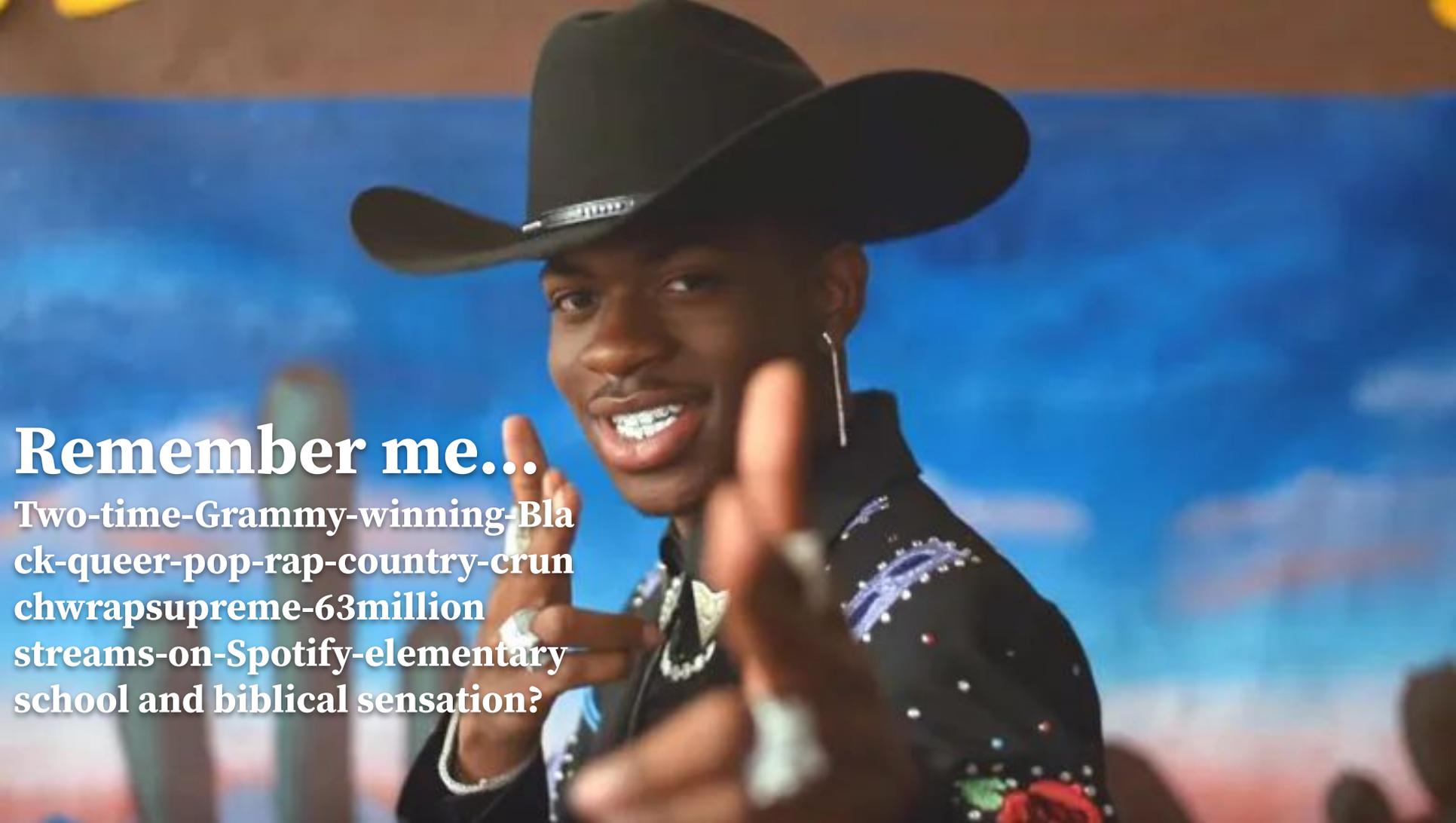


2021

Arts & Letters

Lil Nas X | “Montero”

Exploring the Tactics of
America’s Greatest Marketer
October 2021



Remember me...

Two-time-Grammy-winning-Black-queer-pop-rap-country-cru
chwrapsupreme-63million
streams-on-Spotify-elementary
school and biblical sensation?

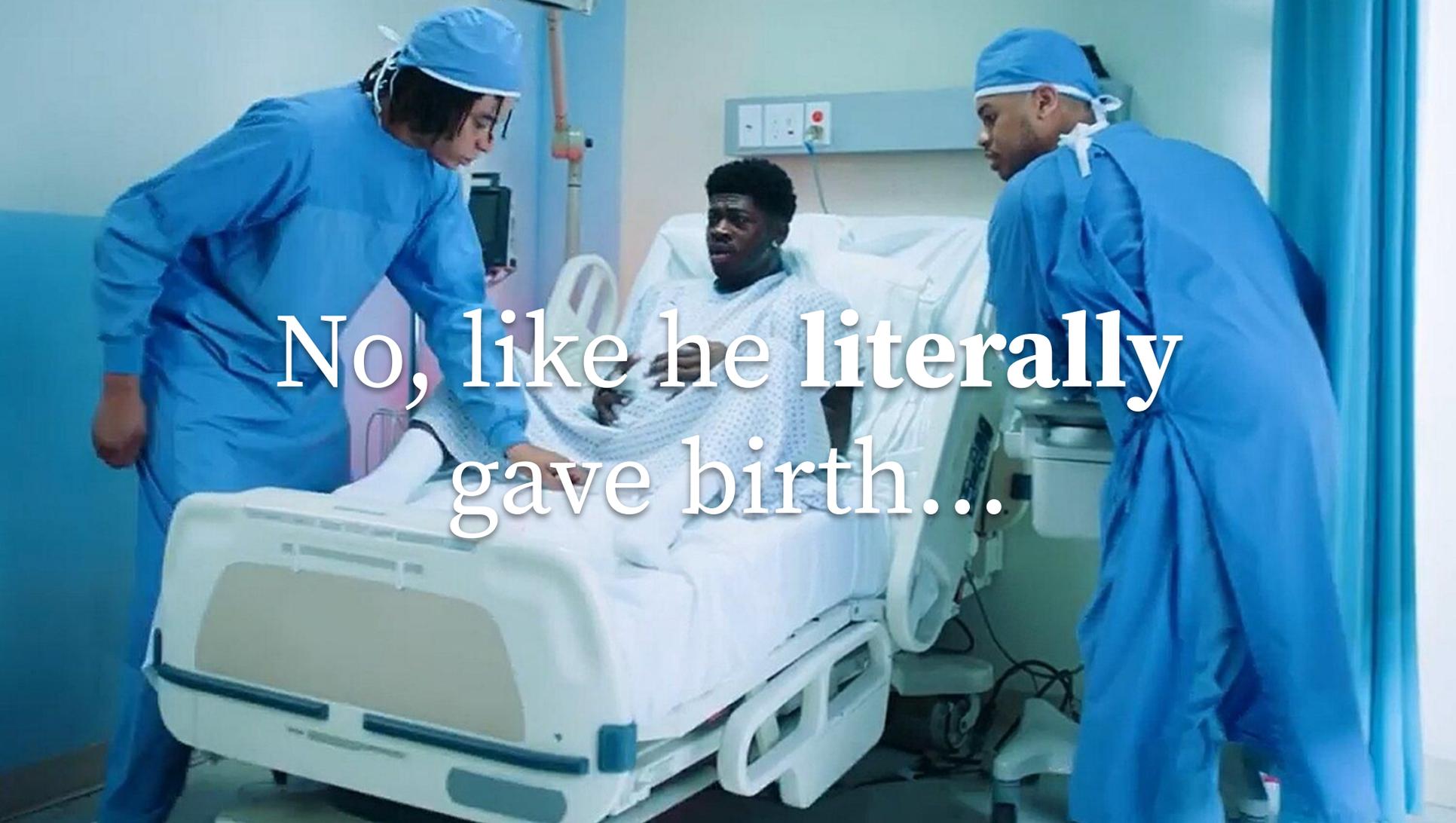


I'm Back!

Since coming into the scene in 2019 with *Old Town Road*, Lil Nas X has continuously challenged genre, gender, and general boundaries.

His name is often paired with controversy, but sheds light on a slew of issues all others choose to ignore.

This year was no different; on September 17th, 2021 Lil Nas X gave birth to his first “industry baby,” *Montero*.

A photograph of a man sitting in a hospital bed, looking towards the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a white hospital gown. Two medical professionals in blue scrubs and caps are leaning over the bed, one on each side, appearing to be in the middle of a procedure or examination. The setting is a clinical room with light blue walls and medical equipment visible in the background.

No, like he **literally**
gave birth...

01

Making an *Industry Baby*

Examining the genius marketing tactics behind *Montero*

True to pregnancy, Lil Nas X activated in trimesters

	Conceive 3/26-7/23	Announce & Prepare 8/25-9/17	Deliver 9/17	
Comms Task	Spark buzz around album themes.	Announce and hype <i>Montero's</i> due date.	Enable an unforgettable entrance.	
Channels	Owned Social Music Videos PR TikTok, Twitter, Instagram	Owned Social Digital OOH TikTok, Twitter, Instagram <i>People</i> YouTube Billboards	Owned Social Digital PR TikTok, Twitter, Instagram YouTube	
Key Content	 3/26 <i>Call Me By Your Name</i> video release  April <i>Nike lawsuit</i> 7/23 <i>Industry Baby</i> video release	 8/25 Teasers begin  8/31 Drake parody  9/2 <i>Belly Reveal</i>	 9/2 <i>People</i> photoshoot  9/15 <i>Baby shower</i>  9/16 <i>Billboards</i>  9/16 <i>The Montero Show</i>	 9/17 <i>Birth video</i>



Takeaway 1

Con the system

In March, Lil Nas X released the music video for *Montero (Call Me By Your Name)* which featured biblical scenery and a lap dance on Satan.

Riding on the success, he created 666 pairs of limited edition [“Satan shoes”](#) containing a drop of human blood, which ultimately earned him a lawsuit from Nike and a hell of a lot of PR.

Although Nike won the lawsuit and production of the shoes halted, the traction from the news perfectly set up the consecutive music video, *Industry Baby*, which Lil Nas X teased with a court date on social. Tweets featuring a CTA link to [FreeLilNasX.com](#) routed to his album microsite.



Takeaway 2

Lil Nas X is social media expert level one million

Lil Nas X has owned the internet for a while - leveraging his humor and Twitter-origins to activate and engage his fan base. Most notably for *Montero*, Lil Nas X religiously posted content to TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter.

Social content served as a reminder for the “album due date” and showed him along his pregnancy journey. On TikTok, he used snippets of new songs, “That’s What I Want,” and “Scoop” as in-app audio.



His pregnancy was exclusive to social - shedding the act for industry events like the VMAs and Met Gala (*far right*).

Why? Wouldn't the publicity from these mass media events bring positive traction to his campaign? Potentially, Lil Nas X wanted to keep his internet persona separate from his industry appearances, which feels off-brand for this unapologetic star.



Takeaway 3

He liberally takes from pop culture as much as he makes it

In homage to the infamous Beyonce pregnancy shoot, Lil Nas X posed for an exclusive digital *People* photoshoot.

Not only did he post these images to social, but accompanied them with a sonogram (look closely, it's his album art).

He also played off Drake's album launch, which was Billboard competition launching at the same time, to drum up press for his launch.



Takeaway 4

Charitable giving has a place in album launches

A clever way to generate buzz around both the album and featured artists, Lil Nas X threw himself a baby shower, where unfortunately, no one showed up. Gifts left behind read “Elton,” “Doja,” “Miley,” and more nodding to the collabs on the album.

In traditional baby shower fashion, attendees (fans) could purchase a gift for Montero off the [registry](#), which listed a charity organization for each track prominently benefitting LGBTQ+ and Black efforts.

Despite using pregnancy as a buzz mechanism, *none* of the organizations listed benefitted women’s health or motherhood.



Takeaway 5

The bigger the universe, the bigger the playground

“In life, we hide the parts of ourselves we don’t want the world to see . . . But here we don’t. Welcome to Montero.” Lil Nas X, born Montero Lamar Hill, was using his given name for a fantastical underworld of his own making, a pastel-colored utopia where everyone could fly a freak flag.” - [The New Yorker](#)

BILLBOARDS

Lil Nas X took to the streets (and the sky) to tout his album with spoofs on legal billboards with language like “Gay? You may be entitled to financial compensation.”

Three billboards featuring his lawyer character from the *Industry Baby* music video appeared around LA shortly before the album release.



Takeaway 5 cont.

The bigger the universe, the bigger the playground

The night before the album release, September 16th, Lil Nas X hosted “The Montero Show,” a YouTube comedic skit featuring himself as various characters on a talk-show stage.

Nine whole minutes of music video countdowns inclusive of dancing, labor pains, and interview questions ultimately lead up to the moment we’ve all been waiting for - the album delivery.

Right after his water broke, *The Montero Show* cut to static and ushered in the big delivery.



Takeaway 6

He follows through unapologetically

We follow Lil Nas X into the delivery room where he births his debut album - accumulating over 11M views to date. The entire album launch embodied the boldness present in the album and pre-released music videos:

“These videos are hugely important. They’re such an antidote to the toxic masculinity rampant in the Trump years,” said Virginia Kuhn, a cinema professor at USC who teaches feminist film theory. “In a culture dominated by visual media, to disrupt that core imagery is so powerful. He’s taking on football and Christianity, prison, childbirth and marriage. This has it all. It feels like the ’80s with Madonna’s videos.” - [LA Times](#)

02

The Art of Realization

(takeaways)

What he got right...

- 1 Surpassing teasers** - so many album drops resort to teasers and easter eggs, while Lil Nas X took the opposite approach: crafting a world and ongoing social content around the album.
- 2 Diversified media** - the campaign was multifaceted (OOH, digital, social, and PR) and played into cultural trends around baby announcements, parties, and social posts.
- 3 True to humor** - Lil Nas X's fanbase loves his bold, unapologetic humor. None of the album promotion *felt* like an ad.

What we wish he did...

- 1 Benefit mothers / female sexual health** - Lil Nas X featured so many organizations on his baby registry, except for those centric to motherhood, pregnancy, & female-sexual health.
- 2 Consider wider cultural context** - Lil Nas X not only exploited a uniquely female experience for buzz, he was able to “drop the act” when convenient (ex. Met Gala) while women were left grappling with the passing of the Texas Heartbeat Act.

Lil Nas X Is Now the Most-Streamed Male Rapper on Spotify

With 52,318,623 monthly listeners.



Montero Video has over 370M Views



Lil Nas X Charts @ChartLilNasX · Oct 11
.@LilNasX's "THATS WHAT I WANT" has reached 100 million streams on Spotify. It's his 9th song to achieve this.



MONTERO



Lil Nas X Charts @ChartLilNasX · 7h
.@LilNasX's "MONTERO" has reached 1.9 billion streams on Spotify. It's his fastest project to achieve this.



MONTERO



And most importantly,
he won over the nuns.
(kidding).

A & L