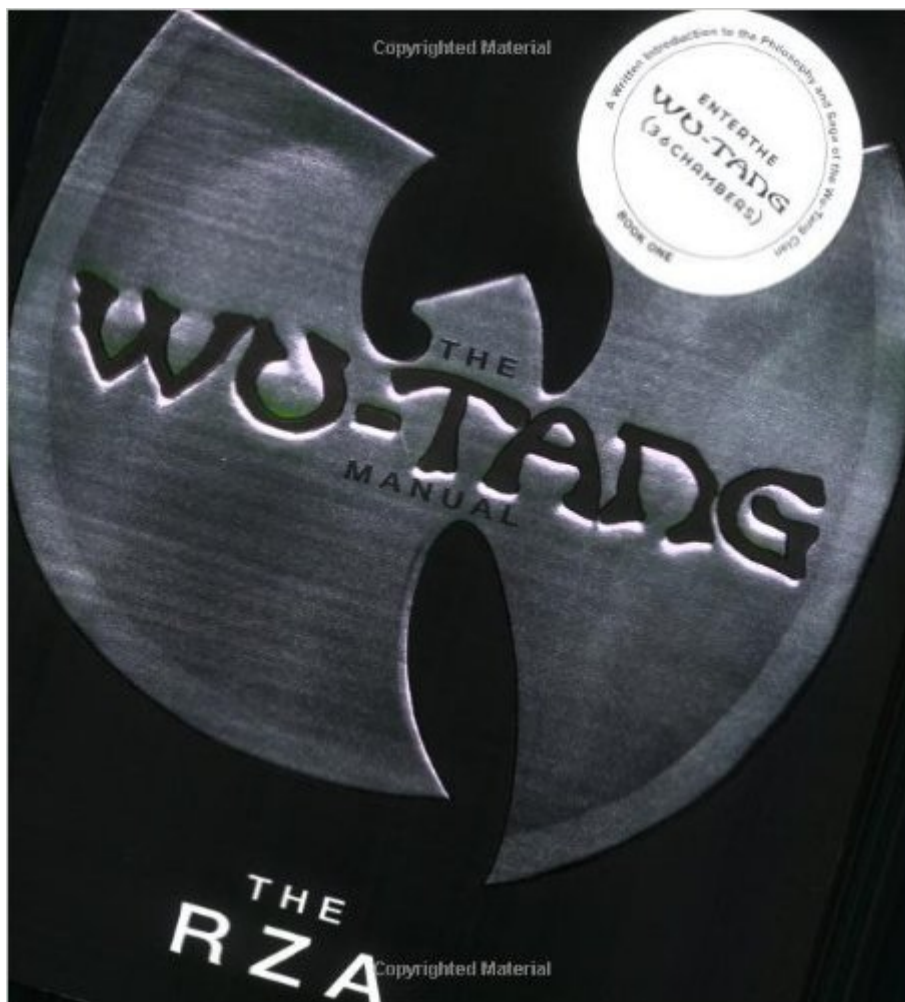


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The Wu-Tang Manual



Synopsis

Long awaited and much anticipated, The Wu-Tang Manual is The RZA's first written introduction to the philosophy and history of Hip-Hop's original Dynasty, the Wu-Tang Clan. Since the release of the revolutionary Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers) over the course of four seminal group albums and a multitude of ambitious side projects the Wu-Tang Clan has constantly redefined what hip-hop can do and where hip-hop can go. Now, after a decade of dark beats and mysterious lyrics hinting at a larger whole, the RZA, the abbot of the legendary Staten Island hip-hop collective, fully reveals, for the first time, the complex, multilayered Wu-Tang Universe in The Wu-Tang Manual. Written in a style that is at once personal and philosophical, The Wu-Tang Manual unravels the intricate web of personalities (and alter egos), warrior codes, numerological systems, and Eastern spiritual ethics that define the Wu-Tang dynasty. Packed with information that reflects the breadth and depth of the RZA and rest of the Clan's intellectual interests and passions, The Wu-Tang Manual is divided into four books of nine chambers each, for a total of 36 chambers. All together, the book provides the breakdown of essential Wu-Tang components, from basic information about each of the nine core members of Wu-Tang Clan to deeper explorations of the key themes of the Wu-Tang universe, a dictionary-like Wu-Slang lexicon, and an entire section of Wu-Tang lyrics with densely annotated explanations of what they mean. Elegantly laid-out and richly printed, the book is designed to reflect the Asian influence on the Wu-Tang universe, which, as the book explains, began with a fascination with kung-fu movies but quickly led to serious study of martial arts and Eastern philosophy and spirituality. The book also includes a map of Shaolin; a trove of never-before-seen photos of the Wu-Tang Clan, including shots of RZA's trip to China with Sifu Shi Yan-Ming, live shots, and portraits-by Michael Lavine, Craig Wetherby, Sophia Chang, and Frank151; and original illustrations of many of the guiding lights of the Wu-Tang universe. For the hardcore Wu-Tang disciple and the recent initiate alike, The Wu-Tang Manual is the definitive guide to the essence of Wu, one of the most innovative hip-hop groups of all time. The RZA's most recent book, The Tao of Wu, is also available from Riverhead Books.

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Customer Reviews

All I can say is, why'd it take so long? Oh yeah, that's right. They were too busy releasing albums, touring, doing shows (and drugs), getting locked up, getting released, appearing on Chappelle's Show, making comic books, scoring movies, and growing the legend of the nine generals, to finish writing a book. Wow. This is an astonishingly exhaustive work explicating fully the reasoning behind all the insane lyrics behind the Wu, plus the culture with which they were inculcated in their youth. I've been a Wu fan since around Killa Bees/Gravel Pit days, and my collection now includes nearly every group and solo album (less Deck's The Movement, some Cappadonna, U-God's stuff, and Immobilarity). As such a thorough fan, I'm highly impressed. Lyrics in their songs that I'd just skipped over before or barely acknowledged take on added depth and meaning with the Abbot's commentary. And it's not just Wu-devotees that will find material in here to their liking. The book begins very simply, with biographies of each of the original nine swordsmen. Containing exhaustive lists of aliases (some of which I had -no- idea belonged to the emcee that they do), birthdates, anecdotes, and releases, these serve perfectly to introduce the reader to the individual rappers. From there, however, the book progresses into a deeper analysis of the underpinnings of Wu tradition, including looks at -all- their obvious influences (kung fu movies, mob movies, comic books, drug culture, etc.) and some less obvious ones (did you know that the famous Shaolin Sifu Shi Yanming is personal friends with RZA and Iron Man?).

The Wu-Tang Manual is akin to all the EU (Expanded Universe) novels, comic books, and publications related to the Star Wars franchise for a hip hop fan of one of the culture's biggest phenomenons ever. The Manual is chock full of EVERYTHING an intellectual listener and avid fan of the Wu would want to know: biographies, lyrics explanations, philosophy, music equipment, and spirituality. The Wu-Tang started a new sound in hip hop in early '93: gritty, minimalistic, atonal, and lo-fi, all exemplified in the classic debut 'Enter: The Wu-Tang'. From then on, a legend was born: numerous solo albums from all nine members, even including the honorary tenth member

Cappadonna, movies, television, touring, guest appearances on other artists' projects, RZA even composed music for the original soundtrack to the Tarantino's two-parter 'Kill Bill'. The Wu-Tang even have their own "Expanded Universe" of branch-off emcees and groups that rivals the amount of material in that of the Star Wars EU (e.g. Cilvaringz, Killah Priest, Sunz of Man, Black Knights, Killarmy, etc.). And they're STILL going strong with a slew of new albums already dropping (Ghost's awesome 'Fishscale', Sunz' 'Old Testament', etc.). The Wu-Tang Clan are HIP HOP LEGENDS, and this Manual chronicles the beginning of the movement all the way to the present, even chronicling the events that shaped the life of Robert Diggs (RZA), which would eventually also shape his movement. To the initiated, [hip hop] heads know the Wu stand for something and they're some pretty deep brothers. RZA quotes everyone from Nietzsche to the Hagakure, a guide of bushido commentaries for the warrior (samurai).

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