

MUSIC

GNX: Kendrick Lamar's surprise album is overflowing with a West Coast sound

RAIAN ABEDIN

From the aftermath of what was perhaps one of hip-hop's biggest rap feuds, Kendrick Lamar has released his newest project. It's nearly become a meme to expect Kendrick Lamar to release music out of the blue, but this time, with *GNX*, we have an entire album.

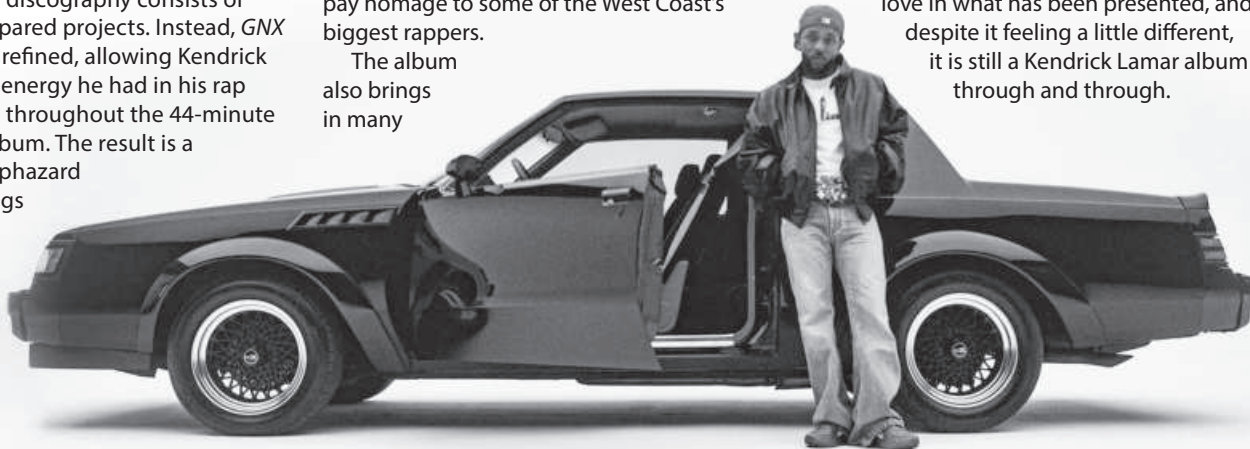
From the very first track, "wacced out murals", it's evident most of what is present here has not been in the works for long. This strikes me as a surprise, as much of Kendrick's earlier discography consists of meticulously prepared projects. Instead, *GNX* chooses to be unrefined, allowing Kendrick to carry over the energy he had in his rap feud and apply it throughout the 44-minute runtime of the album. The result is a gorgeous, yet haphazard mishmash of songs with incredible west-coast-style production, creative sample usage, and some incredibly

surprising features.

The album, overall, is a breath of fresh air in terms of songwriting. There is an ostensible air of levity around many of the tracks here. This is unlike Kendrick's previous projects, many of which are built around specific themes or narratives. *GNX* offers a sort of variety that his other projects rarely ever do. Some loose themes and motifs tie many of these tracks together. While not as pronounced, anyone willing to dig deep will be able to identify how Kendrick manages to pay homage to some of the West Coast's biggest rappers.

The album also brings in many

fresh voices as surprise features, all of whom deliver. One highlight, for me, comes from the final verse on "hey now", delivered by one Dody6— a name most people seem to be unfamiliar with. Similar obscure names from the West Coast make themselves known throughout the album, resulting in *GNX* being a West Coast tribute album that also manages to pass the torch to those who are currently trying to make their names known. The album is only bogged down by a track or two. But apart from that, there is plenty to love in what has been presented, and, despite it feeling a little different, it is still a Kendrick Lamar album through and through.



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