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Story by Emma Hurt

While it may seem hard to believe, recently Madonna's *Like a Virgin* album turned 30. One of the most-iconic albums of all time, it brought the world such epic tracks, including its title track, "Material Girl," "Dress You Up" and arguably defined Madonna's career. As a

producer for the first time, she heavily influenced all aspects of the second album alongside co-producer Nile Rodgers and, with it, ensured that no one would refer to her as a one-album novelty.

Defying the idea that sequels never live up to originals, *Like a Virgin* reminds us of the other sophomore album standouts that made careers and changed genres. She's like an icon for a reason, right?

Aaliyah's *One in a Million* (1996)

This album is often referred to as a defining moment in R&B, both for Aaliyah and Timbaland, and for the genre in the late 1990s. With Missy Elliot and Timbaland writing and Timbo producing a great deal of this album, it contrasts greatly with the R. Kelly influence on Aaliyah's debut album. "If Your Girl Only Knew," "One in a Million" and "Got to Give it Up" are a few of the tracks reflecting the deeper,

softer, more soulful sound that characterizes her sadly too-short career.

Christina Aguilera's *Stripped* (2003)

Three years after her self-titled debut, Aguilera's *Stripped* premiered her new alter ego, Xtina and completely changed the world's perception of the teen pop star. With her newfound creative control, she addressed issues like sexuality, self-respect and feminism head on. "Dirrty," "Beautiful," and "Fighter," remain among her best-known songs of all time, and *Stripped's* release made her the most successful female artist of 2003.

Kanye West's *Late Registration* (2005)

While no one can dispute the aftershocks of West's College Dropout, his second album really set the stage for his career. Unlike on the first, West had the money to hire a string orchestra on this album and called on film composer Jon Brion to conduct it. The partnership and collaborations with artists like Adam Levine, Brandy and Jamie Foxx made for an album with a much more complex and diverse sound.

Rolling Stone's review described it as West claiming "the whole world of music as hip-hop turf." Debuting atop of the Billboard 200 chart, the album's "Touch the Sky," "Gold Digger," and "Diamonds from Sierra Leone" stand out to this day. It was the early evidence of how far his range could and would go. And it won him five Grammys.

Amy Winehouse's *Back to Black* (2006)

Selling around 20 million globally to her first album's two, *Back to Black* represents Winehouse's musical legacy. The soulful departure from the jazzy sounds of *Frank* shot her to the top of the charts with hits like "Rehab" and "You Know I'm No Good." She received eight Grammy nominations and six awards, one of which was posthumous. It's also a bittersweet studio album though, as her final one. It makes us wistful for what else she could have done, if not for her tragic premature exit.

Adele's 21 (2011)

After being exposed to American country and bluegrass music on her 2008-2009 US tour, the soulful sound Adele debuted with *19* deepened and developed to incredible acclaim and commercial success. "Someone Like You," "Turning Tables," "Set Fire to the Rain," "Rumour Has It," and "Rolling in the Deep" all came off this sophomore album sensation, which garnered seven Grammy nominations and seven statues.

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