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On August 3, 2005, West hosted a listening session for his second studio album Late Registration at Sony Music Studios in New York City. There, he announced that he planned to release his third studio album Graduation around October 2006. However, the album was delayed until September 11, 2007, when it was released through Def Jam Recordings and Roc-A-Fella Records. West recorded the album between 2005 and 2007 at several studios in New York and Los Angeles, with the help of various producers such as DJ Toomp, Eric Hudson and Nottz. The album featured guest appearances from artists such as Dwele, T-Pain, Lil Wayne, Mos Def, DJ Premier and Chris Martin of Coldplay. The album cover and artwork were designed by Japanese contemporary artist Takashi Murakami. Graduation marked a departure from the soulful and orchestral sound of West's previous albums The College Dropout (2004) and Late Registration (2005). Instead, West experimented with electronic music, synthesizers and house-music influences, creating a more anthemic and stadiumfriendly sound. The album also reflected West's ambivalent feelings about his fame and media attention, as well as his inspirational messages of triumph and selfempowerment. Graduation was the final installment of West's planned tetralogy of education-themed albums, which he later aborted in favor of a different direction for his fourth album 808s & Heartbreak (2008). West premiered the lead single "Can't Tell Me Nothing" on the New York radio station Hot 97 on May 15, 2007. He then released a free mixtape with the same title on May 27, 2007, featuring snippets of songs from Graduation, as well as tracks by artists signed to his label GOOD Music and collaborations with other musicians. The mixtape also included "Us Placers", the debut song of Child Rebel Soldier, a supergroup formed by West, Lupe Fiasco and Pharrell Williams. The second single from Graduation was "Stronger", which sampled Daft Punk's song "Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger" and became West's third number-one hit on the US Billboard Hot 100. Other singles from the album were "Good Life", "Flashing Lights", "Homecoming" and "Big Brother". Graduation received widespread acclaim from music critics, who praised West's production style and lyrical themes. The album was nominated for Album of the Year and won Best Rap Album at the 50th Grammy Awards. It also topped several year-end lists and decade-end lists by publications such as Rolling Stone, USA Today, NME and Pitchfork. The album sold

over 957,000 copies in its first week in the US, becoming West's second consecutive number-one album and outselling 50 Cent's Curtis in their highly publicized sales competition. Graduation has since sold over five million copies in the US and been certified quintuple platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). Graduation showcased West's artistic evolution and established him as one of the most influential and acclaimed artists of his generation. The album influenced the direction of hip-hop in the late 2000s, paving the way for new styles and approaches. It also inspired other artists across genres, such as U2 and Daft Punk. The album's cover art and artwork, featuring a cartoon bear mascot named Dropout Bear in a colorful futuristic setting, became iconic and widely imitated. The album spawned a series of merchandise, including clothing, toys and accessories. Graduation was followed by West's fourth studio album 808s & Heartbreak (2008), which marked a radical departure from his previous sound. West experimented with Auto-Tune vocals, minimalistic production and emotional themes, reflecting his personal turmoil and grief after the death of his mother and the end of his engagement. The album polarized listeners and critics, but also influenced a new wave of artists who embraced West's vulnerability and innovation.

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