



# Music Update



## J. Cole – Rap with the right message

In an era saturated with upstart MCs all vying for the coveted status of “next big thing”, 24-year old rapper J. Cole’s (born Jermaine Cole) scholarly approach to the game is a refreshing exception to the rule. Born in Germany (his father was a G.I., and his mother is German), raised in small-town North Carolina, Cole’s early years were informative, influential and sometimes scary.

“I started off on a military base, and I remember moving — I guess this was after my parents got divorced — from there to a trailer park. It was one of the scariest places I’ve been to because I was always worried about my mother,” says Cole. “Around the fifth or sixth grade, I moved from there to a nicer house where I had my own room. So I saw life at all levels. I’m half-black, half-white, so I basically put it like this: I can fit in anywhere. That’s why I write so many stories from so many different perspectives, because I’ve seen so many.”

Cole transcended his modest upbringing to become a serious student. He graduated college — magna cum laude, no less — from St. John’s University in New York.

“My mom tells this story of when I was in the second grade or first grade, and I would

be at the teacher’s desk, asking her, ‘Can I get my average?’” Cole recalls with a laugh. “And the teacher would be like, ‘Man, you’re in the first grade! Why do you want your average?’ But it was a competition for me — like, I really want to be the best. Anything I do, I want to do it well.”

Likewise, Cole’s approach to rapping aims to raise the bar. He bends words uniquely in his rhymes; he is at once lyrical and relevant. Cole says the agreement between rhythm and meaning is central to his work.

“Rhyme patterns are nothing without meanings to the words,” he says. “A lot of rappers can do those flows, but the raps aren’t really about anything — which is cool sometimes, but to have the flow and the message is one of my favorite things.”

When Cole finished his first mixtape, he went after the biggest in the business, camping outside rapper/media mogul Jay-Z’s studio for two hours for a chance to connect.

“He walks up to the door. I have a CD out — I took my time with this thing, I kind of decorated it, I put in one of his old albums, trying to be creative,” Cole remembers. “And I reach out my hand like, ‘Yo, Jay, here



J. Cole

you go!’ He just looked at me like, almost disgusted, like, ‘I don’t want that.’ I was crushed, but I realized really quick, ‘This is not how you’re going to get on. You’ve got to get on through the music.’”

Cole set out to do that. He recorded in New York by sneaking into studios, and supported himself with a \$10-an-hour job as a bill collector. Eventually he caught the ear of some powerful industry figures, and a year

later had signed to Roc Nation, a label owned by none other than Jay-Z.

“There’s a 12-year-old right now whose favorite rapper is J. Cole, because I’m representing the true essence of what this thing should be about, this hip-hop thing. If he decides tomorrow he wants to write rhymes, he’s going to emulate me,” Cole says. “Which means the future of hip-hop is kind of secure, if we continue in this pattern.”



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### Promo Only Top 20 for November, 2011

- |    |                           |                                     |
|----|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1  | Stereo Hearts             | Gym Class Heroes f./ Adam Levine    |
| 2  | Someone Like You          | Adele                               |
| 3  | Without You               | David Guetta f./ Usher              |
| 4  | Moves Like Jagger         | Maroon 5 f./ Christina Aguilera     |
| 5  | You Make Me Feel...       | Cobra Starship f./ Sabi             |
| 6  | Sexy And I Know It        | LMFAO                               |
| 7  | Pumped Up Kicks           | Foster The People                   |
| 8  | In The Dark               | Dev                                 |
| 9  | It Girl                   | Jason Derulo                        |
| 10 | The One That Got Away     | Katy Perry                          |
| 11 | It Will Rain              | Bruno Mars                          |
| 12 | Mr. Know It All           | Kelly Clarkson                      |
| 13 | Party Rock Anthem         | LMFAO                               |
| 14 | Good Feeling              | Flo Rida                            |
| 15 | Fly                       | Nicki Minaj f./ Rihanna             |
| 16 | You And I                 | Lady GaGa                           |
| 17 | Criminal                  | Britney Spears                      |
| 18 | Love You Like A Love Song | Selena Gomez & The Scene            |
| 19 | Mr. Saxobeat              | Alexandra Stan                      |
| 20 | 5 O'Clock                 | T-Pain f./ Wiz Khalifa & Lily Allen |

Chart compiled from national airplay charts and Promo Only feedback

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