

Long Live A\$AP – A Tribute to A\$AP Yams

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Steven Rodriguez, otherwise known as A\$AP Yams, was a visionary, a disruptor, and a radical presence in hip hop. The mastermind behind the A\$AP Mob rap collective, which stands for 'Always Strive and Prosper', Yams was always ahead of the game. From the outside, A\$AP Mob's chart-topping success can be attributed to the charisma and rap flows of A\$AP Rocky, but there would be no Mob without Yams – he was the force that orchestrated the collective's success.

Yams wasn't a rapper like Ferg or Rocky, instead just a kid with big energy from Harlem, NY who had an obsession with hip-hop and the mindset of a businessman. Since he was 11, Yams was collecting CDs and downloading music off Napster, trying to study everything there was to know about hip-hop. By his teen years, he secured an internship with Diplomats Records (founded by Dipset, aka the voice of Harlem). At 17, he was set upon building his brand and a reputation. He got 'A\$AP' tattooed on his arm and started bringing his vision to life through his Tumblr (RichN*ggaTumblr), which grew to become a cultural encyclopedia, subtly promoting the mob. Yams was always meticulously working behind the scenes, set on giving a voice to the youth of NYC. A year after founding the Mob, Yams met Rocky and their connection was instant. "Rocky's like Luke Skywalker, and I'm Yoda".

The Mob's sound didn't exactly match the grittiness of New York hip-hop because Yams took inspiration from around the country, including chopped-n-screwed remixing from Houston, to create and revolutionize the industry at large. His progressive ideas moulded the style and sound Rocky and the Mob are known for. In a New York Times profile, Yams said "We wanted to become big, but we didn't want to do it by hopping on somebody else's wave. We wanted to come in the game with our own wave."

Since A\$AP Yams' tragic passing in 2015, the Mob, friends, family, and fans keep his memory alive with the annual 'Yams Day' each January 18. Yams Day is meant to be a celebration and appreciation of Yam's legacy and contributions. When asked about his ultimate goal, Yams once said "we just do wanna do some wavy shit."

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