

CRITICAL BEATDOWN

THE JUMP OFF

50 Cent

The Massacre

G-UNIT/SHADY/INTERSCOPE

S M L XL XXL

We've seen it happen time and time again. MC So-And-So debuts strong only to crash and burn with their second LP. It's plagued the likes of Jeru Tha Damaja, Raekwon and the Pharcyde. Most artists usually blame the failure of their re-up disc on the dreaded sophomore jinx. But for every So-And-So, there is an exception. Someone like 50 Cent, a definitive star that makes more hits than excuses. Although his 2003 debut *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* moved over 10 million units worldwide, the rap behemoth looks to get even richer with *The Massacre*.

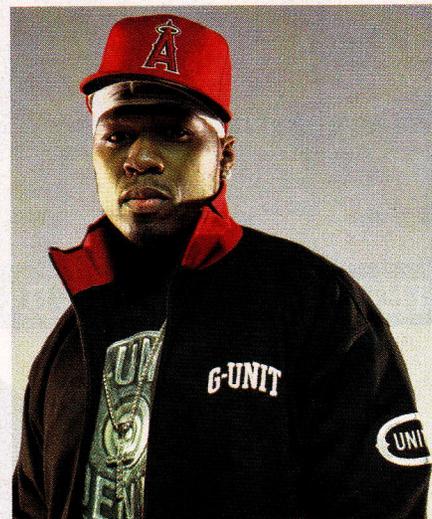
Relying on the same Formula 50 that brought him success in the past, the G-Unit boss packs his latest opus with pistol-packin' bravado and P.I.M.P. talk that, though expected, is strengthened by his new tax bracket. For the most part, the combination works. Take "Position of Power," where Fiddy recaps his meteoric climb to success over JR's criminally hard drums ("Made a hundred mil off music, hundred grand off crack/Now I'm about to see my jeweler so I can blow off a stack"). The potent percussion play continues on the broke-Mac-sprayin' "Piggy Bank," where the Queens native fires at everyone from Shyne

and Jadakiss to Fat Joe, who gets hit with, "That fat nigga thought 'Lean Back' was 'In Da Club'/My shit sold 11 mil', his shit was a dud."

But man can't live on beef alone. So instead of just taking shots at rappers, Mr. Jackson aims for the female mind and body, providing explicit and specific instructions on how to reach his G-G-G-G spot, on the Scott Storch-produced "A Lil' Bit" and scrumptious first single "Candy Shop." 50 then thaws out his heart on the potential summer scorcher "So Amazing," which, along with the lead single, features G-Unit First Lady Olivia.

As the project continues, pussy, power, pistols and paper seem to be the dominating themes. But like one of 50's mentors once said: Been there, done that. What fans (or maybe just critics) wanna hear from an artist positioned as the Biggie or Jay-Z of this new generation is growth and evolution—in layman's terms: classic shit. Instead, Hi-Tek's sonically charged instrumental for "Get In My Car" gets bogged down with misogynistic ramblings. The same can be said for "Ski Mask Way" and "This Is 50." While the latter's potential is supplied by Sha Money XL's smorgasbord of key flavors, lyrically there's nothing rewind-worthy.

Rather than push the envelope, 50 opts to play it safe. That's sad, considering there are glimpses of a deeper Curtis Jackson lurking beneath the surface. On the Dr. Dre-produced "Talkin' 'Bout Me," 50 freaks his version of



"Stan" by spittin' five verses about himself from the perspective of others. Then, on "Baltimore Love Thing," he pens a conceptual tale about a twisted love/hate relationship with the female personification of heroin. And if you need further proof of 50's depth, just check the introspective "God Gave Me Style," where he informs how lonely it is at the top.

Problem is, 50's deeper message is buried under all the bling-bling, bullets and battling. That's not to say *The Massacre* isn't a solid collection that ravages the sophomore jinx. It's just that at times it feels like 50 Cent got rich and stopped tryin'. —ANSLEM SAMUEL