

J. Cole ^[1]

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J. Cole

by Max Eckard, 2012.

January 28, 1985-

Years active: 2007-present

"Here to stay...Fayettenam, NC."

-J. Cole



Rose, Candice. "J. Cole." 2011. Wikimedia Commons.

^[2]Jermain Lamar Cole, better known by his stage name, J. Cole, is a [Grammy](#) ^[3]-nominated rapper, singer and producer from [Fayetteville](#) ^[4], NC. In 2009, he became the first artist to be signed to Jay-Z's [Roc Nation](#) ^[5] label.

Cole began writing his own lyrics at 15, creating his own beats with an 808 beat machine, a gift from his mother. He attended [Terry Sanford High School](#) ^[6] in [Fayetteville](#) ^[4] and graduated in 2003. Looking to relocate to [New York City](#) ^[7], he went on to major in communication and minor in business at [St. John's University](#) ^[8] in Queens, New York, where he received an academic scholarship. By his own account, Cole has made himself notable through a scholarly approach to his work, "no small feat considering his *Magna Cum Laude* distinction upon graduating from St. John's."

Before being signed to [Roc Nation](#) ^[5], Cole worked as a bill collector. Cole apparently waited for days outside Jay-Z's office in order to give him a demo, and the first time they met, Jay-Z apparently "shunned" him. Needless to say, Cole was suprised when weeks later Jay-Z's associates got in contact with him regarding a record deal and a guest appearance on the song "A Star is Born" off Jay-Z's then upcoming album *The Blueprint 3*.

At times alternative, at times hardcore and at times mainstream, his style has been described as brash, uncompromising, reflective and wry. Associated acts include Kendrick Lamar, Omen, Elite, Wale, Melanie Fiona, B.o.B and Tinie Tempah. He has collaborated with No I.D., Diddy, Drake, Jay Electronica, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Hi-Tek, Young Chris, Miguel, DJ Khaled, Alex Haldi, Trey Songz and Rihanna.

The music video for his first single, "Who Dat," was shot in his hometown [Fayetteville](#) ^[4]. There was controversy surrounding the use of local college cheerleaders from [Fayetteville State University](#) ^[9] and a local high school marching band from [E.E. Smith High School](#) ^[10] for the video. The entire music video is one continuous shot with no cuts.

Following three successful mixtapes, *The Come Up* in 2007, *The Warm Up* in 2009 and *Friday Night Lights* in 2010, Cole released his debut album *Cole World: The Sideline Story* on September 27, 2011 on N.C. Hip-Hop Day. His sophomore album is expected to be released in June 2012.

Besides music, Cole enjoys playing basketball. After working with EA Sports to produce the soundtrack for *NBA Elite 11*, he and fellow North Carolinian [9th Wonder](#) ^[11] appeared as "secret characters" in the video game *NBA Jam*. He also played for the Eastern Team in the 2012 NBA All-Star Weekend Celebrity Game.

In March 2012, Cole returned to his hometown, [Fayetteville](#) ^[4]. He released the song "Visionz of Home" and launched an event titled "Dreamville weekend" to inspire the youth of [Fayetteville](#) ^[4] to achieve great things.

References

"[Fayetteville State University Tries to Ban J. Cole's New Music Video](#) ^[12]," from [Hip-Hop Wired](#) ^[13]

"[J. Cole](#) ^[14]," from [AllMusic](#) ^[15]

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"[N.C. Hip-Hop Day sent mixed messages about the state of local rap](#) ^[18]," from the [Independent Weekly](#) ^[19]

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[Eckard, Max](#) ^[24]

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