

Three Must Have Debut Albums

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It's something about an artist's debut album that can never be duplicated. Maybe the hunger and drive that carries the first album is diminished once momma has her house and baby has his shoes. Maybe their new socioeconomic standing changes their experiences and makes it more difficult for them to speak for the streets. Or maybe the arrogance that powers their dreams becomes too much and they just become big headed. Who knows? Either way I have learned to enjoy an artist's grind and hunger while I can.

Listening to Big Sean's recent interviews reminded me how much I admire an artist's thirst. It also caused me to put three of hip hop's best debut albums in heavy rotation on my iPod. And with that said, here are three hip hop debut albums that should undoubtedly be in your collection. If you don't have these three, you aren't as hip hop as you think.

#3: *I'm Serious* by T.I.—This album wasn't a commercial success. In fact, Arista dropped T.I. not long after it was released, but over time the streets fell in love with *I'm Serious*. Its solid tracks combined with T.I.'s relentless work ethic, kept him relevant. After releasing countless mixtapes and doing an infinite number of local shows, Atlantic realized T.I. was a star. If you don't have this debut album in your collection, you're definitely losing. It's a rawer and grimmer T.I. than we've come to know and love. His lyrics are purely what he sees and experiences from the streets of Atlanta's Westside, and his arrogance is at an all time high. If you like T.I. now, you'll love T.I.'s *I'm Serious*.

#2: *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* by 50 Cent—During a time when hip hop was nothing more than sweet, sap love songs to women, 50 Cent singlehandedly gave hip hop back to the streets with his debut, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. Its lyrics are raw, gritty and unapologetic. Its beats by Dre (and I'm not talking headphones) and Eminem are club banging classics. This album was highly anticipated, critically acclaimed and commercially successful, a trio you don't often see anymore. In its first week on the market, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* sold over 800,000 albums and by the year's end, it had gone six times platinum. *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* is definitely Curtis (50's government name) at his best.

#1: *The College Dropout* by Kanye West—When hip hop was introduced to Kanye, he came with a new, fresh and innovative style. Collar shirts and Louis Vuitton backpacks brought a college swag that hipsters could relate to. And his "I'm tired of this b.s. job, so I'm going to follow my dreams and win" lyrics were even more relatable. And let's not forget Ye's humble and "I'm just grateful to be here" attitude. Don't we miss that Kanye? *The College Dropout* established the emerging producer as a lyricist and a hip hop superstar. The album went on to be certified triple platinum in the US and to produce the arrogant asshole we all know and love today. ☺