

Few rappers have been as versatile for as long as Wale. The DC rhymer has helped permanently collapse the worlds of backpack rap and the Billboard Hot 100, packaging social commentary with braggadocious bars and anthemic tales of romance and aspiration. And he's still pushing forward with his newest album, *Folarin II*, a sequel to the 2012's pivotal mixtape *Folarin*. With its blend of fly-guy theme songs, infectious R&B collaborations, and genuine soul-searching, the record reaffirms his status as one of rap's most innovative, exciting, and enduring curators. Wale first broke out with 2008's *A Mixtape About Nothing*. By the time he released his major-label debut album, 2009's *Attention Deficit*, he was named a member of XXL's Freshman Class—cementing his place as a venerable rap star. Over the next decade, he consistently expanded his catalog and perspective with albums like *Ambition* (2011), *The Gifted* (2013), *The Album About Nothing* (2015), *Shine* (2017), and *Wow...That's Crazy* (2019). And though the title of *Folarin II* lends itself to nostalgia, its content shows he's focused on the future. Heading into 2022, he's looking forward to tapping in with his fans on tour and appearing in the new Michael Bay film *Ambulance*. While *Folarin II* is an argument for his role as an era-defining artist, Wale, confident in his stature, isn't sticking around for individual accolades as much as the process itself. "I'm passionate about what I do," he says. "I get up and I go to work."