



Dedicated to the One I Love: Artists' Odes to Their Favorite Musicians

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KANYE WEST, D'ANGELO, & GARY CLARK JR. By Xaviera Simmons

I listen to Kanye West, D'Angelo, and Gary Clark Jr. a lot in my studio, and I wanted to produce a conceptual image inspired by their individual projects, with particular attention to each of their sounds, lyrics, and overall creative output.

I just couldn't choose one artist, as I decided to think of them visually and sonically as a whole. I made it a point not to focus on obscure avant-garde artists, like folks probably expected, because I feel it's important as a conceptual artist to acknowledge what's present in popular sound today. Each of these musicians simultaneously exists in both mainstream and underground cultures.

Listening to them, I think we can perceive a good slice of popular music today, as well as views of the creative black man in America. In their own ways, West, D'Angelo, and Clark Jr. all influence American culture by constructing a vision of the creative black male—which, in turn, influences the sounds and visions of the entire planet. Through mastery of sampling, instrumentation, conceptual vision, sexuality, tenderness, and bravado, these three each addresses masculinity, sensuality, and creativity. Collectively, they form a history lesson in sound.