

# X-RATED

## WHERE SIZE MATTERS

### (Jump-Off)

#### WALE

Attention: Deficit

(ALLIDO/INTERSCOPE)



Washington, D.C., is ecstatic. After years without any representation, there's finally a brother running the city. His swagger is impeccable. His sense of style is on point. His way with words is captivating. His African roots give him universal appeal. He's the people's champ, and his name is Olubowale Folarin, but you can just call him Wale.

Much like President Obama's rise to power, Wale had to put in a lot of leg-work to become Chocolate City's first nationally celebrated MC. The 24-year-old's push actually kicked off back in 2006, when his go-go-fueled track "Dig Dug (Shake It)" got regular radio play in the D.C., Maryland and Virginia areas. That led to the release of two well-received mixtapes—*Paint a Picture* and *Hate Is the New Love*—and DJ/producer Mark Ronson signing on as Wale's running mate. The joint ticket went on to rally more public support with "W.A.L.E.D.A.N.C.E.," off Wale's 2007 mixtape, *100 Miles & Running*. The record's success earned the rapper a major-label endorsement from Interscope, in 2008, and paved the way for Wale's inaugural album, *Attention: Deficit*.

Every rapper on the campaign trail makes promises of changing the status quo, but few actually deliver on that lofty goal. Consider Wale the exception. Staying true to his hometown roots, the 2008 XXL Freshman 10 alumnus infuses his opus with heavy doses of go-go funk, while still maintaining his hip-hop edge. The Cool & Dre-produced lead single, "Chillin'," finds Wale teaming up with techno-pop star Lady Gaga for a



distinctly D.C.-sounding anthem. Known for their signature synths, the Miami beatsmiths switch their sound up even further on the Jazmine Sullivan-guested "World Tour," which is a nod to A Tribe Called Quest's 1993 gem "Award Tour." Over a summery sound bed of sparkling piano keys and rugged percussion, Wale spits, "Mama ain't raise no fool, true/But me and my brother never made it outta school."

What Wale manages to avoid is regurgitating the same frivolous concepts and mundane subject matter that so many rookies feast on. In fact, on the Ronson-helmed "90210," he boldly touches on females suffering from bulimia and coke addictions ("She throws up whatever she eats/She

leave the bathroom with her nose bleed/ She live her whole life like TV/And she do anything for everything"). The rapper pens another introspective tale, in the form of "Diary," featuring Floetry's Marsha Ambrosius. Local producers Sleepwalkers provide the melodic backdrop for a heartfelt letter to a woman too hurt to love. After his promises of eternal devotion fall on deaf ears, a frustrated Wale retorts, "Every problem that you ever had with another man I gotta face."

After baring his soul for the ladies, Wale puts his armor back on in the company of men. Holding his own alongside hip-hop heavy weight Bun B on the reality check-in' "Mirrors," Wale employs a stutter flow that

barrels through Ronson's sonic collage of strumming guitars, funky bass line and fading horns. The upstart MC does his thing on his hypnotic duet with Gucci Mane, "Pretty Girls," but meets his match on the high-octane "Beautiful Bliss," where North Carolina native J. Cole exhibits an undeniable hunger when he drops witty bars like, "You see me, let me in/All I wanna do is eat like a freaky lesbian."

Aside from a few head-scratchin' lines on "Mama Told Me" ("I would invest in a poncho/Cause I won't punch-out like Glass Joe") and his narcissistic tendency to say his own name ad nauseam, Wale creates an impressive body of work for his first term in office. Not only does he stock his cabinet with a diverse list of musical advisers, ranging from DJ Green Lantern to rock band TV on the Radio's David Sitek, he tackles key issues like education ("Be Right") and suicide ("Contemplate") head-on. With hip-hop continuing to take a creative downturn, *Attention: Deficit* is a long-overdue stimulus package. On the robust "Triumph," Wale makes one resounding promise to his rap constituency: "I ain't tryna be politically correct/But I won't stop until I get my respect."

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