



## Matt White

Notion isn't a gossip magazine but such is the spice doing the rounds that I just had to let it all hang out: Nelly is rumoured to have popped the question to none other than Murder Inc's Ashanti. There are pictures of the two of them all over the web so there must be something to this...

Busta Rhymes is gearing up for his debut release on Dr Dre's Aftermath label, and the taster features Ol' Dirty Bastard; 'Where's Your Money' is a total knockout. On the subject of knockouts, Busta was recently involved in fisticuffs with the boxer Zab Judah, but they are good friends!

Floetry, the UK's best imports since Soul II Soul, have finished their album 'Flo'ology' and will drop their first single, 'Supastar', featuring Common imminently and the album should follow soon afterwards. A split rumoured to be going down is between Lil Jon and The Eastside Boys. Will there be a beef or battle raps?

The most famous split of this year was between 50 and The Game, and neither of them have wasted time in recruiting new soldiers; 50 already has Mobb Deep and M.O.P. and the chatter is that possibly Mase could be joining him. Meanwhile The Game is rumoured to be in talks with the legend Kool G Rap and Shyne, another sworn enemy of 50's. Plus 50 has a very busy year ahead, what with his tour, book, film, watches, new soundtrack and his re-issued album (with a video for every track on the album – now, that's a first).

Kanye West has finally dropped his new album, 'Late Registration', and once again he has delivered. Check out 'Gold Digger', 'Heard 'Em Say' and 'Drive Slow'.

**And for me it's another year, another MOBO nomination. Fingers crossed I may finally get my hands on one. Will let you know next time...**

## R&B reviews by Angharad Williams

### Bobby Valentino Tell Me

DEF JAM

East meets west in this smooth club track where Bobby takes the role of romancer. The highlight has to be the production; the Chinese-style strings and a prominent beat blend beautifully, to the point where much of Bobby's lyrics are lost. This is the downfall of the track as the lyrics don't suit the mystical sounds of the Eastern influence. However, it is still a heavy track which people are already talking about.

★★★

### Mario feat. Juvenile Boom

J RECORDS

Here we go with another Lil Jon beat which sounds very similar to all those other crunked-up r&b tracks doing the rounds

right now. This track proves that Mario can adapt to a faster-paced beat than his slow jams have, but you can give me one of the slower numbers over this any day. This is a definite for the clubs thanks to its A-Town vibe. Just watch for the obvious – and inevitable – comparisons to another prince of r&b.

★★★

### Mariah Carey Say Something

DEF JAM

Mariah returns with this much hyped single. This is the most up-tempo track from Mimi's latest album and has production thanks to the all-conquering Neptunes and a cameo by the one and only Snoop Dogg. These features take Mariah into new territory, another step away from her usual soulful ballads. This is a bouncy track which has

a different flava to those on the rest of the album and looks set to challenge the reigning queens of r&b.

★★★★

### Amerie Talkin' About

SONY

Amerie hits us again with another club track which will delight fans of the club banger '1 Thing'. However, this track is a much better showcase for Amerie's voice, and the blend of percussion, horns and beats come together deliciously. This is one of those tracks that, once it's in your head, it's stuck in there forever! Look out for the remix featuring the skills of Foxy Brown.

★★★

### Craig David Just Chillin'

WARNER

This is one of the funkier numbers from the Southampton singer's

latest album. It's got an interesting mix of sounds which is very American in style, however it lacks a certain something that many of his peers have. Not quite a club hit but it may appeal to the teenyboppers in us. This is a good cut but not the best we've heard from Craig.

★★

### Soundboy Entertainment feat. Elexa I Got You

WHITE LABEL

This UK cut is one to look out for in the coming months. The beat comes thanks to the Yin Yang Twins' 'Whisper Song' underlying impressive candy-coated vocals by Elexa. The drops of the lovers' phone conversations in the mix does work and adds an extra dimension to the tune. This may be a difficult one to track down but well worth the trouble.

★★★★