

= American Gangster (album) =

American Gangster is the tenth studio album by American rapper Jay Z, released November 6, 2007 on Roc-A-Fella Records. It is his first concept album, which was inspired by the film of the same name. The album features production from Diddy & The Hitmen, Just Blaze, and The Neptunes, among others. Guest appearances include Beanie Sigel, Lil Wayne, Pharrell and Nas. Jay Z released an a cappella version of the album on the date of his 38th birthday, December 4, 2007.

The album was released to commercial success, despite being pulled from the iTunes Store at Jay Z's request, at the time of its initial release. It debuted at number one on the U.S. Billboard 200 chart, selling 425,861 copies in its first week, while tying Elvis Presley for the second most U.S. number one albums. Upon its release, American Gangster received general acclaim from most music critics. Rolling Stone named it the third best album of 2007. The album has been certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America for shipments in excess of one million copies in the United States.

= = Background = =

On November 9, 2007, Jay Z appeared on the Charlie Rose Show to discuss the album. When asked about how the film gave life to this album, he stated "It's a New York City true story, you know. So as soon as the movie came on, it was like familiar, things that my pop seen and my uncles seen and, you know, different things like that, things I've seen growing up. So they resonated with me in a way, the story, as well as, I mean, even though everything happens, you know, the way it turns out, you know, it's one of those movies that where you champion the bad guy, because the bad guy, you know, he don't seem like a bad guy, and the good guy? I mean the good guys are bad. You know, that complex? the complexity of human beings in this thing was amazing to me. I loved the complexity of the human beings".

= = Recording = =

Jay Z would have the film American Gangster playing on the monitors above the recording booth to keep him inspired. In an interview with MTV producer LV from The Hitmen said "Jay would have the beats... He'd do the record, and he'd send it back to us. We'd fill in the blanks as far as making them full records. From having live horns, live strings, live drummers. This percussion dude, he was coming in with bottles, banging on bottles, just sprinkles of shit. We went all out. We brought in musicians to bring it out. Jay probably just heard a sample and some drums. Once we got the vocals back, we brought in all the extra candy".

Beanie Sigel and Lil Wayne are two of the few featured guest spots on the album, in which Sigel appears on the new version of "Ignorant Shit", and Lil Wayne joins Jay Z on the Beastie Boys sampling "Hello Brooklyn 2000". Jay returned the favor on "Mr. Carter" from Lil Wayne's Tha Carter III. Also, fellow New York City rapper and former rival Nas is featured on the No I.D.-produced track "Success", while the Neo soul singer Bilal sings the hook on "Fallin'", but is not officially credited.

= = Composition = =

= = = Lyrics = = =

Allmusic says that "And that might be the most common complaint about the album? it's really just another case of Jay Z being Jay Z, albeit with different presentation. Unless you know each verse from Reasonable Doubt through Kingdom Come, it might sound like he's dealing with no variation on well-worn themes, the exact same thoughts and emotions that make up older

tracks about his past as a drug dealer ? the rise , the arrogance , the conflictedness , the fall , and all stages in between . " Yahoo ! Music writer Angus Batey viewed its thematic concept in the context of the " gangsta " ideal , stating " Using a selection of beats built from ' 70s soul and funk , it reflects the period setting ; lyrically , its primary theme is an investigation of the evolution of the gangsta archetype , looking at how the drug dealer became a semi @-@ sympathetic outlaw figure , examining the contradictions inherent in those who chase the American Dream on the far side of legality , and ruminating on what this period of US history might yet come to mean " . Pitchfork Media reviewer Tom Breihan noted that " ' No Hook ' has some of the most complicated rhyme @-@ patterns Jay has tried in years " : Although Jay @-@ Z says American Gangster was inspired by the movie of the same name , he touches on the topics of censorship and the Jena 6 controversy :

= = = Production = = =

The Neptunes provide production twice on the album , with the first single " Blue Magic " which is the fourteenth track , and the eighth track " I Know " . Diddy and two of his producers known as LV & Sean C , who are from his production team , The Hitmen , are responsible for six tracks on the album . They are credited with the second single " Roc Boys (And the Winner Is) ... " , " American Dreamin ' " (where his other production partner Mario Winans assists) , " No Hook " , " Party Life " , " Pray " , and finally " Sweet " .

DJ Toomp delivers one track for the album , while Just Blaze is credited for a bonus track and the re @-@ make of " Ignorant Shit " . Kanye West mentor No I.D. gives two tracks also , one which he co @-@ produces with Jermaine Dupri and vice versa . Finally , three lesser known producers lend hand to the " Intro " , which is credited to Chris Flames and co @-@ production from Idris " Driis " Elba , while Bigg D produces the Beastie Boys @-@ sampling Lil Wayne assisted track , " Hello Brooklyn 2 @. @ 0 " .

= = Release and promotion = =

= = = Removal from iTunes = = =

Jay @-@ Z pulled American Gangster from the popular iTunes Store . Jay @-@ Z stated " as movies are not sold scene by scene , this collection will not be sold as individual singles . " The album was made available for digital download , in its entirety , at Amazon.com , Rocafella.com and Rhapsody.com. It was subsequently released to the iTunes Store in 2011 .

= = = Tour = = =

On October 21 , 2007 , Jay @-@ Z announced his American Gangster Live tour to promote the album . Jay @-@ Z stated that he would only perform material from American Gangster . The tour consisted of five smaller sized venues across the U.S. , starting on November 6 , 2007 in L.A. and ending on November 12 , 2007 in Philadelphia . According to a statement on the Roc @-@ A @-@ Fella website , the five @-@ city club tour sold out in less than 60 seconds .

= = = A Cappella CD and remixes = = =

Like Jay @-@ Z 's 2003 album The Black Album , Jay @-@ Z released an a cappella version of American Gangster . Released in December 2007 , the a cappella version of the CD caused a string of remix and mash @-@ up albums by both fans and professional DJs / producers alike . Although none of the remix or mash @-@ up albums have yet reached the public notoriety of DJ Danger Mouse 's The Grey Album , several versions of the CD have made their way into the mainstream .

Several of the notable American Gangster Remix albums are listed below :

2007 : The American Godfather ? DJ Skee

Samples : The Godfather I & The Godfather II

2007 : Brooklyn Soul ? Mick Boogie , Shuko & The Gunna

Samples : Marvin Gaye

2007 : American Zeppelin ? DJ Doc Rok

Samples : Led Zeppelin

2009 : Hindustani Gangster ? Music Without Borders : Kunal Merchant & Seif Al @-@ Din

Samples : Indian & Bollywood samples

= = Reception = =

= = = Commercial performance = = =

American Gangster debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 , Top R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Albums and Top Rap Album charts selling 425 @,@ 861 records in the United States its first week . American Gangster is Jay @-@ Z 's tenth number one album , officially tying him with Elvis Presley for the second highest number of number one albums behind The Beatles . On December 6 , 2007 , the album was certified platinum in sales by the Recording Industry Association of America , for shipments of one million copies in the United States .

Two singles have been released from American Gangster . The first , " Blue Magic " , was released on September 20 , 2007 , peaking at 55 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 , 31 on the U.S. Billboard Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs , and 17 on the U.S. Billboard Hot Rap Tracks . The track 's name is a reference to the kind of heroin that Frank Lucas sold in the movie American Gangster ; the CD even came in a package similar to the one the heroin came in . The second single , " Roc Boys (And the Winner Is) ... " was released on October 10 , 2007 , and reached 63 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 , 15 on the U.S. Billboard Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs , and 8 on the U.S. Billboard Hot Rap Tracks .

= = = Critical response = = =

American Gangster received universal acclaim from contemporary music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 83 , based on 25 reviews , which indicates " universal acclaim " . Rolling Stone 's Rob Sheffield commented that the album " definitely doesn 't have any fluff like Kingdom Come 's ' 30 Something ' or ' Beach Chair ' . Jay sounds relaxed , no longer worried about impressing anyone . Instead , he follows the story from the uptown dope @-@ king ambition of ' American Dreamin ' ' to the big @-@ payback crash of " Fallin ' " . Neil Drumming of Entertainment Weekly wrote that , " While Jay @-@ Z does not make the ambitious leap of trying to write from Lucas ' point of view , he does use the film 's story and period vibe to color his own elaborate legend . On ' American Dreamin ' , a Marvin Gaye sample provides the backdrop as Jay @-@ Z wistfully recounts his early days as a dealer , scheming with his buddies . " Allmusic writer Andy Kellman found it to be " a very good Jay @-@ Z album " . The A.V. Club critic Nathan Rabin commented that Jay @-@ Z " finds inspiration in the Ridley Scott film of the same name , the lush atmosphere of ' 70s soul , and the bracing grit of blaxploitation " .

Uncut complimented the " comfortable cruising altitude " of Jay @-@ Z 's delivery and called the album " an effective reminder of what success is about ? leaving the hustle behind . " Amy Linden of The Village Voice lauded its retro musical references and stated , " As you 'd expect from (still) one of the best wordsmiths in hip @-@ hop , there 's some killer wordplay here " . The New York Times writer Kelefa Sanneh commended Jay @-@ Z for his lyricism , stating " he packs his wordy stanzas full of unexpected syllables , clever allusions and unpredictable rhymes schemes . This is probably as close as the new Jay @-@ Z will ever come to sounding like the old Jay @-@ Z " . PopMatters editor Mike Schiller perceived " no narrative thread " , but viewed it as " sonically consistent " and praised Jay @-@ Z 's performance , stating " What American Gangster truly gives us is Jay @-@ Z

through and through ... It's superhero music in that Jay's supremacy is never questioned, but it's superhero music that insists on showing off more than just that hero's immense power". XXL's Alvin Samuels described it as "a pot of pure uncut crack music", while writing "Rediscovering his hustler's ambition, Jay delves into the many facets of the drug game like an OG passing knowledge down to a new jack".

Despite finding its conceptual style flawed, The Observer's Steve Yates praised Jay-Z's reflections on fame and "the voracious capitalism (up- and downside)", which is proving hip hop's most durable legacy", adding that "It's Jay-Z's and American Gangster's triumph that reflecting on his appetite seems to have reawakened it". Sputnikmusic's Cam commented that lyrically, it "may be the smartest album Jay has ever released". In a mixed review, Louis Pattison of NME was ambivalent towards its "low-key" style and stated, "You leave American Gangster longing for more of this don't give @-@ a @-@ fuck attitude, but the feeling that presides is Jay-Z patting his wallet". In his consumer guide for MSN Music, Robert Christgau gave the album a one @-@ star honorable mention (), indicating "a worthy effort consumers attuned to its overriding aesthetic or individual vision may well like." He cited "Blue Magic" and "Say Hello" as highlights and quipped, "Jay-Z, that's a brand name, like Pepsi, that's a brand name? he stands behind it, he guarantees it, even if you don't know him any more than you know the chairman of Universal Music".

== Accolades ==

American Gangster was ranked in the top ten of several music publications' end-of-year lists, including The Austin Chronicle (number one), Spin (number eight), and Rolling Stone magazine (number three). Rolling Stone also named the album's second single, "Roc Boys (And the Winner Is...)", the best single of 2007. In an interview with Jeff Johnson of cable network BET, 44th United States President Barack Obama stated that he is a fan of the album.

== Track listing ==

?(co.) Co-@ producer

== Personnel ==

== Charts ==

== Weekly charts ==

== Year-end charts ==

== Certifications ==

== Chart procession and succession ==