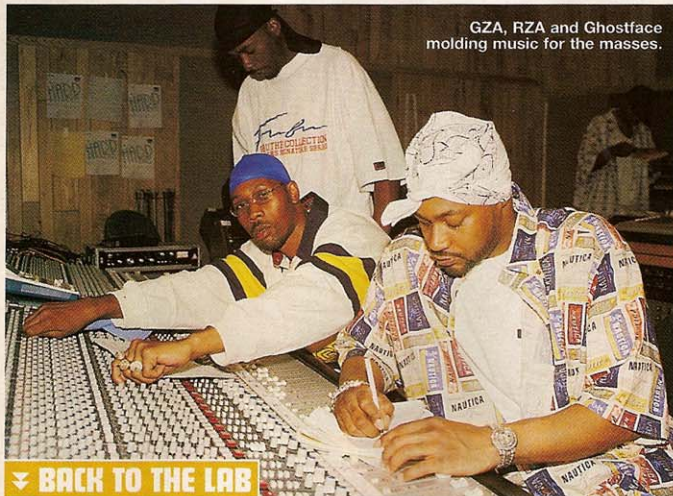


MUSIC MATTERS



GZA, RZA and Ghostface molding music for the masses.

➤ BACK TO THE LAB

WU-TANG CLAN

Gradually, the Wu-Tang Clan ease in the back door of North Hollywood's Track Records Studio on a warm summer night. The only clan member missing is Ol' Dirty. He's on the "iron vacation," says U God, without a hint of worry in his voice or eyes. "We still got music on him."

Their current residence is a Hollywood Hills mansion where they all eat, sleep and excrete the type of fire that caught the nation's attention back in 1993—back when hip-hop's once-reigning family dropped the classic *Enter the Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers*. Now, for the past several months, the Wu-

fruits of their current labors.

Tonight, they intend to add at least one more track to the 15 completed RZA-produced songs recorded for the upcoming LP. RZA, the Clan's nucleus, sits at the control board playing a portion of the steamin'-hot "Gravel Pick," featuring Method Man and U God. The song pounds like ...36 Chambers' "Shame on a Nigga," but the production and lyrics are a lot simpler than Wu's other debut singles, like "Protect Ya Neck" and "Triumph." Method Man even shies away from metaphors, spitting straight braggadocio over the party beat: "I can't stand Bentleys/ They cost too much/ Remember ODB said/ I'll fuck yo' ass up!"

RZA is fully aware that Wu fans may not expect lighthearted lyricism. "If you really look at it," he says, "we was taking it back [with] 'Clan in da Front' and 'Da Mystery of Chessboxin' (from ...36 Chambers). Those songs was hella fast. We just up-tempo right now. We know niggas is partying. We still got slow shit."

"We know what we doing," says U God, a huge smirk across his face. "But the time calls for simplex. Okay, y'all want it like that?" He raises his index finger to simulate the double clicking of a computer mouse. "Click. Click. Beware. We can go there easy. One finger even." —BILLY JOHNSON JR.



Tang Clansmen have been sequestered like jurors in the O.J. trial, working on their third and as yet untitled album. See, since releasing 1997's *Wu-Tang Forever*, all members have been busy, promoting their solo releases and working on side projects. But the world has been furiously awaiting the

SAY WORD

Not Playin': 18-year-old Danyella Rogers has reportedly filed a \$200 million lawsuit against Lil' Cease, Lil' Kim, Puffy and Atlantic Records. The Brooklyn native claims that an explicit phone conversation she had with Cease was recorded and used without her consent on his album, *The Wonderful World of Cease a Leo*. We'll keep ya posted. >>> **Banned From TV:** On July 6, police at Detroit's Joe Louis Arena stopped the movie-short used as the prelude to Dre and Snoop's performance during the Up In Smoke tour. (The mini-movie shows Dre and Snoop in a violent shoot-out with a band of would-be robbers.) The video didn't show, as authorities threatened to cut the power if it was played. Dre indicated he would file a civil lawsuit against the city of Detroit. Officials reportedly tried to stop the video at another Michigan show, but a US District judge intervened, saying the city had no right to pull the plug. Dre is currently seeking in excess of \$25 million from the



Lil' Cease

city for violating his first-amendment rights. Stay tuned, this could get ugly. >>> **Gas Face 2000:** On July 18, attendees of RED Distribution's second-annual convention in Southbury, CT, were treated to a reunion show from 3rd Bass, MC Serch and Pete Nice kicked off the opening night of the convention with classics like "Pop Goes the Weasel," as well as new joints from their upcoming release on Warlock Records. >>> **Radio Assassins:** NBSG Radio Network has decided to syndicate "Soul Assassins," a weekly two-hour radio show, hosted by Cypress Hill's B-Real and Eric Bobo. The show currently airs on Power 106 in Los Angeles but goes nationwide on August 19. Keep ya ears open. >>> **Heaven Up in Harlem:** On a final note, the former Murder Mase is now... Minister Mason Betha. The Harlem World native has become an official man of the cloth. And y'all thought he wasn't serious.

WU-TANG: LAWRENCE DORTL