

# REVIEWS

## SINGLES

### KANYE WEST & JAY-Z

H.A.M. (4:37)

**Producers:** Lex Luger, Kanye West

**Writers:** K. West, S.C. Carter, L.A.

Lewis, M. Dean

**Publishers:** various

Roc-a-Fella/Roc Nation/Def Jam/IDJMG

Critics and fans alike have expressed mixed emotions over "H.A.M.," the first single off Kanye West and Jay-Z's highly anticipated collaborative album, "Watch the Throne." Simply put: The song is good, but could have been better. Producer Lex Luger gives listeners a loaded beat full of psychedelic bang, with strings and opera-like hollers catering to fans with short attention spans. Unfortunately, the verses from these two hip-hop MVPs leave a lot to be desired. With all the explicit lyrics in his bar, West sounds too much like an ordinary hard-talking rapper and less like the vulnerable MC his fans appreciate. And while Jay-Z's lyrics sport a personal vibe, including mentions of his late uncle and nephew, the verse somehow still feels hollow. While "H.A.M." is a bit underwhelming, fans likely won't skip it when listening to the rest of "Throne."—MC



from despite his better judgment. Saadiq's talents as a singer, songwriter and producer allow him to craft a convincing throwback to a sound that his audience might not be old enough to remember.—EJN

### COUNTRY

#### EASTON CORBIN

I Can't Love You Back (4:05)

**Producer:** Carson

Chamberlain

**Writers:** C. Chamberlain,

C. Daniels, J. Hyde

**Publishers:** FSMGI/WCCR

Music administered by State

One Music America (IMRO/

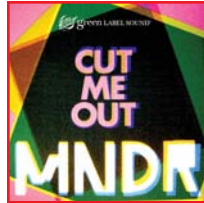
BMI), Sony/ATV Music

Publishing/Mammaw's

Cornbread Music (BMI)

Mercury Records

With his chart-topping debut single "A Little More Country Than That," Easton Corbin became one of country music's most successful new artists. He followed with the engaging hit "Roll With It," but on this third single, he slows down the tempo and reveals just how effective he can be as a balladeer. Penned by Carson Chamberlain, Clint Daniels and Jeff Hyde,



#### MNDR

Cut Me Out (3:15)

**Producer:** Peter Wade

Keusch

**Writers:** A. Warner,

P.W. Keusch

**Publishers:** SONGS Music

Publishing (SESAC), 120

Music/Kobalt (ASCAP)

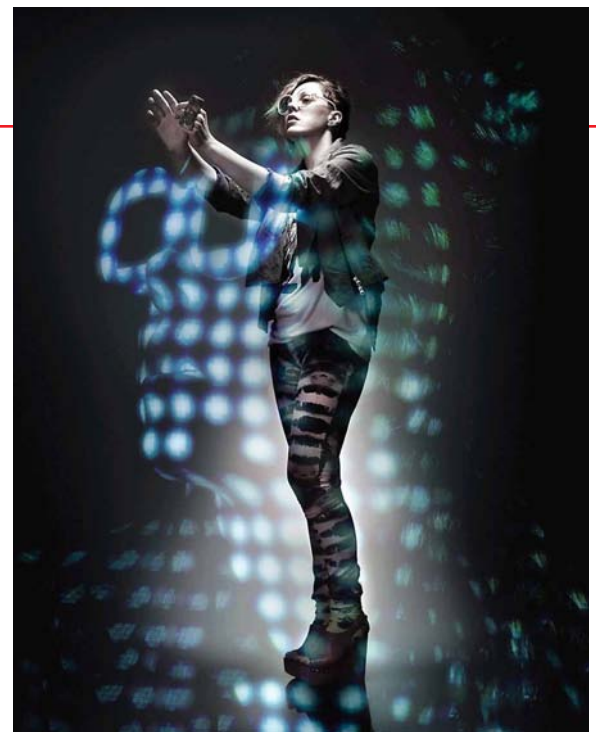
Green Label Sound

MNDR recently secured a

spot on Chromeo's Risky

Business tour, and judging

from new single "Cut Me Out," the upstart New York duo will fit in perfectly with its electro-funk audience. The track features airy synthesizers and heavily relies on vocal repetition, with sugary "oh oh oh" sounds and the song title being echoed in the hook. Singer Amanda Warner, who recently breathed life into the Mark Ronson single "Bang Bang Bang," possesses the vocal quirkiness of Santigold and the peppy style of the Sounds' Maja Ivarsson as she works over the single's steady beat. While the song loses some of its luster with repeated hearings, "Cut Me Out" is a solid club record and an impressive step toward mainstream success for the pair, which plans to release its debut full-length in early 2011.—KR



### R&B

#### RAPHAEL SAADIQ

Radio (3:21)

**Producer:** Raphael Saadiq

**Writer:** R. Saadiq

**Publisher:** Ugmo Music/

Universal Music Publishing

(ASCAP)

Columbia Records

Raphael Saadiq skillfully emulated '60s and '70s soul on his 2008 album "The Way I See It," but on "Radio," the first single from forthcoming set "Stone Rollin'," he returns to the primordial R&B of the pre-rock-'n'-roll era. The beach-borne guitar and doo-wop backing vocals simultaneously evoke

the classic sounds of Southern California and Chicago. Saadiq cleverly bridges the generational gap by choosing a lyrical theme that works just as well today as it would have 50 years ago. The singer personifies radio as a wild femme fatale who he can't turn away

ASHLYNE HUFF



#### ASHLYNE HUFF

White Flag (3:32)

**Producer:** Greg Ogan

**Writers:** E. Bellinger,

E. Bogart, A. Huff,

G. Ogan

**Publishers:** various

Liquid Digital Audio

After contributing a track to the Pussycat Dolls' most recent album and opening for Jordin Sparks last summer, Los Angeles singer/songwriter Ashlyne Huff takes the spotlight on her debut single, "White Flag." With a playful persona and charismatic voice, Huff smartly keeps the stakes of her introduction low by surrounding the song's beguiling hook



with light romantic musings. "I've been hiding from the truth this whole time/Picture perfect hanging right in front of me," Huff sings in the second verse before putting her "white flag in the air" and surrendering to her true love. Producer Greg Ogan's crackling beat recalls the synthesizer-laden drive of Katy Perry's "California Gurls" and takes off during a delightfully catchy bridge. "White Flag" makes unadulterated fun its top priority and gives Huff a powerful opening statement as a pop artist.—JL

"I Can't Love You Back" is a beautifully crafted song about a man who can't let go of a

failed romance. Corbin delivers an achingly vulnerable performance and makes his emotional pain palpable as he sings about trying to rekindle the flame in a relationship. Though his debut hit drew vocal comparisons to George Strait, with each successive single Corbin proves that he can carve out his own place in the country spotlight.—DEP

### POP

#### FAR\*EAST MOVEMENT FEATURING RYAN TEDDER

Rocketeer (3:31)

**Producers:** Stereotypes, the

Smeezingtons

**Writers:** various

**Publishers:** various

Cherrytree/Interscope

Following breakout hit "Like a

G6," electronic pop group

Far\*East Movement returns to the Billboard Hot 100 with the help of OneRepublic's Ryan Tedder. "Rocketeer," the second single off the act's latest studio album, "Free Wired," flashes a nice melody but lacks the uniqueness that made "G6" a surprise chart-topper. The song develops a more laid-back groove than its rhythmic predecessor, as Tedder sings the soothing chorus and Kev Nish tosses off lines like "Baby we can stay fly like a G6/Shop the streets of Tokyo, get you fly kicks." In terms of production, however, "Rocketeer" lacks diversity in its instrumentation and feels somewhat tired by the time of its conclusion. The song rolls along on a nice combination of pop elements, but Far\*East Movement should be willing to take more chances on future singles.—RG

## LEGEND & CREDITS

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