

FADE TO BLACK

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27 year old Wiz Khalifa may just be rap's biggest rock star. His musical genre is surely not Rock & Roll, but that's not an issue; it's been firmly established that rappers are the new rock stars. It's nothing new really, according to one rather important cultural figure "it's been like that for a minute now". His highly eclectic tastes, across the board appeal, consistency, live show presence and draw make Wiz's "star power" undeniable. But the most important rubric by which a rock star is measured is the old adage that "Women want you, men want to be you," and although not every dude can envision themselves fitting into the very tight pants the tall and slim native of one of America's most blue-collar towns has been known to wear; blowing down an endless quantity of weed, while waking up to Amber Rose is about as close to the modern day version of the American dream as anyone could hope to get.

The old mold in Hip-Hop, concerning an artist's commercial success, was perceived to be dependent on having a clearly defined audience. Labels, media outlets, and even fans themselves viewed most emcees in a very clearly defined box, somewhere pinned down between the spectrum of "conscious rappers" or "gangster rappers." Technology has changed everything; labels matter less and less by the minute and in many ways having a varied musical content base--which often gives way to a varied but dedicated fan base--can become an artist's best attribute. No one speaks to that concept more than Wiz Khalifa.

Of the many tracks available to the public before the release of his newest album *Blacc Hollywood*, two of the most popular were "We Dem Boyz" & "So High." "We Dem Boyz," a hard hitting, auto-tune infused, Chief Keef-esque anthem with a beat made by in-demand producer Detail, became one of the biggest tracks of the year following its February release. "So High" on the other hand is a smooth and dreamy reworking of a 2013 track by popular Indie group Ghost Loft. Neither song feels like an artistic stretch, with Wiz fitting perfectly into both beats' unique soundscapes, a skill he's all but mastered at this point.

Still, Khalifa's eclectic nature isn't just relegated to his music, nearly everything about the guy is dichotomous. Khalifa is likely to wear an outfit consisting of \$1000 Zanotti high tops along with a ripped \$1 white t-shirt with a stick figure on it; the image may have been arbitrarily thought up shortly after taking a few dab hits, but it's just as likely the design had a deeper meaning, and had been plotted out with his team of creatives weeks in advance. Either way, the look, and really anything he does seems to somehow work, and work well.

"It's like being inspired by everything that's moving and living, whether it be shapes whether it be colors, it's like tapping into the more simplistic things and minimalizing everything in an era of so much technology and so much advancement."

Lofty but wise words from a man whose laugh is so synonymous with being a stoner that even Seth Rogen would be jealous. The most impressive thing about his lack of a niche is the audience that Wiz ends up appealing to. It's truly rare for an artist to get to a level where young suburban white kids feverishly buy your music and come to your shows, yet the hood still shows love. Any doubt I had about the latter notion was put to rest at this June's Hot 97 Summer Jam