

DAILY NEWS

A Tribe Called Wu-Tang: Classic albums released on same day in '93

By Carl Stoffers
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Here's the scenario: 22 years ago, the golden age of hip hop reached what many consider its peak.

On Nov. 9, 1993, two hip hop masterpieces were released - The Wu-Tang Clan's "Enter the Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers" and A Tribe Called Quest's "Midnight Marauders." Those albums have gone on to be considered two of the most influential records in the history of the genre.

"It was the golden era of hip hop," author and music historian Kevin Powell told the Daily News. "It was like rock 'n roll or Motown in the sixties."

"Marauders" was Tribe's third LP. Lyrically and musically varied, with jazz-infused beats and samples, it spawned the singles, "Award Tour," "Electric Relaxation," and "Oh My God," which all charted on Billboard's top 100.

"I can't say the album's success was a surprise, but it's humbling, considering the music that came out at the time and after," Tribe's DJ/producer Ali Shaheed Muhammad told the News. "To know your music transcends time feels good."

The yin to Tribe's jazzy, laid-back yang was Wu-Tang Clan's aggressive debut release, "36 Chambers." The title, a kung-fu movie reference, signaled the group's hardcore lyrics and featured a bass-heavy, dirty feel.

A crew of nine rappers, Wu-Tang released an independent single, "Protect Ya Neck," in late 1992, which earned the group a sizeable underground following.

By November 1993, the anticipation of "36 Chambers" release was high. It quickly went multi-platinum and ultimately launched the successful solo careers of members Method Man, Ol' Dirty Bastard, RZA, GZA, and Raekwon.

"It was the essence of hip hop," said Powell. "This was Wu-Tang's coming out party. There were so many voices, all these characters, it was like DeNiro or Pesci in Scorsese films. They were like self-created ghetto superheroes."

The influence of both groups, and the masterpieces that were released that day, continues to permeate hip hop, despite the inevitable changes in the genre.

"You can draw a straight line from Wu-Tang to Macklemore and Ryan Lewis referencing them on their record and Tribe to Kanye West and so many others," said Powell. "It's one of the most important dates in the history of music."

Many see the simultaneous release as something more meaningful than a serendipitous hip hop collision.

"They each made a piece of art that can never be duplicated and will go down in history as some of the greatest music ever produced," said SiriusXM DJ Ed Lover.

Since 1993, Wu-Tang Clan members have had extensive solo careers, and the group has continued to release music under the Wu-Tang banner, despite the death of Ol' Dirty Bastard in 2004.

Tribe's last new album, "The Love Movement," was released in 1998, but its three members continue to work on solo projects. A 25th-anniversary version of its 1990 debut album, "People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm" will be released November 13, featuring remixes by artists that Tribe inspired, including Pharrell Williams and CeeLo Green.

Muhammad was coy when asked about a future Tribe reunion.

"You never know," he said.

More than two decades later, both groups--and the albums they released on that day--have stood the test of time, continuing to entertain and inspire.

"They showed the diversity of the music," said Lover. "For that one shining moment in time, that one day, you got a taste of how far hip hop had come and what hip hop could be."