



The self confessed bully of hip hop, Curtis Jackson a.k.a 50 Cent has returned with his long awaited (and frequently delayed), new album Before I Self Destruct. I spoke with him at G-Unit's offices in New York City just prior to the release of his new long player.

By Sarah Illingworth

# 50 CENT

## Seek And Destroy

I didn't know what to expect leading up to this interview with 50 Cent. Would he live up to his image and be arrogant, hard to talk to and on the defense? Au contraire - when I met him at G-Unit's new headquarters in Manhattan he was engaging, charismatic and, oddly, full of life advice.

At a time when Kanye West, the MC's chosen nemesis, has been forced to hang his head over yet another outburst, it could be 50's time to shine. He's back with a fourth, and potentially final, album on Interscope - Before I Self Destruct, a film of the same name he wrote, produced and directed himself, and a self-help-come-entrepreneurial manual titled The 50th Law. He's had his share of career lows of course, but whatever you think of him, Curtis Jackson is a multi-million dollar making superstar. There's gotta be a little genius mixed in.

**There have been so many delays leading up to the release of Before I Self Destruct. Is it good to have it out?**

Yeah, my last album was in 2006. This project I'm excited about, 'cause I want to see how [people] respond to the content on this album.

**Why is that?**

To me, this is the prequel to [my debut] Get Rich Or Die Tryin'. It's like all of my experiences prior to the time period that I created the material that they enjoyed on Get Rich. And I feel like it shows more imperfections than the projects I put out to this point. When I listen to rappers, [or] hip hop music in general, I think [MC's are] creating the coolest guy possible. You know - they write the guy who has the best finances, they write the toughest guys, they write the things that they would [do] - if they weren't that themselves - that they admire about other people. They don't write the things about themselves that weren't so cool, in a way that sounds cool. Like, Em[inem] would say something on a record, and I'd be like 'damn, that wasn't cool to say, but it sounded so good'. He had a record where he was getting touched by someone, but you're like 'yo, what the fuck?! Yo, play it again'. You're not supposed to wanna hear that again, you know what I mean? In the inner cities, where [people] come from an environment where they don't have a lot of money, you can write things that they identify

with, and they can feel that you've been through similar struggles that they've gone through, or you can write the life that they wish they had. In some ways they can aspire to be you.

**You have a similar background but things are obviously different for you now. What was it like when the change happened? Was it kind of a weird, awkward time?**

You know what...it [was]. I think you see yourself the way you are. From my perspective, I did. I didn't see the transition. [For] the public, the transition was happening for them. I just saw new stages and more people and really nice hotel rooms, while that transition that you're talking about was happening. And [I was] happy at that point, because people were finally acknowledging the music. For me it was like experiencing everything that I wished for initially. If you asked me to make a wish in 2003 it would be that my music would be a success. That's it, that's all that mattered. And, when the things that come with having successful projects come, it changes everything. The finances, the women, everything... your lifestyle just changes completely. And either

you can indulge in the success that you're actually having, or you reflect on the struggle, how hard it was to get to that point - and why people are angry. Because, where I'm from, when people get confused, they get angry... because anger is a more comfortable feeling than not knowing what's going on period. So, they get angry to find a more comfortable space to deal with those emotions, as opposed to actually dealing with informing themselves at that point.

**So who are you writing to with this album?**

Well I'm writing for me. I stopped writing for people - the Curtis album was me trying to offer something different. If you listen to my cadence on 'Ayo Technology', you've never heard me rap that way because I was trying to find a new space in collaboration with Justin

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Timberlake. It was a great record, and it was a great collaboration...it wasn't a mistake at all. A lot of the other songs I did were me meeting other artists, doing something that they would do too from my perspective. This album, I kinda kept it to myself. It's really Em, it's one song with me and Eminem. The rest of the album is me. And then there's a bonus track with me and R. Kelly.

**And it's a busy time, obviously, with the book.**

Yeah, The 50th Law. I got turned onto Robert [Greene] after my music took off. I was reading [his books] 48 Laws, and 33 Strategies of War, and The Art of Seduction because reading became a bigger form of entertainment for me when the touring started. I met him in 2006 and we started this project. It took us three years for us to finish it. When I met him, he was completely not what I thought he was going to be. He was a totally different guy and we'd look like the complete odd couple if you'd seen us sitting together. We had so many similarities and views on how we would deal with situations that it made perfect sense for us to collaborate.

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**What's the idea behind the book?**

The book deals with fear a lot. I think a lot of people are afraid to move to the next level without being conscious of it. 'Cause they may do everything that it says for them to require, or be eligible, to move into a good space and then get there and not apply themselves. You go to school, you get your masters in the area you're in, [and] you get your job. [Now] you're in the boardroom and they're asking a question and you know the answer, but someone else is answering the question a lot of times. If I'm in corporate settings I'll ask questions because I want the answers. I'm not afraid of people in a room [thinking] I don't know. I'd rather leave the room knowing, 'cause I asked the question, than conceal that I didn't know.

**Being in the position that you're in, it's probably a little easier to do that than it is for the average person -**

[Yes] but it depends on how you look at it. People always look at my scenarios and my hardship - I think [pain is relative] for each individual. So, something extreme as me being shot nine times may be in my life, it may be just you breakin' up with someone. It might seem like it's something simple to someone else, but it ain't that simple to you because you're invested in it emotionally. Everybody has their own situations that they can point to, things that were hurtful to them, and I think they gotta use those, 'cause if you look at that, whatever you're up against that day at work is tiny compared to what that was. Even losing that job wouldn't be as bad as losing that relationship.

**You have a movie coming out too -**

Before I Self Destruct? I'm excited about it - it's the first movie I wrote, produced and directed myself. And I think it's good, I think it shows the cause and effect [of the record].

**Is it biographical?**

No...I took the dysfunctional behaviours that's on the record, and wrote them into the characters' lifestyle, and showed the circumstances to how these things can actually happen. You'll watch the film and understand why the things that I'm saying on the record are factual.

**Does the album itself have a storyline?**

Well the album has pieces...it's my experience, but at different points. It's a collage of events, behaviours and moods. I think the record is a classic. I've already deemed it a classic in my head. The first single's off to a great start, 'Baby By Me' featuring Ne-Yo.

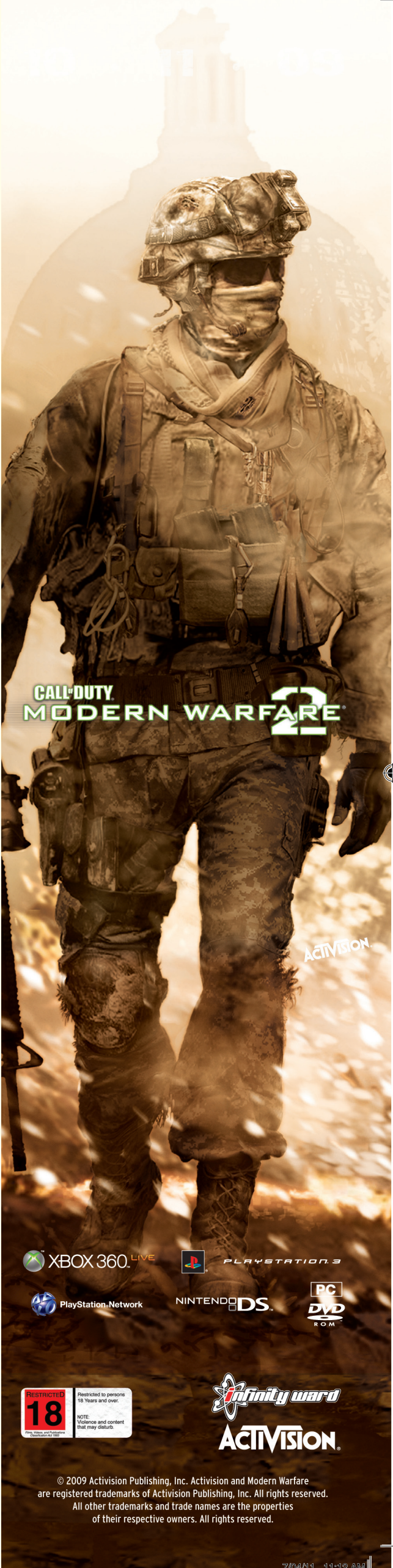
**Is this going to be your last album with Interscope? What are you anticipating?**

Well, we're negotiating. I think most artists have issues with the label at different points, and I obviously have my issues with Interscope, but all of the success that I've had has been with Interscope [laughs]. I've experienced some shit prior to Interscope that was a lot worse. I just gotta go through the negotiation process.

**But you want to keep making albums?**

Yeah, I didn't lose my passion for music and just the opportunity to be a part of the storytelling with more depth, like the film projects, is exciting to me, but I would never replace music with film.

*Before I Self Destruct is out now through Universal.*



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