platinum album "Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter," and the 2000 triple platinum release "The Dynasty: Roc La Familia." These are two of my personal favorite albums from Jay, and I think they deserve some more recognition. Let's get into it.Vol. 3: Life and Times of S. CarterTracklist 1. Hova Song (Intro)2. So Ghetto 3. Do It Again (Put Ya Hands Up)4. Dopeman5. Things That U Do6. It's Hot (Some Like It Hot)7. Snoopy Track 8. S. Carter9. Pop 4 Roc10. Watch Me 11. Big Pimpin12. There's Been A Murder 13. Come And Get Me14. NYMP 15. Hova Song (Outro)In 1999, there was no rapper as big or as important as Jay-Z except DMX. He embarked on the infamous Hard Knock Life tour and sold 6 million records of his Vol. 2 album, and garnered hit after hit from the album. You'd think Jay took a year or two to let the Vol. 2 success carry over, but Jay was in dominance and work mode. He had released an album every year up until this point, and as 1999 came to a close, he would prepare yet another release, just 14 months or so after Hard Knock Life. The Vol. series is what I feel is the most slept on part of Jay's catalog, as he locked in for three different styles on each album. Vol. 1 was a combination of personal moments and shiny suit wisdom, while Vol. 2 was a perfect blend of excess, street anthems, and hits. With Vol. 3, Jay got a bit darker, which was met with some reserve from fans and leads people to rank it among his worst, and while it isn't in the same classic vein as The Blueprint or Reasonable Doubt, it is nowhere near the level of quality as a Blueprint 3, Kingdom Come, MCHG, or Blueprint 2 for that matter. Vol. 3 almost feels like a rejection of the newfound and success Jigga had just received in a way. How? Well let's examine.The album starts off with the epic "Hova Song (Intro)," which he supplies the right amount of aplomb and slick lyricism to introduce us to this new listening experience. Check how he seamlessly coasts over the production and sets the tone:"Rappers with no relation/There's "Seven Degrees of Separation"/And I'm Kevin Bacon/This is the murderer's version/Jigga the shit, even when he rhyme in third person/Hova the God, I should be rapping with a turban/Haters can't disturb him/Waiters can't serve him/Mike Jordan of rap - outside J working/Now watch how quickly I drop 50/I don't like playing, niggas can't stick me/Niggas can not jam me, niggas can't get me/Slimmy at the Rucker wanna leave and spend with me/I consistently take em out the park like Ken Griffey/"Do you believe? It's Hova the God. That's the way you start off an album. Once again, you can feel the pull between Jay the street MC and the new pop star, as he sets up an anthem in "So Ghetto," a blatantly defiant middle finger to pop star fame in many ways. Jay paints a picture that nothing has really changed (yet), and the hook helps drive it home as well, as Jay explains that "he's so gutter, ghetto girls fall in love with me," and gives us three of his most raw verses ever. It's a perfect beginning, but Jay loses a step with "Do It Again" somewhat. I liked the song when it came out, and both Jay and Beanie Sigel craft dope verses, I just find the production to be a bit stale, and the song itself doesn't hold up well years later, unlike a majority of the rest of this album. The song is a bit catchy, however, and was a big single off this album, but for me, this is a song I tend to skip when I revisit this album.When we arrive at the cinematic "Dopeman," Jay is in Reasonable Doubt mode, painting a vivid picture of him being on trial for being the dopest MC, which if we remember correctly, was the basis of Reasonable Doubt. Jay was the best MC without a Reasonable Doubt, and on Vol. 3, he was now being sent to trial for being the "dope man," providing our ears with nothing but crack music. It's one of the best songs on the album, and just as Jay picks up steam, he slows a bit with the unnecessary Mariah Carey assisted "Things That U Do," which is nothing more than Jay getting a favor returned by Mariah for a hook. The song itself is a weak spot on the album. Though Jay is always lyrically sound, this one just falls short. I enjoyed the next track, "It's Hot," as Jay fires shots off and talks shit, but the most infamous part of this song is his response diss to 50 Cent. Timbaland provides the beat, and Jay loads and aims:"Go against Jigga, yo' ass is dense/I'm about a dollar, what the fuck is 50 Cents?/Hot shit, kick a nigga, turn these mics out/My jewelry so bright you can turn these lights out/"After taking his shot, we go to one of my favorite tracks on the album, the knocking "Snoopy Track," which I have no idea why the title is what it is, but I love this song. Juvenile provides the amazing hook, and Jay just coasts over yet another solid Timbaland beat. Admittedly, I wasn't a huge fan of the next two tracks, as the production on "S. Carter" and "Pop 4 Roc" both feel a bit bland, but I do think Jay goes in lyrically on "S. Carter" without a doubt. I just wish the production was slightly stronger, and the hook there wasn't as corny as it is now. There aren't many weak spots on the album, but my biggest gripe with this project has always been some of the production, and this is where it shows up and sticks out the most, at the halfway point. Once again, though, lyrically Jay does not disappoint.He picks up the pace and floats over the West Coast inspired dark track "Watch Me," as Dr. Dre assists him. Jay lyrically lays his game down, and switches flow throughout the song and the album in general so effortlessly. If anything, this is the album where we learned the range of Jay as an MC. He didn't have to he stuck in the street lane, with a slower, more in your face flow, and he didn't have to be the fast flow rapper, or the laid back pop star, he could be all that and then more. The style of production in the album switches and the way he coasts over this West Coast, like production with Dre, only furthers the point of his versatility and range as an MC.As if that wasn't to show his range, Jay teams up with UGK to bring the biggest and yet unlikely single for the album, "Big Pimpin." When this song dropped, I was instantly a fan, and it just flows so smoothly and entices you to rap along to it. Both Bun B and Jay employ a rapid fire flow, and while young MH loved their verses, there is absolutely nothing that compares to the legendary relaxed pimped out verse from Pimp C. This feels as if Pimp pulls up in his brand new car, hops out, drops his verse, grabs two women, and departs. Just like that. It embodies the entire feel of the song, and it flows perfectly. Here's the entire verse:"Uhh.. smokin out, pouring up/ Keeping lean up in my cup/All my car got leather and wood, in my hood, we call it buck/Everybody wanna ball/Holla at broads at the mall/If he up, watch him fall/Nigga I can't fuck witch'all/If I wasn't rappin baby/I would still be ridin Mercedes/Chroming, shining, sipping daily/ No rest until whitey pay me/Uhhh, now what y'all know bout them Texas boys/Coming down in candied toys/ Smoking weed and talking noise/"Nothing but fire. As we move on in the album, the rest of the songs take a much darker feel. The final tracks "There's Been A Murder," "NYMP," "Come And Get Me," and of course the outro all see Jay in his most focused place on the entire album, executing with lyrical precision, slicing through the production, and I truly feel like this was the perfect way to end the album. Four bangers in succession, but my favorite of those four would have to be the defiant "Come And Get Me." Jay is always at his best when he's giving a middle finger to the competition and the world over. Before the beat switches up, Jay sits on his throne, loads up yet again, and shoots with flawless aim. Check it out:"I remove your roof nigga let the sun shine in/Thirty-eight waist, enough to put one nine in/Really a thirty-six, without the gun I'm thin/But when the gat is tucked/I'm fat as fuck/Ignorant bastard, I'm takin it back to day one/No kids, but trust me I know how to raise a gun/For niggas that think I spend my days in the sun/Well here's the shock of your life/The glock, not the mic/Homie I'm not into hype, trust me, I'm still street/You still fuckin up then trust me I still creep/Yeah I know the platinum chain be lookin real sweet/But reach and I bury niggas sixty feet deep/"This is Jay at his most aggressive, and his most street in many ways, and to hear that on the end of this album drives home the message that he wanted to go a different direction from Vol. 1 and 2. Vol. 3 is a much more rugged album, with a small amount of gloss and shine, but with the price of fame comes a level of anger behind it, and I felt like this was Jay's response. Jay is a methodical and strategic artist. It's one of the reasons he's one of my favorites of all time. He displays his best attributes here on Vol. 3, and executed a solid 8 out of 10 album, one that is probably the middle of the road in his catalog, but is entirely slept on as an album. Rampant bootlegging and the Un situation aside, this album's legacy should be much more revered, as it was one of our final looks into the more tortured street mind of Shawn Carter, and one of his last remnants of Jigga, in all honesty. Vol. 3 isn't a classic, no, but it is a damn good album. It should definitely be remembered and loved as such. Now, onto yet another Jay-Z album that's totally slept on as well, shall we??The Dynasty: Roc La FamiliaTracklist1. Intro 2. Change The Game 3. I Just Wanna Love U (Give It To Me)4. Streets Is Talking5. This Can't Be Life6. Get Ya Mind Right Mami7. Stick 2 The Script8. You, Me, Him, and Her9. Guilty Until Proven Innocent10. Parking Lot Pimpin11. Holla 12. 1-900-Hustler13. The R.O.C.14. Soon You'll Understand 15. Squeeze 1st16. Where Have You BeenWhen Jay-Z entered the year 2000, he had the no. 1 album, one of the best crews in rap, two multiplatinum albums, and huge success. He wanted to set his crew up for more success, so they set out to record a compilation album to release later that year. However, you can't deny inspiration or good marketing, so as the release date drew near in October 2000, the compilation would turn into a Jay-Z album that would also feature the rest of the team. There's some songs that Jay doesn't even appear on, but he's on a mostly all of them and only misses 2 on the entire album.This is a Jay-Z album and a damn good one at that. When people reflect on the Blueprint and The Black Album, I think this album could hold up to those in terms of lyricism, as Jay was in his absolute prime during 1999-2001. There's no better evidence of him being in his prime than on the actual intro to this album. The production provided by Just Blaze is completely beautiful, as the sample sets up Jay to drop what is likely a top 2 intro in his catalog and some of his best lyrics period. Take a look:"No father figure/You gotta pardon a nigga/But I'm starvin my niggas/And the weight loss in my figure/Is starting to darken my heart, Bout to get to my liver/Watch it my niggas/I'm tryin to be calm but I'm gon' get richer/Through any means, with that thing that Malcolm palmed in the picture/Never read the Qu'ran or Islamic scriptures/Only psalms I read was on the arms of my niggas/Tattooed so I carry on like I'm non-religious/Clap whoever stand between Shawn and figures/Niggas say it's the dawn/Don, but I'm superstitious/Shit is as dark as it's been, nothing is going as you predicted/I move with biscuits/Stop the harder niggas acting too suspicious/This is, food for thought, you do the dishes/"That's opening brilliance for you. Hands down. Jay crafts one of my favorite intros in hip hop ever and then leads us right into a very West Coast bouncy track with Memphis Bleek and Beanie Sigel on "Change The Game." While "Change The Game" is a solid track, and the back and forth between the three MCs is dope, the song that really kicks off this album energy wise, is the Neptunes produced and Pharrell featured hit single "I Just Wanna Love U (Give It To Me)." The song is a huge commercial hit, but Jay drops some dope lines that are easily infectious, and no I'm not talking the first verse that quotes Biggie, but the beginning of the second verse is smoothest part of the song:"Yeah, save the narrative/You savin it for marriage/Let's keep it real ma, you saving it for karats/You wanna see how far I'ma go/How, much I'ma spend but you already know/Zip, zero/ Stingy with dinero/Might buy you Crist', but that about it/Might light your wrist, but that about it/"Jay coasts over the spacey Neptunes production to make one of the biggest anthems of his career. He then teams up with Beans for a street anthem, the aptly titled "Streets Is Talking," which is the sequel so to speak of "Streets Is Watching," but this admittedly pales in comparison to the original, though both Jay and Beans spit dope verses. Beans is really the lowkey MVP of this album, and his verse here is one of the strongest on the whole project. Check the precision:"The streets is not only watchin but they talkin now?/Shit they got me circlin the block before I'm parkin now/Don't get it twisted, I ain't bitchin, I'm just cautious now/So, under the park, the extra cartridge now/Hit his click Sig' up you fell at it you're dense/I get word to the street like Bell Atlantic and Sprint/I feel the vibes/ And I hear the rumorsBut fuck it, I'm still alive/And I'm still Ju'maa I know, 'stafAllah, niggas wanna press me, put my back to the wall/But pressure bust pipes I know, I spat it to y'all/To know me is to love me, you see me, can't be me, hate this/Fuck you I got guns like Neo in Matrix/Cross the Family, think Mac's sweet like Karo/Or soft like Play-Doh/Get knocked off like Fredo/Corleone/ They find you with a hole in your dome/I roll with niggas that'll follow you and go to your home/Thought you ball, but nigga you fall to my defense catch you while you reaching/Clip you, then I cross you, then I'm leaving/Apply full court pressure/like four-four….get you out of here, pull pressure/To the trigger, bullets fly in threes/You forever rest under bullshit, dirt, lies, and leaves/I do bullshit, dirt, tell lies then leave/Look in my eyes, realize it's Beans/Niggas wanna despise the team/Till I play head coach and straight up, divide they team/Trade they man for some pies and a couple of things/Til the bullet.. ah, motherfuckers!!"As the beat cuts off, Beans just keeps going. It is one of the best moments of Beans' career as he outshines Jay in just one verse, while Jay kills his three verses. Jay was dope in all his verses, but Beans just came in and owned that song. In a huge switch of vibe, the epic "This Can't Be Life" follows, and the Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes sample provided by Kanye just give this track a truly somber feel. Jay kicks off the song with a heartbreaking verse about losing a child and the life he grew up around. Lyrically, he's at his most poignant. Check his verse:"See I was -- born in sewage/Born to make bomb music/Flow tight like I was born Jewish/Used the streets as a conduit/I kept arms, 38 longs inside my mom's Buick/At any given moment Shawn could lose it/Be on the news, iron cuffs - arms through it/Or stuffed with embalming fluid/Shit, I'm goin through it/Mom dukes too, Tears streamin down her pretty face, she got her palms to it/My life is gettin too wild, I need to bring some sort kinda calm to it/Bout to lose it/Voices screamin "Don't do it!"/It's like '93, '94, bout the year that Big and Mack dropped/And "Illmatic" rocked/Outta every rag drop/And the West had it locked/Everybody doin 'em, I'm still scratchin on the block/like, damn I'ma be a failure/Surrounded by thugs, drugs, and drug - Paraphernalia/Cops courts, and their thoughts is to derail us/Three time felons in shorts with jealous thoughts/Tryin figure where your mail is, guesstimate/ The weight you sellin, So they can send shots straight/ to your melon, wait!/It gets worse/Baby momma water burst/Baby came out stillborn/Still I gotta move on/Though my heart still torn/Life gone from her womb/Don't worry, if it was meant to be, it'll be -- soon/"This is one of the best verses from Jay in his career. It's so reflective, yet so real and raw, and most importantly, full of emotion, a rarity to ever see in Jay. Beans and Scarface are both featured here, and they both do their jobs on the song, painting two totally different personal pictures, but each strike a nerve. Look at how Beans begins his verse:"Second oldest born, from Michelle Brown, my mother/Hell bound, grew with two sisters and one brother/Pop wasn't around, so many stories that's another/I'm thinking damn, how my older sister gon' make me tougher/When steel sharpens steel/I'ma keep it real/I'm tired of trying to hide my pain behind the syrups and pills/Dead to the world, stretched out like a corpse for real/Y'all niggas thinkin what y'all reading in The Source is real/What my life like, you looking at the source, it's real/What your life like? Mine dog, of course it's real/"That's one of the realest opening moments in a verse to me. He spoke directly to his own addictions, to the reality of his upbringing and provided emotional depth, while explaining to the people that what you see in the media has nothing to do with what the reality is. Face takes a different approach, as he speaks about someone close to him who loses a child. The pain in Face's voice seems to confirm the story that it happened literally as he showed up to do it. The entire verse from Face is just downright heart wrenching, take a look:"Now as I walk into the studio, to do this with Jig'/I got a phone call from one of my nigs/Said my homeboy Reek, he just lost one of his kids/And when I heard that I just broke into tears/And see in the second hand, you don't really know how this is/But when it hits that close to home you feel the pain at the crib/ So I called mine, and saddened my wife with the bad news/Now we both depressed, counting our blessings cause Brad's two/Praying for young souls to laugh at life through the stars/Loving your kids just like you was ours/And I'm hurting for you dog, but ain't nobody pain is like yours/I just know that heaven'll open these doors/And ain't no bright side to losin life, but you can view it like this/God's got open hands homie, he in the midst/Of good company, who loves all and hates not one/And one day you gon' be wit your son/I could've rapped about my h