



The album's cover is Carpenter's most controversial to date.



Carpenter sings about her dating experiences in *Man's Best Friend*.



Man's Best Friend is at its best with its upbeat tracks.

ALBUM REVIEW

BY JOHN TAN

LAST year may have seen the rise of various new artistes, but its main star was arguably Sabrina Carpenter. With the release of *Short N Sweet*, the five-foot pop star dominated airwaves, winning over listeners with *Espresso*, *Taste* and *Please Please Please*.

Cheeky and risqué in nature, the offerings shot her to pop stardom after years of stagnation. A year has since passed and Carpenter returns with her seventh album *Man's Best Friend*. The release, as expected, has achieved commercial success.

The 26-year-old earned her second number one worldwide album, marking a career best for Carpenter. But the feat came with a new level of scrutiny for the songstress.

Capitalising controversy

The album's cover alone drew criticism as Carpenter is seen kneeling on all fours with a sensual expression, while a man grabs her hair. Though she claims it to be feministic, others saw it as degrading to women as a whole.

Regardless of the differing opinions, the cover initiated a conversation for Carpenter. If anything, it showcases her wit as an artiste, proving there is depth and intention behind all the cheekiness and sensuality.

Carpenter is clearly opting for shock value, provoking for the sake of

Desanitising pop

➤ Sabrina Carpenter blends genres with mixed results



Man's Best Friend is Carpenter's seventh studio album. – PICS FROM INSTAGRAM @SABRINA CARPENTER

provocation, poking fun at certain troupes' hypocritical views on dating and relationships.

Leave the blues away

The album's production emulates this approach too. Carpenter does not hold her tongue back, as she

sings openly about her encounters with men and their immature behaviours – from the lead single *Manchild* to the closing track *Goodbye*.

Standouts include *Manchild*, *House Tour* and *Nobody's Son*. The tracks' production and lyrical value

are what one can expect from a high-profile pop star such as Carpenter – infectious, engaging and memorable.

The album's ballads, however, were a bit of a disappointment. While it is wise of Carpenter to showcase range, ballads such as *Sugar Talking*

and *Don't Worry I'll Make You Worry* do nothing for her artistry.

Unlike her previous ballads, such as *Because I liked a Boy* and *Already Over*, the ballads on the album lack soul and complexity. Most listeners will forget the song as soon as it reaches its outro.

Stick to one genre

Carpenter's blending of genre on the album is to blame here. Similar to *Short N Sweet*, the songstress decided to experiment with pop, disco pop and country, infusing the genres throughout the 12 tracks.

With *Manchild* and *Go Go Juice*, Carpenter samples her love for country. In *Tears* and *When Did You Get Hot?*, she borrows influence from disco pop. Her decision to explore is admirable, yet it seems to have worked against her again.

With the exception of *Manchild*, Carpenter's country samples seem inauthentic and out of place. Whereas, her pop pursuits fit her just right, complementing her voice, sarcasm and cheeky persona.

Return to pop

Hopefully, Carpenter realises this soon enough. After all, she is known for her "poppier" and upbeat offerings. It will be a waste if Carpenter refuses to fully lean into this musical direction.

Man's Best Friend may have brought in the numbers, but the effort falls short in comparison to her previous projects musically. Carpenter may want to revisit her past projects, as she may just learn a thing or two from them.

Rock band Radwimps reveals music video for *Hitsu Zetsu* from album *Anew*

JAPANESE rock band Radwimps has released the new music video for *Hitsu Zetsu* from its chart-topping new album *Anew*, out now worldwide.

With its raw and heartfelt lyrics, the song has been generating buzz since the release of Radwimps's new album. The music video, directed by Michihito Fujii, features actress Suzu Hirose, whose subtle yet powerful expressions beautifully capture the song's emotional depth. Her performance, paired with the band's

impassioned delivery, results in a cinematic, documentary-like piece that tenderly embraces the emotions of those living in the present moment. Fujii and Radwimps previously collaborated on the 2022 film *The Last 10 Years*, strengthening the creative chemistry that shines through in this latest project.

Anew features a total of 12 tracks – 10 new recordings alongside previously released songs *Tamamono* (theme song for NHK's drama serial *Anpan*) and

Meidai (theme song for NTV's news programme *News Zero*). The physical album includes an exclusive bonus track, *Tamamono (Orchestra Version)*, while the digital edition features a re-recorded *Dai-Dan-En feat. Zorn (Anew Version)*.

The band will release a 20th anniversary tribute album *Dear Jubilee -Radwimps Tribute-* on Nov 19. The album will feature a total of 14 tracks, with details on participating artistes and song selections to be revealed soon.



Radwimps continues to see strong streaming numbers in the region with Indonesia (second), the Philippines (fourth), Thailand (sixth), Taiwan (seventh) and Malaysia (ninth) among its top global audience.