In 2013, Kanye West revealed a new item of clothing on his website. “Hip Hop T-Shirt” was a plain white tee, described to be “Egyptian cotton” and with “A.P.C. Kanye silkscreened inside the neckline.” The shirt was also priced at $120. Seemingly ridiculous, the shirt sold out instantly. Why? Because Kanye understands the business of exclusivity, of taking the mundane and morphing it into a new experiment that seems fresh and sometimes even beautiful. He does this with his fashion and his music, both of which have greatly influenced fellow rapper and protégé Travis Scott. Seen on the runway repping Kanye’s clothing and now lauded as the fan favorite of West’s prodigies, Scott is a fantastic mimic of this style. He has even approached a similar business venture with less success; reselling a plush bird, marked up 385% from its original seller. In his previous LP *Rodeo,* Scott dazzled audiences with an album that redefined the southern hip hop and trap scene. He produced platinum bangers like “Antidote,” all the while providing ethereal, cloudy and experimental two-part epics like “Oh My Dis Side.” Expecting nothing but improvement from his new project, *Birds in the Trap Sing McKnight*, Scott fails to move past *Rodeo*, and even regresses into his initial style of production and lyricism, seen in past mixtapes *Owl Pharaoh* and *Days Before Rodeo*,making this album a home for features that ring louder than the artist himself.

The record opens with “the ends”, a track that sets the tone for the rest of the project. With what almost seems like a melodramatic turn, Scott uses a more minimalist and disenchanting production that fails to compel the newfound gloom to his music. Also disenchanting are his lyrics, with lines like “Let’s make it a badass time” and references to the chains on his neck and sleeping with a tec. Providing a sigh of relief is Andre 3000 with a quick and glitchy verse. Scott isn’t even present at times, like in “biebs in the trap.” When Scott finally jumps in, his lyrics are simply a word salad, barely managing to pull off the supposed aura of druggy disorientation and abstraction behind them, with bars like, “Indict me, snipe me, swipe it, drop it, trap it (yeah yeah).”

The forced subtlety of the project fails to impress, and despite the occasional resurgence of Scott’s flashy, textured instrumentation and the occasional banger, the album can’t make up for how much it lacks. With tracks like “goosebumps” (which is carried by Kendrick Lamar’s twitchy feature) and “pick up the phone,” (which survives independently as a single released long ago) the album hits its high point. On the other hand, tracks like “coordination,” which has the weakest vocals that Scott has provided to date, and “guidance,” a sad attempt to hop on the Americanized dancehall train, leave listeners scratching their heads. The album as a whole comes off quieter than *Rodeo*, but does not successfully appeal as minimalism with intent, only as mediocrity.

Ultimately, Scott provides a barely passable and disheartening LP that feels more like a release of *Rodeo*’s b-sides*.* Scott once served as a refresher to the rap game, as an artist who truly ventured into originality and had great success because of it. *Birds,* on the other hand,is a sloppy project that shows no artistic progress, no interesting experimentation and serves best as a host to other artists, both new and old. With potential still at his fingertips, there may still be hope that in his next project, Houston’s own Jacques Webster will escape the rut that is *Birds*.