

= The Don ( Nas song ) =

" The Don " is a song by American rapper Nas . Released as the second single from his tenth studio album , Life Is Good ( 2012 ) , it is produced by record producers Da Internz , Heavy D and Salaam Remi , who all helped write the song along with Nas , although Heavy D died before the song could be finished . Built around a sample of " Dance in New York " by reggae singer Super Cat , a former collaborator of Nas , " The Don " is backed by a boom bap , reggae @-@ tinged production with additional drum and piano sounds . Lyrically , Nas attempts to reaffirm his status as a " street poet " , addressing the hardships of poverty within disadvantaged societies and the realities of weapon and drug problems .

" The Don " was released to digital retailers on April 3 , 2012 . Although the song was not commercially successful , charting only in the lower regions of the UK Singles Chart , it received acclaim from music critics , many of whom praised Nas ' rapping style and lyrics , especially the realistic persona he conveyed . Some also pronounced themselves impressed with Nas ' motivation at such a point in his long career . A music video for " The Don " , directed by Aristotle Torres , was premiered on April 27 , 2012 , which attempts to present several aspects of Nas ' lifestyle , including performing at concerts , as well as his experiences in New York City , his place of residence .

= = Background = =

" The Don " was produced by Da Internz , Heavy D and Salaam Remi ? the latter a regular collaborator with Nas on many of his previous songs , including the singles " I Can " and " Made You Look " . Heavy D originally presented the song " Dance in New York " , by reggae singer Super Cat to Remi in the belief that Remi could create a " crazy " production if he could choose an appropriate part of the song to sample and edit . Nas , who had worked with Super Cat earlier in his career , claimed that Super Cat actually mentioned him in " Dance in New York " on his first listening of the song . Remi began to try and edit the song , and put together the bassline that would eventually be used on " The Don " , but could not work with the sample that he had been given extensively : after learning the identity of the original producer of " Dance in New York " , Jah Thomas , he paid Thomas in return for use of the song 's multitrack .

Remi continued to work on the production whilst also putting together material for the posthumous Amy Winehouse album Lioness : Hidden Treasures ( 2011 ) in London : whilst there , he learnt of Heavy D 's recent death , encouraging him to complete the production for " The Don " . After Nas received the song , he requested that production duo Da Internz work on " The Don " and edit it further before it would be rapped over . In an interview with XXL , Da Internz called it " an honour that you wouldn 't believe " to have worked on the song once they knew of Heavy D 's involvement in its conception , as they had wished to work with him before he died : they also praised Nas ' attitude in the recording studio , describing " his bars [ and ] his approach " as " just special " . Following the song 's completion , radio disc jockey Funkmaster Flex premiered " The Don " on the New York City radio station Hot 97 on March 15 , 2012 ; Def Jam Recordings later released it to digital retailers on April 3 , 2012 .

= = Recording = =

" The Don " was written by Nasir Jones , Dwight Myers , Salaam Gibbs , Marcos Palacios and Ernest Clark , and produced by Myers under his production name Heavy D , Gibbs under his production name Salaam Remi , and Palacios and Clark under their production name Da Internz . Gibbs also provided additional bass sounds in the song 's production . The song was recorded by Gleyder Disla at Instrument Zoo Studios and by Brian Summer at Conway Recording Studios ? recording studios in Miami , Florida and Hollywood , California respectively . Reggae artists Super Cat and Jah Thomas are credited as writers on " The Don " , as a sample of the song " Dance in New York " , which the duo wrote together , is interpolated in " The Don " . Audio mixing was carried out by Jaycen Joshua at Larrabee Studios in Hollywood , California , with additional vocals being

provided by Red Alert . " The Don " was mastered by Chris Gehringer at Sterling Sound , New York City .

#### = = Composition = =

" The Don " is a hip hop song of three minutes and two seconds in length . It begins with the first use of a sample of " Dance in New York " by Super Cat , used as a means of explaining the importance of music to poorer communities . Following this , Nas ' lyrics are backed by an " airy " , boom bap @-@ orientated production , composed by producers Da Internz , Heavy D and Salaam Remi , containing influences of reggae , whilst also featuring a prominent " bass thud " , staccato drum and piano break ? similar in style to much of the production featured on Nas ' debut album , *Illmatic* ( 1994 ) . Other parts of " Dance in New York " are blended into the song 's production throughout . A reviewer for DJBooth felt that the production shared an old @-@ fashioned aesthetic with Nas ' previous single , " Nasty " , noting that " The Don " " shares its predecessor ? s grimy , old @-@ school informed yet forward @-@ looking feel " . Ken Capobianco shared similar sentiments about the song 's style , observing that it " evoke [ s ] the sound and feel of New York ? s ' 90s hip @-@ hop heyday " . Henry Adaso of About.com noted Nas ' lyrics as consistent with his persona of a " street poet " , writing that " there are gun threats , car boasts , thoughts of rooftop sex , shoutouts to New York rap pioneers , and references to real drug rings " . According to Rolling Stone writer Simon Vozick @-@ Levinson , Nas " deftly " addresses his earlier life by describing " a concise portrait of the artist as a young man " . Heavy D , who died before the song was fully completed , is also mentioned by Nas in the song 's lyrics , where he notes that Heavy D was the one who came up with the production and the ideas behind it before he showed it to Remi .

#### = = Reception = =

" The Don " received universal acclaim from music critics , with Nas 's lyrics drawing particular praise . Rico Barrino of Artistdirect praised Nas 's rapping as being able to impress in different contexts , calling his lyrics " both catchy and commanding " and noted his " precise , potent lyrical poetry honed by 20 years in the game " . Writing for MTV News , Rob Markman called the production " a sonic departure " from Nas ' previous work , but complimented his lyrics as " vintage " and pointed out the consistency of the lyrical quality throughout the song . In his review of " The Don " for About.com , Henry Adaso described the song as " the type of lyrical exercise Nas only throws down once or twice per album " , and that songs such as " The Don " gave a case for Nas ' inclusion " as one of hip @-@ hop 's all @-@ time greats " , also picking up on his " assured " boasts and the " quiet confidence " enveloped in his tone . Adaso also expressed a positive response towards the song 's production , expressing his surprise that having three different producers working on the song had not led to a " case of too many cooks in the kitchen " , writing that " instead , we get a cohesive , hard @-@ hitting , face @-@ melting , reggae @-@ tinged beat " . A reviewer of the song for DJBooth wrote of Nas ' performance as " at turns wistful , threatening and braggadocious " , and praised the production 's " compulsively head @-@ noddable groove " . In their review of *Life Is Good* , Sputnikmusic recommended " The Don " to first @-@ time listeners of Nas , stating to be an exhibition of Nas ' " incredible lyrical structures " and " how rapidly this guy can punch out the syllables " . They also noted it as a " change of pace " from the more downtempo material on *Life Is Good* . In his review of *Life Is Good* for Prefix Magazine , Charlie Kaplan called " The Don " the album 's " clear highlight " and felt it a fitting tribute to Heavy D 's life and work , writing that it " raises a glass to the recently departed overweight lover with a vivid tour of New York rap 's classic soundscapes " . For the chart week dated July 28 , 2012 , " The Don " debuted on the UK Singles Chart at number 196 .

#### = = Music video = =

## == Background ==

A music video for " The Don " was filmed in New York City , and directed by Aristotle Torres . On April 18 , 2012 , a 30 @-@ second promotional clip of the video was released online , which contained shots of skyscrapers and Nas being escorted out of a crowd of party @-@ goers into a white Rolls @-@ Royce . Graphics then appear , announcing the forthcoming release of the full video .

## == Synopsis ==

The video begins with a shot of a yacht out on water , which then segues to an image of the Statue of Liberty : the words " Nas " and " The Don " have been superimposed in mid @-@ air on the left and right @-@ hand sides of the statue respectively . After quickly moving between various images of New York City , Nas is shown sitting at a table at an open air restaurant with a female , at which point he raps the opening lyrics of the song . Again , the video moves rapidly between images , this time addressing Nas ' lifestyle , with shots of sunglasses , jackets and shirts all featured . Shortly following this , Nas is escorted into a white Rolls Royce , wearing a white suit . He is then shown standing in a ring of fire set up on the ground , whilst continuing to recite lyrics from the song .

The video then continues to alternate between three different settings : Nas ' journey in the Rolls Royce , during which he is driven around New York ; him standing in the ring of fire , performing lyrics from the song ; and him sitting in a club , surrounded by several women , also performing lyrics from the song . Black @-@ and @-@ white shots are then shown of Nas performing at a concert , with many fans shown supporting him . Finally , the video ends with several aerial shots of New York City , and an image of the letter " N " burned into the ground .

## == Live performances ==

Nas first performed " The Don " live on March 18 , 2012 , as part of a set specially organised by video service Vevo at the music festival South by Southwest . At the 2012 ESPY Awards , Nas performed " The Don " as part of a medley of songs from Life Is Good , including " Nasty " and " Summer on Smash " , the latter which he performed with rapper and producer Swizz Beatz . On July 17 , 2012 , as part of an appearance on the satirical television program The Colbert Report , Nas performed both " The Don " and the single " Daughters " , a song which also appears on Life Is Good .

## == Track listing ==

Digital download

" The Don " ? 3 : 02

## == Credits and personnel ==

The credits for " The Don " are adapted from the liner notes of Life Is Good .

Recording

Recorded at : Instrument Zoo Studios in Miami , Florida , and Conway Recording Studios in Hollywood , California .

Personnel

Nas ? songwriting , vocals

Da Internz ? songwriting , production

Heavy D ? songwriting , production

Salaam Remi ? songwriting , production , bass

Marcos Palacios ? songwriting

Ernest Clark ? songwriting

Super Cat ? songwriting  
Jah Thomas ? songwriting  
Gleyder Disla ? recording  
Brian Summer ? recording  
Jaycen Joshua ? mixing  
Red Alert ? additional vocals  
Chris Gehringer ? mastering  
Samples

Contains elements of " Dance in New York " , performed by Super Cat and written by William Maragh and Nkrumah Thomas .

= = Charts = =

= = Release history = =