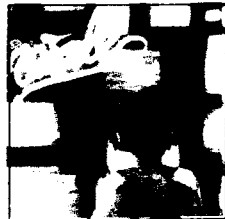


## ALBUM REVIEW

### 'Attention Deficit'

Reviewed by Jim Warkulwiz  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Washington, D.C., rapper Wale has recently been taken under the wing of some of hip-hop's greats, performing with the likes of Jay-Z, Kanye West and Talib Kweli. He has also released several acclaimed mixtapes with rhymes that feature more than run-of-the-mill lyrics about spending money and sleeping with women. The question is if Wale could impress on his first full-length album, "Attention Deficit."



Throughout the album, Wale blends hip-hop styles with influences like the social consciousness of "backpack" rap, similar to A Tribe Called Quest, and pop hip-hop, similar to Lupe Fiasco. Songs like "90210," which talks about how some women feel the need to put up a façade to feel appreciated, and "Shades," which talks about discrimination within the black community because of different hues of skin color, rank among some of the most socially conscious songs of the past decade. Lyrics with this much purpose are seldom heard in rap today.

The song "Chillin'," featuring Lady Gaga, is what contributes to the pop side of Wale, a club jam that can be thrown on at any party. Although it had been released long before this album's debut, it remains relevant as a catchy club song.

However, things start to go sour when Wale becomes too involved in trying to please this party scene, giving off the sense that he was trying to appeal to everyone.

As sensitive and introspective as the rapper can get, there are times when his lyrics become absolutely repugnant. Simply put, the more emotional Wale does not aim to be Lil Wayne. So why is he trying to imitate him?

Songs like "Pretty Girls" and "Let It Loose" seem contradictory to Wale's deeper side, chatting up girls in the club and having them flirt with the promoter so they can go to the VIP section.

Wale seems to be doing too many things at once that take away from the product as a whole.

It's when he keeps a balance in his songs, like "Mama Told Me," that the album is a hit.

What the up-and-comer needs to do is find and perform for the audience he wants and stay away from pleasing everyone else. But aside from some noticeable novice mistakes, this debut album is a good listen.

Grade: B-

Download: "Mama Told Me" and "90210"

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## BOOK REVIEW

### 'Pilgrims: A Wobegon Romance'

Reviewed by Stéfán Orzech  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The most striking facet of "Pilgrims: A Wobegon Romance," the latest novel from Garrison Keillor, is that it somewhat unintentionally constitutes an attempt toward a modern adaptation of Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales."

Lake Wobegon, for readers unfamiliar with Keillor's work, is a fictional place in Minnesota that Keillor has used as a setting in several of his books and on his radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion." "Pilgrims" presents 12 Wobegonians, all of various professions, including a farmer, a carpenter and a barber. They are interestingly enough not even present in the United States but en route to Italy, where the usual wit and charm so typical of Keillor ensues.

The novel also contains Gary Keillor, a character in many ways identical to the author himself, much as how Chaucer can be viewed as a character in "The Canterbury Tales" as well.

Finally, as implied by the title, these 12 characters are likewise embarking on a type of pilgrimage.

Yet, it distorts too many similarities with Geoffrey Chaucer's text to construct for itself a parallel identity, and the components that make this novel unique will interest modern readers to a greater extent.

Like Chaucer, Keillor begins the book with a prologue of sorts, yet the latter is much shorter and does not delineate every character but simply the main few. Marjorie Krebsbach, an English teacher among the 12, provides more access to the story, along with the character Keillor himself.

In addition, rather than the sequential structure with which Chaucer organized his work (i.e. where each character's tale is preceded by a prologue), Keillor applies a more fluid approach.

He weaves in and out of several characters' heads within a few pages, rather than utilizing merely one perspective.

Finally, Keillor as a character has much more direct interaction with the reader than Chaucer. Aside from the correlations and disparities that one might draw between the two texts, "Pilgrims" is foremost its own entity, and it stands relatively well upon bookshelves. It is admittedly a little weaker than its Wobegon predecessors, but Keillor's writing retains its familiar ability to provide an, at times, humorous and enjoyable read that will leave his fans and other readers anything but woebegone.

Grade: B+

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## Movie 'stares' into confusion

Reviewed by Kristen Karas  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

George Clooney sits down in a military uniform, eyes intensely focused, neck muscles bulging. Suddenly, the chewing goat he's focused on topples over onto the floor. It's difficult to decide whether to laugh out loud or to stare at the movie screen thinking, "What?"

That's exactly how you'll feel for the entirety of "The Men Who Stare At Goats," a wacky, at times hilarious, but mostly disjointed film that takes viewers on a wild and slapstick but confusing ride.

The film, based on a nonfiction book of the same name, stars Ewan McGregor as Bob, a journalist who stumbles upon a story about a secret Army operation focused on creating a unit of "supersoldiers" with powers that include the ability to pass through walls and stop the heart of a goat just by staring at it. When Bob meets Lyn Cassady (Clooney), a former member of the unit, the film takes viewers through two back-and-forth stories: Cassady's vague secret mission in Iraq with Bob tagging along, and the

flashback origin of how Cassady's "New Earth Army" began.

In small bits, the present-day portion of the film is fun. Clooney is an absolute pro at this kind of character. He has a knack for combining quirk with charm in a way that is both believable and incredibly watchable.

His bickering with McGregor is also a hoot. The two actors share a wonderful chemistry that is the driving force for most of the film. Watching Cassady nonchalantly torturing Bob or driving him crazy while trying to decide which direction to take at a forked road is a riot.

The problem with their scenes, however, is that they lack a concrete story. You won't remember much about why the two are traveling through the desert beyond their witty interactions with each other, and you'll quickly tire of watching their car malfunction more than once.

But you will remember the flashbacks, the oddball scenes that need more flesh. The backstory is intriguing, but if it is based on a true story in part, then why not give viewers more of the real thing? While it's hard to believe that most of the psychic

portions happened, it isn't entirely implausible that a unit like this might have existed. Instead of giving viewers a taste of the strange truth, the flashbacks are at times so outlandish (particularly a scene where the soldiers are instructed to freely dance instead of keeping formation) that they borderline on ridiculous.

Jeff Bridges and Kevin Spacey have roles as integral members of the unit's beginning, but their characters are underused and one-note. Bridges, in particular, could have used more development as the hippy officer who created the operation.

Ultimately, the film's main plot gets so separated from the flashbacks that by the time Clooney and McGregor meet up with Bridges and Spacey in the present, it's difficult to remember what exactly is going on.

"The Men Who Stare At Goats" is a film in every way as strange as its title. It's a mess — a well-acted and sometimes laugh-out-loud mess—but too unfocused overall to let you leave without scratching your head.

Grade: C+

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## 'Say Anything' doesn't say much

Reviewed by Kevin Sullivan  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Over the course of the three minutes and 13 seconds of "Hate Everyone," Max Bemis twists his own words around, evolving from world's greatest self-proclaimed misanthrope into a burgeoning humanist in a few breaths.

This indecisiveness is a running theme in Say Anything's eponymous self-titled third album, a hodgepodge of styles and contradictory lyrics.

Of course, this is what the pop-punk Roky Erickson and his band have always brought its audience. Much like the bipolar singer's erratic behavior, his music is constantly riding the wave of its catchy pop appeal and its own unpredictability. At any moment, it seems it could all fall apart into an incoherent mess or generic rubbish.

"My hair cannot commit to one popular genre of music," he sings on "Crush'd," an upbeat, synth-infused acoustic rock song. Bemis' musical work, like his always-changing coiffure, is fresh but still accessible and purely confined within pop constructs.

The very same song has its let-downs. Lazy clichés abound. "I have a

total crush on you, baby/ and I can't let it go," rings the chorus, making its way to the equally languid conclusion, "Did it hurt when you fell from heaven, girl?"

This is not an isolated incident, and it becomes a problem because of how much the band relies on Bemis' wittily disaffected banter. His musical narratives often introduce characters for a single line and to no effect at all — the horny bus driver in "Ahhh ... Men," for example. The man has sexual frustration. Get it?

Though the lyrics are occasionally spot on, they constantly revolve around Bemis' former sexual exploits and self-loathing desire for death. It's unfortunate, because he hints at having a deeper understanding of love that he seems too insecure and self-conscious to share with listeners.

Musically, there are things to capture audiences of earbud wearers. Unfortunately, Say Anything is front-heavy, giving up all its treasures during

the first half of the record before falling back on straight-ahead pop/rock elements for the final side.

"Fed to Death"

starts the album with a bang. The song goes from a simple acoustic number to hard rock, taking a brief detour at a synth-pop crossover before ending on an equally concise piano-only outro.

But Bemis gets self-conscious halfway through the tune, stopping the song in full swing to give himself a spoken word pick-me-up. For all of the singer's intentionally ironic lyrics, this prideful self-criticism perhaps accidentally beats them all.

"Wait a second," he mutters. "I can't write the same damn song over and over again."

From here, he destroys the completely unique musical idea the band was building in favor for guitar and keyboard rock 'n' roll.

The rest of the album plays out the same way, showing a band that has run out of ideas halfway in.

"Say Anything" is more focused than 2007's jumbled "In Defense of the Genre," but it's almost too much so. The group seems to be circling back and forth between high ambition and generic lows, almost taking the lyrics

"Do Better" to heart: "We could do better, we could be the greatest band in the world."

Grade: C+

Download: "Less Cute"

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