

Arts and Entertainment

Where's the real Ashanti?

Emily Killian
Pilot Co-Editor

Ashanti has been a part of the R&B world for years, after pairings with the Notorious B.I.G., Fat Joe and Ja Rule helped get her name out to the public. Her association with the Murder Inc. artists, especially Ja Rule, gave her career a strong boost with the release of her debut self-titled album.

When I heard her first solo album, I thought, "dang, this girl can sing!"

Ashanti's "Chapter II," however, left me wondering where the real Ashanti was on the album. Sandwiched between skits were a few good songs, but only a few left more than a passing impression.

The skits got on my nerves and were a waste of my time to listen to. The intro only made me

remember how good her first album sounded, while some of the rest of the songs had an early 90s feel to them ("I Found Lovin'" and "Carry On") and there was no overarching style to her work. It was almost as if she threw a bunch of junk together just to fill space so she could crank out another album.

Now my thoughts are closer to, "wow, this girl is wasting her talent." Overall she's a wonderful singer with a lot of potential—potential that was not filled in "Chapter II."

"Rock Wit U (Awww Baby)," "Ohhh Ahhh" and "Sweet Baby" caught my ear, despite their obvious sexual innuendos. "Feel so Good," once the actual song starts is very catchy, but the beginning of it and certain parts of it have entirely too many interruptions.

On the positive side,

"Breakup 2 Makeup" has a nice casual sound with a message that resonates with many people because of its theme of making up after a break up. The soulful sounds of "Rain on Me" were quite pleasant as was "Then Ya Gone," in which Ashanti reminds us that we should be living each day the best we can because we never know how long our lives will be.

"U Say, I Say" reminds us that we should focus on the things in our lives that are important to us. This track, along with "I Don't Mind," is one of the few on the album that highlight her amazing singing voice.

"Living my Life" is possibly my favorite song on the album because of its optimistic message. In this track she tells how she has been through bad times but that she made it through those times.



Photo courtesy of Murder Inc. Records

S.W.A.T. shows action with a plot

Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures

Stars of S.W.A.T., Samuel L. Jackson and Colin Farrell, take a look down the subway line in their recent movie.



Rachel Jones
Pilot staff

When most of us see an action movie, we never really think about the plot. After all, isn't the point of the action film mainly to see things blow up and people fighting? With the universal plot of good cop vs.

bad cop, "S.W.A.T." takes the action genre to a new level: the explosions and action sequences don't bury the plot.

"S.W.A.T." begins with Jim Street (Colin Farrell) and his partner rashly disobeying orders and freeing hostages. Street and his partner are given a choice of demotion or

removal from the police force. Street, whose life is his job, stays on while his partner angrily leaves the Los Angeles Police Department. Street patiently bides his time, waiting for another chance to rejoin S.W.A.T. (Special Weapons and Tactics). His second chance comes in the form of Sergeant

Dan "Hondo" Harrelson (Samuel L. Jackson). Hondo, recruited by the chief of LAPD to "bring the luster back into S.W.A.T.," quickly chooses two highly respected S.W.A.T. members, T.J. McCabe (Josh Charles) and Michael Boxer (Brian Van Holt). Hondo recruits newcomers David "Deke" Kay (James Todd Smith a.k.a. LL Cool J) and Chris Sanchez, the first woman to ever be recruited by S.W.A.T. (Michelle Rodriguez, "The Fast and the Furious"). He then gives Street a long awaited chance to rejoin S.W.A.T.

Hondo's S.W.A.T. team quickly proves to be the best, and is assigned to escort an infamous drug lord, Alex Montel (Olivier Martinez, "Unfaithful"), to a federal prison. The catch: through the very news reports that verified his capture, Montel has publicly offered \$100 million to anyone who can free him. Greedy mercenaries soon race to free him, turning L.A. into a war zone.

Soon the only thing between the drug lord and his freedom is Hondo and his team.

Farrell has quickly risen to Hollywood fame in films such as "Phone Booth" and "Minority Report". His performance in "S.W.A.T." will only boost his star status. Jackson is an action movie veteran and should not be overlooked as the streetwise Sergeant. For those of you who look at T.J. McCabe and wonder, "Where have I seen him before?" think back to "Dead Poets' Society" and remember the love-struck Knox Overstreet.

Word to the wise, there are some realistic scenes that may cause squeamish reactions in the audience. Those who do enjoy action will be pleased by the authenticity of the police drama. Overall, "S.W.A.T." has great action sequences, solid performances by the actors, and a strong plot that doesn't end before the movie does.