



The Wu-Tang Manual

By The RZA, Chris Norris

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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's — 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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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-In the late 1970s, Robert Diggs was growing up in a New York housing project. He spent his time with his many cousins and watching kung fu movies in Times Square. Later, he turned his interests in martial arts, spirituality, chess, comics, and rap music into one of the most successful rap groups of the 1990s-the Wu-Tang Clan. Named for a type of Shaolin martial arts, the Clan consists of Diggs-The RZA-two of his cousins, and six other members. The author shares all that went into making the group what it is, a curious mix of Eastern philosophy, supreme mathematics, capitalism, and, not least, talent. Nearly a quarter of the book is dedicated to lyrics, including a deep analysis of what each rapper meant. The Wu-Tang's lyrics are full of violence, drugs, and slang, but also well-executed metaphors, symbolism, and their philosophy realized. It's rare that rap lyrics are given this level of analysis, let alone in such a readable fashion. The book is full of photographs of the members and information about their work and interests, which include drugs, both legal and illegal. Even this topic is treated with intellectual detachment: "You can't say [drugs] are all bad or they're all good." (Sadly, since the book's publication, founding member ODB died from a drug-related incident.) Even though the Wu-Tang's greatest success came in the 1990s, they are still highly relevant and have many teen fans, all of whom will find something appealing in this account.-*Jamie Watson, Harford County Public Library, MD*

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About the Author

The RZA is most famous as the founder and leader of the Wu-Tang Clan, the platinum-selling hip-hop group that is widely considered one of the most important of all time, and has also spanned multiplatinum solo careers for many of its members, including RZA. Originally from Staten Island, he is currently based in Los Angeles, where he has continued his music career while successfully branching out into lecturing, television, and film.

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