A$AP Rocky's newest album fell flat

By Jay'Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

When I heard A$AP Rocky's album "Don't Be Dumb" was released on Jan. 16, his first full-length project in eight years, I expected a defining statement.

Rocky is not just a Harlem rapper, but a fashion icon and cultural tastemaker whose earlier albums such as "LONG.LIVE.A$AP" and "AT.LONG.LAST.A$AP," set a high bar for creativity and influence. After such a long absence, it felt reasonable to anticipate something of that caliber.

Instead, "Don't Be Dumb" is an uneven project. It showcases Rocky's artistic ambition and willingness to experiment, but it rarely delivers the kind of urgency that made his earlier work resonate so deeply.

While the album introduces a rougher, punk-influenced version of Rocky, it still did not amuse me.

The album opens with tracks that immediately establish some of Rocky's strengths as an artist. Lead singles like "HELICOPTER" pair energetic production with his elastic flow.

Still, despite their polish, these songs lack a lasting punch and never quite reach true "hit" status.

The rap centerpiece is "STOLE YA FLOW," a fiery diss track that channels Rocky's ongoing tensions with Drake.

Whether interpreted as a strategic move in rap politics or a burst of genuine frustration, the track stands out as one of the album's most essential moments.

At the same time, its prominence threatens to overshadow the rest of the project. The attention surrounding the diss risks reducing the album's conversation to rap beef rather than the music itself, which ultimately hurts its longevity.

Elsewhere, tracks like "NO TRESSPASSING" and "STOP SNITCHING" highlight Rocky's ability to move between moods, blending dark club energy with aggressive beats.

While these songs are competent and atmospheric, they stop short of truly pushing boundaries. The experimentation feels familiar rather than revelatory.

Rocky is at his most compelling on the album's softer moments.

Songs like "STAY HERE 4 LIFE," featuring Brent Faiyaz, and "PLAYA" lean into romance and introspection, layering melodic hooks over R&B-leaning production. These tracks reveal an emotional depth and restraint that deserved more room to breathe.

Many of the album's weaker moments stem from indulgence. Tracks such as "STFU" and "AIR FORCE (BLACK DEMARCO)" feel like aimless detours that bloat the runtime without adding much substance.

The pacing suffers because of boring add-ons. Interludes and skits like "INTERROGATION" interrupt momentum and longer cuts occasionally sag under their own weight.

Even strong guest features sometimes outshine Rocky himself, making him feel like a feature on his own record.

Lyrically, the album is inconsistent. There are flashes of sharp wit and personality, but too often Rocky revisits familiar themes without offering new insight. At points, the flow feels playful rather than pointed, and several hooks lack the precision needed to pull the song together.

What ultimately makes "Don't Be Dumb" interesting is its refusal to stay in one lane. The genre-hopping is both the album's greatest strength and its biggest flaw.

Rocky's willingness to take risks keeps the project from feeling stale, but the lack of cohesion prevents it from fully landing.

In fact, the album quietly suggests a direction Rocky might benefit from exploring more fully: R&B.

His melodic chemistry with artists like Brent Faiyaz hints that a tighter, R&B-focused project could allow him to refine his sound rather than stretch it thin. An album centered on that softer, more introspective side could play to his strengths a lot more than this punk-rock style.

For fans who grew up with "LONG.LIVE.A$AP" or "AT.LONG.LAST.A$AP," "Don't Be Dumb" will not replace those classics.

Still, it proves that Rocky has not lost his creative spark. What remains uncertain is whether he is willing to shape that spark into something worth listening to on repeat.

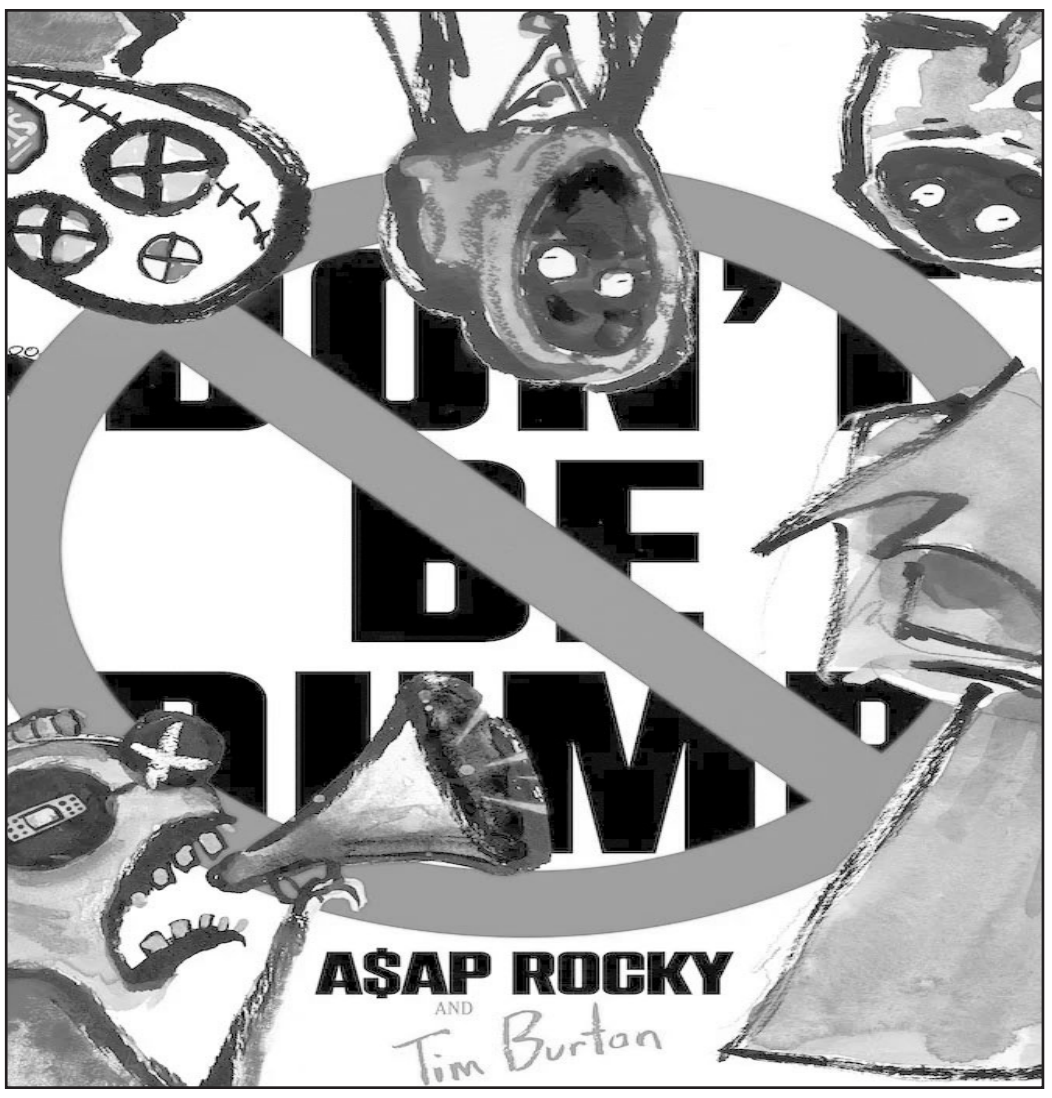
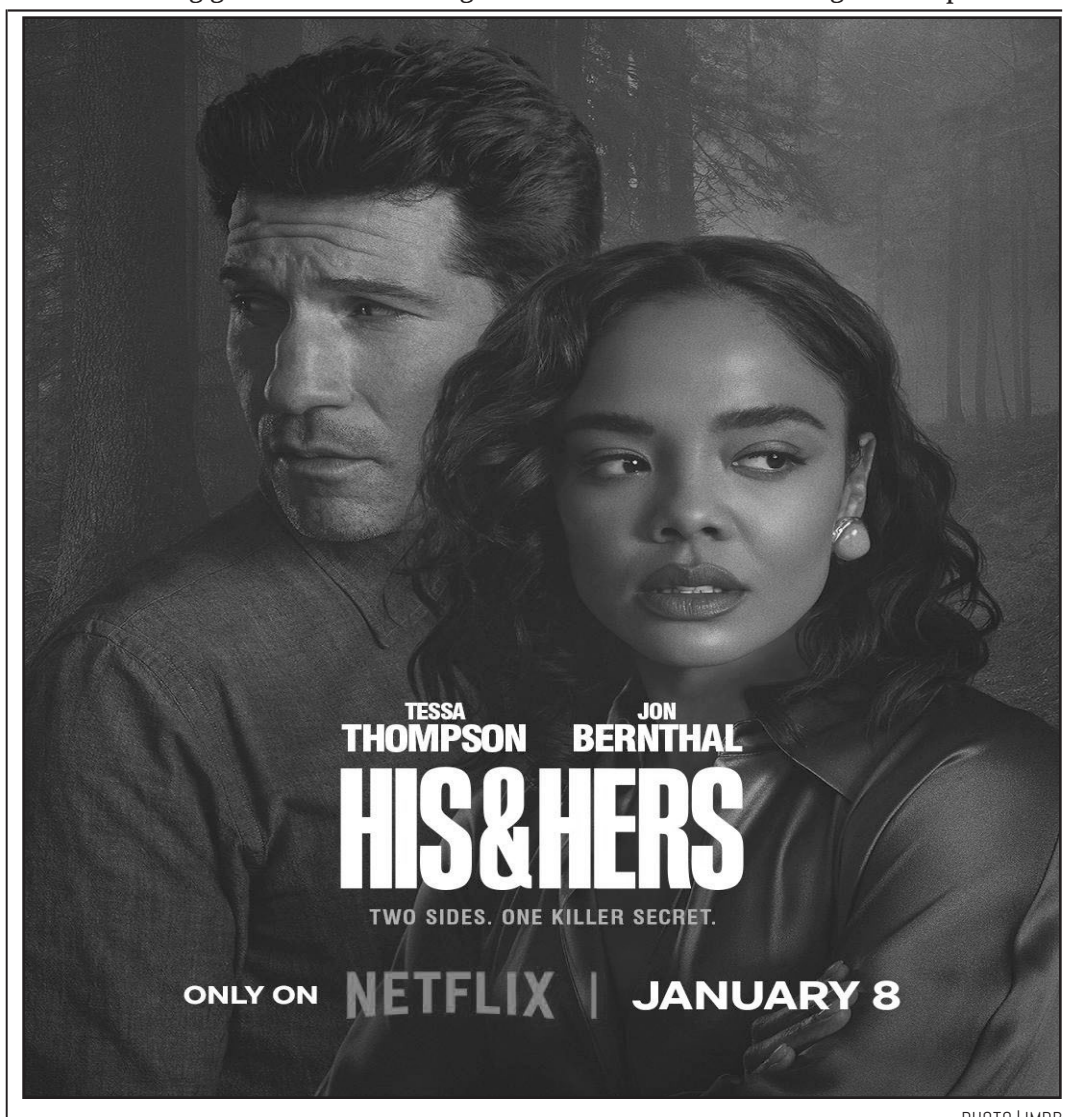


PHOTO | PITCHFORK

A$AP Rocky's cover art for "Don't Be Dumb," which features art from filmmaker and animator, Tim Burton.



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The promotional image for Netflix's "His & Hers," which features the two main characters, Anna and Jack.

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Netflix 'His & Hers' is one of the platforms best shows

By Jay'Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

Netflix's limited series "His & Hers," is one of the platform's greatest releases.

The series stood out to me not because it tried to reinvent the crime drama, but because it approached the genre in an engaging way.

It focuses on perspective, character and emotional tension. That choice is what ultimately made the series so engaging to watch. I personally binged the series in one day.

The story centers on both Anna, a successful television journalist, and Jack, a police detective who also happens to be her estranged husband.

When a murder takes place in their hometown, the two are pulled back together professionally and personally.

What I appreciated most about this setup is that the mystery never feels separate from the characters' relationship.

The investigation is shaped by their shared history, making the story feel more personal and emotionally grounded than a standard whodunit.

One of the aspects I enjoyed most about the series was its pacing. The series unfolds slowly and deliberately, allowing tension to build over time rather than relying on constant action.

While some viewers may find this approach understated, I found it refreshing. The show gives the audience space to think, question and piece things together on their own.

Each episode adds new information while also complicating what came before, making it hard to fully trust any single perspective.

The performances also played a major role in my positive reaction to the series.

Tessa Thompson brings a quiet intensity to Anna, balancing her polished on-screen persona with moments of vulnerability that feel authentic.

Jon Bernthal's portrayal of Jack is equally effective, capturing a sense of emotional exhaustion and unresolved frustration.

I especially liked how their interactions felt restrained rather than dramatic, which made their shared past feel believable. The tension between them often said more than dialogue ever could.

Visually, the series maintains a muted and subtle style that fits the tone of the story.

The small-town setting feels isolating rather than comforting, reinforcing the idea that familiarity can make people overlook uncomfortable truths.

The series does not rely on flashy visuals, and I found that this simplicity helped keep the focus on the characters and their conflicting versions of events.

The ending was another element that stood out to me. Instead of providing an easy or reassuring conclusion, the series ends with a bold reveal that forces viewers to rethink everything they have seen.

I appreciated that the show committed fully to its themes, even if the ending may not work for everyone. Rather than trying to please the audience, it stays true to its message about perception, bias and control over storytelling.

Overall, "His & Hers" succeeds because it trusts its audience. It does not overexplain its ideas or rush toward resolution. Instead, it invites viewers to engage with the story on a deeper level.

For me, having the combination of strong performances, deliberate pacing and thematic consistency made it one of the more memorable thrillers Netflix has released recently.

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