

Enter the Wu

Words: Stewart Dalley

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Rising from the ashes of two soured solo outings for GZA and RZA, it was with fellow rapper Ol' Dirty Bastard that GZA – and laterally RZA – formed the All In Together Now crew; who would subsequently go on to become Wu-Tang Clan.

Today Wu still comprise of the original nine members (plus several hangers on) and are not so much a group but a corporation. But this isn't a case of free-radicals turned corporate whores through capitalism - it was always their intention. As a collective they drew on Shaolin methodology and created a fighting force proficient in the discipline of rap, who understood the best way to attain world domination was to establish themselves as a group, as well as individually. Their debut single 'Protect Ya Neck' first emerged on their own label, which they recorded with their own money at the same time as their debut album 'Enter the Wu: 36 Chambers'. When it hit, it struck like a bomb and the major labels soon came knocking. But their shrewdness made them hang on until Loud Records offered them the deal they wanted – one for the group, with the ability for each member to release solo projects enshrined in the contract.

Final Chapter

It's been ten years and then some since those first releases and by the looks of it the boys ain't done too badly, albeit some better than others. As a group they've only ever actually released four albums – although it feels like a hell of a lot more due to the group's various solo outings - and now there is talk of a fifth and final chapter, as Wu originator GZA tells us. "The talk is in the air, and I'm all for it. I think we should go out one more time with a bang. It's just a case of getting all the individuals together to work this out and lay it down. And hopefully that will be sooner rather than later."

Festival Action

While talk of a new Wu album has been mooted in the past, this time the calls have been given more validity with the announcement that the whole crew, minus ODB and U-God, will be performing on stage for the first time in what seems like an eternity, when they hit the European summer festival circuit - appearing at Werchter Festival (Belgium), Roskilde Festival (Denmark), Oxygen Festival (Ireland) and T in the Park (Scotland). But if you expect GZA to get all gushy on us, well you clearly don't know the man. "The shows will be in effect, I can tell you that much. I've only spoke to a few Clan members about it but we've yet to get together as a group and work it all out. But you know we ain't gonna do no half-assed shows."

Strictly Genius

As a solo artists GZA is also set to record one last album, but don't expect it any time soon, he's too busy with other things. Like appearing in Jim Jarmush's latest film 'Coffee & Cigarettes', alongside RZA and Bill Murray, where he, amongst many others, talks about the pros and cons of the aforementioned. Although, ironically enough, neither he nor RZA actually use either product, preferring a cup of tea and some other tobacco related items. In between times there's the compilation album 'Collection of Classics', collaborations with Pete Rock on his new 'Soul Survivor II' album, and the soon to be released 'Wu Tang Revealed' - a DVD comprising 'behind the scenes antics' around the time of the recording of the group's 'W' album in LA, which by all accounts was no holiday camp.

New Releases

Method Man - 'Tical 0: The Prequel'

Ghostface – 'The Pretty Toney Album'

GZA – 'Collection of Classics'

Masta Killa – 'No Said Date'

BOX

GZA's Top three classic hip hop joints

Erik B & Rakim – 'I Ain't No Joke' 4th & Broadway 1987

Big Daddy Kane – 'Set It Off' Cold Chillin' 1988

Run DMC – 'Peter Piper' Profile 1986