

= 45) (4 + 5 =

9) The lyrics and rhymes of the 9 members are to be considered as 36 deadly lyrical techniques for pressure points . All of this is the basis for the album title , Enter the Wu @-@ Tang (36 Chambers) , being that 9 members x 4 chambers = 36 . However , this is just a theory ; the true significance of the title is not definitively known .

= = Music and lyrics = =

= = = Production = = =

Group leader RZA produced Enter the Wu @-@ Tang (36 Chambers) by creating sonic collages from classic soul samples and clips from martial arts movies such as Shaolin and Wu Tang (1981) . He complemented the rappers ' performances with " lean , menacing beats that evoked their gritty , urban surroundings more effectively than their words , " according to Stephen Thomas Erlewine of Allmusic . The use of soul samples and various esoteric clips , and the technique by which RZA employed them in his beats , was unique and largely unprecedented in hip hop . The gritty sound of Enter the Wu @-@ Tang is due , at least in part , to the use of cheap equipment to produce the album .

Many critics argue that the minimalist means of production plays directly into the appealing " street " quality that makes the album a classic , including Ben Yew , who stated , " Because [RZA] didn 't have the best mixing or recording equipment , the album is wrought with a ' dirty ' quality ? the drums have more bass and are more hard @-@ hitting than they are crisp and clean ; the samples have an eerie , almost haunting type of echo ; and the vocals , because each member 's voice is already aggressive and gritty , perfectly match the production . " Although Ol ' Dirty Bastard is given co @-@ production credit on " Da Mystery of Chessboxin ' " and Method Man is co @-@ credited for " Wu @-@ Tang Clan Ain 't Nuthin ta F ' Wit , " critics and admirers universally credit RZA with developing a " dusty yet digital production style [that] helped legitimize the use of more diverse sample sources to the hardcore New York rap massive , breaking away from James Brown based beats and embracing a style that turned the Underdog theme into the menacing coda for a group of underground terrorists . "

= = = Lyrics = = =

Enter the Wu Tang ushered in a new standard for hip hop at a time when hip hop music was dominated by the jazz @-@ influenced styles of A Tribe Called Quest , the Afrocentric viewpoints of Public Enemy , and the rising popularity of West Coast gangsta rap . The album 's explicit , humorous and free @-@ associative lyrics have been credited for serving as a template for many subsequent hip hop records . Rolling Stone described the album as possessing an aesthetic that was " low on hype and production values [and] high on the idea that indigence is a central part of blackness . " While the lyrical content on Enter the Wu @-@ Tang generally varies from rapper to rapper , the basic themes are the same ? urban life , martial arts movies , comic book references , and marijuana ? and the setting is invariably the harsh environment of New York City . The lyrics have a universally dark tone and seem at times to be simply aggressive cries . AllMusic contributor Steve Huey praises the lyricists for their originality and caustic humor , stating " Some were outsized , theatrical personalities , others were cerebral storytellers and lyrical technicians , but each had his own distinctive style ... Every track on Enter the Wu @-@ Tang is packed with fresh , inventive rhymes , which are filled with martial arts metaphors , pop culture references (everything from Voltron to Lucky Charms cereal commercials to Barbra Streisand 's " The Way We Were ") , bizarre threats of violence , and a truly twisted sense of humor . "

With the exception of " Method Man " and GZA 's " Clan in da Front " , every song features multiple rappers contributing verses of varying lengths . The verses are essentially battle rhymes , mixed with humor and outsized tales of urban violence and drug use . There is some debate about whether

the lyrics on 36 Chambers are properly classified as gangsta rap or something else entirely . In a Stylus Magazine review , writer Gavin Mueller evokes the bleakness of the Wu @-@ Tang world view :

[T] he lyrics reach back to New York 's own Rakim : dense battle rhymes potent with metaphors . Each Wu MC links his rhymes to crime and violence , allowing his preoccupations to surface subtly and indirectly , rather than spouting off overt gangsta @-@ isms designed to shock ... The hood imagery of the lyrics is utterly pervasive and uncompromising , immersing the listener in a foreign land smack in the middle of New York . There is no celebration here , and little hope .

All nine original Wu @-@ Tang Clan members contribute vocals on Enter the Wu @-@ Tang . Masta Killa only appears on one track , contributing the last verse of " Da Mystery of Chessboxin , ' " but all the other rappers appear on at least two songs . Method Man and Raekwon are the most prolific of the group , featured on eight tracks . Though the performers have widely differing techniques , the chemistry between them is a key ingredient of the album 's success . Pitchfork Media asserts that " Half the charm is in the cast 's idiosyncrasies : ODB 's hovering sing @-@ song , Raekwon 's fake stutter , Ghostface 's verbal tics , Method Man 's hazy , dusted voice . "

= = Singles = =

" Protect Ya Neck " and " Tearz " were the first tracks recorded by the Wu @-@ Tang Clan . " Protect Ya Neck " is a free @-@ associative and braggadocious battle rap featuring eight of the nine Wu @-@ Tang members , and " Tearz " tells stories of a little kid getting shot (RZA 's little brother) , and another one who contracts HIV after having unprotected sex . They were independently released as the " Protect Ya Neck " / " After Laughter Comes Tears " single , which RZA financed by demanding \$ 100 (USD) from each rapper who wanted a verse on the A @-@ side . The single was re @-@ released in a much larger pressing , with " Method Man " as the B @-@ side .

" Method Man " reached number 69 on the Billboard Hot 100 and number 17 on the Billboard Hot Rap Tracks chart . " Method Man " gained significant airplay partly for its catchy refrain , which copies the refrain of Hall & Oates ' " Method of Modern Love " (" The M @-@ E @-@ T @-@ H @-@ O @-@ D ... Man ") .

" C.R.E.A.M. " , featuring Raekwon and Inspectah Deck , was the second single from the album and the first new A @-@ side to be released after the group signed with Loud / RCA . Its lyrics deal with the struggle of poverty and the desire to earn money by any means . It was the Wu @-@ Tang Clan 's most successful single , reaching number 60 on the Billboard Hot 100 and number 8 on the Hot Rap Tracks chart . The single topped the Hot Dance Music / Maxi @-@ Singles Sales chart . " Can It Be All So Simple " , featuring Ghostface Killah and Raekwon , was the album 's third single . The single failed to chart on the Billboard Hot 100 , but reached number 24 on the Hot Rap Tracks chart in 1994 . A remix of the song was included on Raekwon 's debut solo album Only Built 4 Cuban Linx ... (1995) .

The group made music videos for the three A @-@ sides and for " Method Man " , " Da Mystery of Chessboxin ' " , and " Wu @-@ Tang Clan Ain 't Nuthin ta Fuck Wit " . As the group 's profile increased , the quality of their videos improved ; though the " Protect Ya Neck " video resembled a home movie , later videos were directed by rising hip hop music video director Hype Williams . The videos received almost no airplay on MTV , but were extremely popular on video @-@ by @-@ request channels such as The Box . Touré wrote in his 1993 Rolling Stone review that " in Brooklyn , N.Y. , right now and extending back a few months , the reigning fave is the Wu @-@ Tang Clan , who are to the channel what Guns N ' Roses are to MTV . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Initial reaction = = =

Upon its release , Enter the Wu @-@ Tang (36 Chambers) received rave reviews from most

music critics . In an article for The Source , The Ghetto Communicator wrote " This record is harsh , but so is the world that we live in . For B @-@ boys n 'girls who come from the core of the hard , this is the hip @-@ hop album you 've been waiting for " . Rolling Stone 's review was decidedly ambivalent , praising the album 's sound , but noting that " Wu @-@ Tang ... are more ciphers than masterful creations . In refusing to commodify themselves , they leave blank the ultimate canvas ? the self . " Entertainment Weekly was more enthusiastic , giving the album an A , and writing that " With its rumble jumble of drumbeats , peppered with occasional piano plunking , Enter has a raw , pass @-@ the @-@ mike flavor we haven 't heard since rap was pop 's best @-@ kept secret . " Robert Christgau found the Wu @-@ Tang Clan " grander " and " goofier " than their West Coast contemporaries and concluded , " Expect the masterwork this album 's reputation suggests and you 'll probably be disappointed--it will speak directly only to indigenous hip hoppers . Expect a glorious human mess , as opposed to the ominous platinum product of their opposite numbers , and you 'll realize the dope game isn 't everyone 's dead @-@ end street " .

Music journalist Touré declared of the album , that " This is hip @-@ hop you won 't find creeping up the Billboard charts but you will hear booming out of Jeep stereos in all the right neighborhoods . " However , Enter the Wu @-@ Tang had surprising chart success , despite its raw , underground sound . It peaked at number 41 on the Billboard 200 chart and reached number eight on Billboard 's Top R & B / Hip Hop Albums chart . The album continued to sell steadily and was eventually certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America on May 15 , 1995 .

= = = Retrospect = = =

Since its release , Enter the Wu @-@ Tang has risen in stature to become one of the most highly regarded albums in hip hop . The album was originally given a rating of 4 @. @ 5 mics out of 5 in The Source magazine in 1994 ; however , it was given a classic 5 mic rating in a later issue of the magazine . Similar to The Source , XXL magazine gave the album a classic rating of " XXL " in its retrospective 2007 issue . In the book Spin Alternative Record Guide (1995) , Enter the Wu @-@ Tang (36 Chambers) has a critical rating of 8 / 10 from Spin . In 2003 , Rolling Stone named the album among the " 500 Greatest Albums of All Time " , asserting that " East @-@ coast hip @-@ hop made a return in 1993 . " The magazine later listed it as one of the " Essential Albums of the 90s " and " 100 Best Debut Albums of All Time . " The Source cited Enter the Wu @-@ Tang as one of the " 100 Best Rap Albums " , while also naming " Protect Ya Neck / Method Man " and " C.R.E.A.M. " among the " 100 Best Rap Singles " . MTV declared it among " The Greatest Hip @-@ Hop Albums of All Time " , while Blender named the album among the " 500 CDs You Must Own " . Oliver Wang , author of Classic Material : The Hip @-@ Hop Album Guide described it " as timeless an album as hip @-@ hop has ever seen . "

Publications based outside of the United States have acclaimed 36 Chambers as well ; Australia 's Juice magazine placed it at number 40 on its list of " 100 Greatest Albums of the ' 90s " , and Les Inrockuptibles ranked it number 59 on a list of " The 100 Best Albums 1986 ? 1996 " . In naming Enter the Wu @-@ Tang one of the 50 best albums of the 1990s , Pitchfork Media staff member Rollie Pemberton summed up the album 's critical recognition by writing :

This is the sound of accidental fame . Something as unique and unusual as this record isn 't supposed to find itself at the height of commercial viability ; it 's supposed to smolder underground , hidden from the view of mainstream America , who surely would not be ready for such a challenge . But America was ready , in part because this one challenged convention , not listeners . Sure , its sloppy drum programming , bizarre song structures , and unpolished sound quality disturbed commercial rap purists , but the talent was so inherent and obvious , and the charisma so undeniable , that it propelled the Wu @-@ Tang Clan to the height of the rap game , and today stands not just as the hip @-@ hop classic that introduced the concept of obscure thematic characters (each member 's name references old kung @-@ fu movies) , but also bridged the gap between traditional old @-@ school sensibilities and the technical lyricism of today .

In 2010 , Enter the Wu @-@ Tang (36 Chambers) was included in the book 1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die .

= = Legacy and influence = =

= = = East Coast hip hop = = =

Enter the Wu @-@ Tang (36 Chambers) is one of the most influential albums in hip hop history . Adam Heimlich of the New York Press considers the album a touchstone of hardcore hip @-@ hop , a gritty , stripped @-@ down , dark and violent subgenre of hip hop and the signature sound of New York City 's rap scene during the mid @-@ 1990s . He writes that , " the Wu @-@ Tang Clan ... all but invented 90s New York rap , back when the notion of an East Coast gangsta still meant Schoolly D or Kool G. Rap [They] designed the manner and style in which New York artists would address what Snoop and Dre had made rap 's hottest topics : drugs and violence . " As the album helped return New York City hip hop to national prominence , a new generation of New York rappers , many of them inspired by the Wu @-@ Tang Clan 's example , released a flurry of classic albums that later became known as the East Coast Renaissance . Enter the Wu @-@ Tang has been recognized by critics as a landmark album in the movement . AllMusic indicates that the success of the album paved the way for Nas , The Notorious B.I.G. Mobb Deep and Jay @-@ Z.

At the time of the album 's release , mainstream hip hop was dominated by West Coast hip hop . Enter the Wu Tang (along with the critically acclaimed Illmatic and the commercial success of Ready to Die) was able to shift the emphasis away from the melodious , synthesizer @-@ driven G @-@ funk and restore interest into the East Coast hip hop scene . According to one columnist , " When Enter the Wu @-@ Tang : The 36 Chambers first graced the pages of rap lore in 1993 , Dr. Dre 's funk @-@ filled , West Coast gangster rap dominated the business . Though this initial dominance was difficult to overcome , Wu @-@ Tang still managed to carve out a piece of rap history . "

= = = Hip hop production = = =

RZA 's production on Wu @-@ Tang Clan 's debut album had a profound and significant influence on subsequent hip hop producers . The distinctive sound of Enter the Wu @-@ Tang has been credited for creating a blueprint for hardcore hip hop in the mid @-@ 1990s . Blackfilm.com asserts that Enter the Wu @-@ Tang 's production formula " transformed the sound of underground rap into mainstream formula , and virtually changed the face of contemporary music as popsters once knew it . " Many successful rap producers have admitted to the influence of RZA 's beats on their own production efforts . 9th Wonder , a producer and former member of Little Brother , is one of many whose vocal sampling styles are inspired by RZA . The album 's reliance on soul music samples was novel at the time , but 21st century producers such as The Alchemist , Kanye West and Just Blaze now rely on this technique . According to Allmusic , the production on two Mobb Deep albums , The Infamous and Hell on Earth (1996) , are " indebted " to RZA 's early production with Wu @-@ Tang Clan .

= = = Subsequent Wu @-@ Tang work = = =

Following Enter the Wu @-@ Tang 's success , the individual members of the group negotiated and signed solo contracts with a variety of different labels : Method Man signed with Def Jam , Ol ' Dirty Bastard with Elektra , GZA with Geffen Records , and Ghostface Killah with Epic Records . This expansion across the music industry was an element of RZA 's stated plan for industry @-@ wide domination , wherein " All Wu releases are deemed to be 50 percent partnerships with Wu @-@ Tang Productions and each Wu member with solo deal must contribute 20 percent of their earnings back to Wu @-@ Tang Productions , a fund for all Wu members . "

On Enter the Wu @-@ Tang 's effect on the group and the music industry , the Milwaukee Journal 's Aaron Justin @-@ Szopinski wrote " The Wu showed us that a hip @-@ hop group can control its

own destiny in the tangled web of the industry . It owns publishing rights , controls its samples and has 90 % influence over its career . And that control , that outlook for the future , is what makes it the best . " Wu @-@ Tang Clan have produced four subsequent group albums since Enter the Wu @-@ Tang , including Wu @-@ Tang Forever (1997) , which is certified as a quadruple platinum record . None of the subsequent Wu @-@ Tang Clan albums have garnered the critical accolades that their debut was accorded .

In 2013 , the group reunited , at the behest of RZA , for an album and tour celebrating the 20th anniversary of the album 's release . The album was titled A Better Tomorrow and the tour included dates throughout the United States , Europe and Russia . All original members of the group who performed on Enter the Wu @-@ Tang participated in both the tour and reunion album , excepting Ol ' Dirty Bastard , who died in 2004 .

= = Track listing = =

= = = CD = = =

Tracks 1 ? 5 are on the Shaolin Sword side of the album and tracks 6 ? 12 are on the Wu @-@ Tang Sword side .

An asterisk (*) indicates international version bonus track

= = = Vinyl / cassette = = =

The vinyl and cassette track order is slightly different to that of the CD :

= = Personnel = =

Credits for Enter the Wu @-@ Tang (36 Chambers) adapted from AllMusic .

= = Charts = =

= = = Album = = =

= = = Singles = = =

= = Accolades = =

The information regarding accolades attributed to Enter the Wu @-@ Tang is taken from AcclaimedMusic.net , except for lists with additional sources .

(*) designates lists that are unordered .