Beyonce album breaks iTunes sales record

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Beyonce performs during the Super Bowl XLVII Halftime Show at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome on February 3, 2013 in New Orleans, Louisiana

Apple on Monday announced that music fans snapped up more than 800,000 digital versions of Beyonce's new album in just three days, smashing an iTunes record.

The eponymous album titled simply "Beyonce" sold 828,773 copies through the weekend, easily eclipsing a record set by Justin Timberlake

after the March release of "The 20/20 Experience," according to Apple.

Beyonce's album was released exclusively in Apple's online iTunes Store and became a top seller in 104 countries, Apple said.

Beyonce surprised fans Friday by releasing a previously unannounced fifth solo album on iTunes, bypassing customary record roll-outs and creating a sensation on the Internet.

Despite the lack of prior publicity, the self-titled album is an elaborate production, including videos shot around the world.

The pop diva returns to the feminist themes of her earlier works and, in some of her most intimate ballads yet, performs with her husband Jay-Z and their baby, Blue Ivy.

"I didn't want to release my music the way I've done it. I am bored with that. I feel like I am able to speak directly to my fans," Beyonce said in the statement.

The work was described as a "visual album' because it included videos shot in an array of locations including Paris, Sydney, New York City, and Rio de Janeiro.

Now 32, Beyonce delves into female sexuality and empowerment in songs such as "Pretty Hurts." In the video, Beyonce plays the role of a beauty pageant contestant under pressure to keep a trim waist.

"Blonder hair, flat chest / TV says bigger is better. South Beach, sugar free / Vogue says thinner is better," sings Beyonce, no stranger to changing hair styles.

A hard copy, double CD/DVD of the album was to be available in stores

before Christmas.

California-based Apple describes iTunes as the world's most popular music shop, featuring a library of more than 26 million songs and being available in 119 countries.

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