

KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'

50 Cent's eyes are bleary. His head is throbbing. He hasn't slept in 28 hours. He arrived at Milk Studios, on Manhattan's west side, straight from the airport. He flew in from Toronto this morning, after pulling an all-nighter on the set of his movie, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. "I wouldn't miss something for Yayo," he says. "Under any circumstances, I wouldn't." He's come to pose for pictures, to lend his star power to the fourth solo artist to emerge from his G-Unit Records (Lloyd Banks, Young Buck and Game—all platinum). And while he's here, we figured he could give us his take on things: the status of his relationship with Game; the diss songs recently released against him (Fat Joe's "My 44," Jadakiss' "Checkmate," Sheek Louch's "Clickety Clank"); the reaction to his quadruple-platinum sophomore album, *The Massacre*; and the future of his company.

I'm getting ready to change that impression that I created in the beginning. I'm trying to change people from viewing G-Unit as a group to just viewing us as G-Unit Records, the company. 'Cause the individuals are too strong to be placed in a group form. There's never been a group in the history of music to this point that has come in as a group—four members or more—that has been able to separate and each one of them be a success. There's always one member out of the group that doesn't do it. If it's not that, it'll be a fucking Justin Timberlake. But where's the rest of the boys?

G-Unit as a group, that's over. It'll never be the same, 'cause everybody's here physically available to create they own material, and I'd be slowing them down to not allow them to work at the pace that they capable of. Buck's already got over 25 records towards his next album. So how do I tell him, "No, we gonna do G-Unit's album next," when you got 25 records by yourself? I'm listening to them and I like the records. Nah, you gotta put your next solo album out. And Banks is ready with his record. Yayo's release, and then the soundtrack to the movie... There will be a single off the soundtrack leading into Buck's or Banks' record. They should expect us to have something representing G-Unit at all times.

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IMAGE
MATT GUNTHER

There's not gonna be another label to come in and give us a run for our money. It's not gonna happen. The reason why? They'd have to be led into this business. And who's gonna bring them in? For artists, your shot is secured if you're down with us. And I'm making it an option for them to come meet with me. I'm open.

G-Unit sticks together. A portion of our success is credited to that. People from the outside have to be strong enough artists to stand on their own to get my attention. I don't have no problems with an artist wanting to have his own crew, or be his own separate thing, as long as what he's doing is accurate enough to generate finances for the company.

But if you say you want to fuck with people I don't fuck with, that ain't gonna work. That ain't gonna work at all. That says we don't have a relationship. Anybody who has a relationship with you doesn't want to fuck with people who you don't fuck with. I don't just hate people for no reason. They do things that make me uncomfortable, to make me say things or take that position with them. I don't usually resolve anything. That's why even going to the press conference, when I go with Game, is big for me.

Anybody, not just G-Unit, anybody that you're down with... You should not blatantly go against what everybody else in your camp is doing. Then you alienate yourself, and you can't expect those people in that camp to be receptive to helping you in any way. Game will understand my actual value when it comes time to make his next album and I won't participate in any of the creative side.

I think the press conference went well. I think we accomplished being in the same room with each other and not having an altercation break out. Me and Game haven't had communications since. He's not G-Unit... It's family, and your dedication to us, versus just paperwork. G-Unit is closer than usual on an artist level. We have relationships like they're my younger brothers. Banks, Buck, Yayo, Spider, Olivia, it's different. We got different relationships. And at the same time, what I'm trying to do is... take the Olivia project. I view that as an



opportunity to diversify a section of G-Unit. Everything is street-orientated and aggressive at this point. Now, she's a female R&B solo artist—it's different. Everything else that goes on with G-Unit, I want to turn it into an actual record company like Interscope. I think Interscope is the best possible company. Internationally, they move records beyond the other labels. If you look at the other artists that release records, they ain't selling no records outside of the country.

G-Unit would still be under Interscope Records. Like the Universal Music Group with Def Jam, all of that under the same umbrella. So, as a company grows to the point that you have a roster that dominates, I'll be in that position anyway.

I think overall the general public loves my new album. 'Cause what I get when I go places is, "It's crazy," and all that. To me, the SoundScan is an indication of how many people you're actually reaching with your music. I'm excited about my sales to this point. I feel like I'ma do a lot better than I did the first time. The critics, they don't wanna see me win. I guess I won too big. They don't want me to win because they didn't think it was possible. You know why they don't like it? They don't like it when you start accomplishing things that they don't think that you can accomplish. Once you start exceeding their expectations, they become bitter. So it's like, it's cool if you stay within the guidelines. Like if *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* would've been a platinum record, they would've been like, "50's hot!" They'da loved it. Double-platinum, "He's hot. We love him!" But because it's 11 million [worldwide sales], it's like, "Damn!" And the hip-hop community, the artists, can't honestly see themselves selling 11 million on an album.

I feel this is my year. After comparisons to the Beatles and having four records in the Top 10—which hasn't been done since the '60s—I feel great. That's an accomplishment in itself. I felt like the journalists at the magazines didn't want to favor me on this record. I think people wanted to go against what everyone else would say. They don't want to like me anymore, 'cause I'm not the underdog anymore, but it makes me feel like the underdog, because they don't believe I can make more great music.

I'm a workaholic. Nobody outworks me. I still appreciate the opportunity to be able to do business on this level. I'm excited about being able to have the meetings that I have. You can see it visible in my actions, even in the rap world. Like, the artists think I wouldn't have time to say anything about them if they're not selling a lot of records. But I still notice what they doing.

"My 44?" Well, he had to say something. I ain't mad at it. Neither one of them really said anything that would, you know... It's too much of me out there for them to say anything. You got everybody trying to do they job as a rapper. While they be trying to figure out some dirt, you got every journalist, news reporter trying to find dirt, too. So it's like, they'll say, "You a snitch." They'll call me little things, whatever you can call somebody that would be disrespectful. From the environment we come from, the worst thing you can be is a snitch. So, they'll call me that. It don't bother me to hear them say that, anyway. I think even the general public knows that they just saying that because they heard it said before. Who I sent to jail? They trying to say I had an order of protection from them, like I was afraid of them.

They so easy. They so predictable on the artist end. The artists, they limited in what routes they can go. And because I understand that, I can

play them. I love to plot and plan, 'cause I can play to them and watch them do exactly what I thought they was gonna do. And say, "Damn, that worked out exactly the way I thought it was. Watch this..." And when that happens I go, "Oh shit!" It's chess, but it's like instead of pawns, it's people—you moving them around, setting them up for your next move.

There are always moves that gotta be calculated. Like, the mixtapes are still important, but since the success of *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, I created a traffic jam with mixtapes because the media promoted how I utilized the mixtape circuit as far as promotions. Then everybody went putting out they own mixtapes. And then it was like, for you to have a tape, I mean your tape has to be fucking good now. My 2050 mixtape is like an album. Other artists don't put mixtapes out like we do, 'cause they start putting a price tag on their count. Any other artist that put out as much material as I put out, their company would feel over saturation if the artist couldn't keep recreating themselves. Musically, I walk in a different range. And as a team, there's more people to work off of.



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I got so many other outside things going on: Vitamin Water, G-Unit clothing, watches, rims, sneakers. But right now, all I care about is my music and this film, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. When I went into the movie, I was excited about it. I think everyone's gonna be surprised at my performance in the film. Especially after Samuel L. Jackson made the statements that he made—I don't think that they expect me to act. I got the best possible director for this film, Jim Sheridan. We let my acting coach go, when we started rehearsing. Jim kind of became my acting coach.

I can accept directions from him. My acting coach was really light-spoken. She was a really nice lady, and sometimes she don't know how to tell me when I'm wrong, 'cause she's looking at me like, "Oh shit, this is 50 Cent." I think she's seeing it like the general public has seen it, based on the impression that I'll do something to them. Like I'm menacing. I'm not. Well, maybe just a little. But I think that they misinterpret me a lot. I really want people to understand that my intentions aren't bad. I think that they think they are. I think overall, the general consensus of me is that I will do something to you. I don't think I created that image. I think they created that for me. I don't screw my face up. I smile at people. And then they say my smile is a "devilish grin." So this is just their perception.

I think that the same impression the general public has on me is what people I'm going to have meetings with have on me. So they're a little uneasy with me coming into the meetings, and then after they actually come in contact with me they relax.

I do this by just presenting myself professionally. By being accurate with information. I'm pretty much always on time. I'm not late for anything. It's just being professional. I think that people watch artists ahead of them that aren't professional. They say, "I need all green M&M's" or "I need this like this." They do it because they can. I'm probably the lowest-maintenance artist, in the position I'm in right now, that they've ever seen. And I'll do what I have to do for as long as I have to do it to get it done right.

I'm focused. Everything that I do is calculated. There's nothing that I haven't thought about. And in the next few years, my company will grow into a position where I won't be compared to rap labels anymore. I'll be compared to record labels, as music, but I wanna be compared to Quincy Jones, or Motown. —AS TOLD TO VANESSA SATTEN