

New Releases



**Wu-Tang Clan & Various Artists
"Wu-Chronicles"
Priority/Wu-Tang Records
Grade: C+**

Combining the mysticism of a Saturday afternoon "Kung-fu" marathon and the grim reality of racism and urban violence, the Wu-Tang Clan have come out with some of the most original music in hip hop.

They have also been able to make an impact every year in the music world. That's mainly due to the solo projects each band member has released since the band's inception.

Fortunately, for casual Wu fans, "Wu-Chronicles" is now available. The "best of" collection features highlights of each of the band members' solo works along with a couple of unreleased tracks.



The album kicks off with "4th Chamber" from one of the better MCs of the group, Genius. Their fascination with the martial arts is immediately evident as a sample of a martial arts movie is laid out before a harsh, throbbing staccato beat hits the listener.

Less talented rappers may obsess over filling every blank space with a relentless beat, but each member of the Wu-Tang, especially Genius and Method Man, make effective use of silence.

Fans of the late Notorious B.I.G., a.k.a. Christopher Wallace, will no doubt want to check out track three, "The What," as he trades off boasts with Method Man.

Though each member of the Wu-Tang has a chance to show off their certain strengths by putting all their songs on one album, it leaves the album

somewhat disjointed. With the exception of the unreleased tracks "Latunza Hit," by the Wu-Syndicate and "96 Recreation (Demo)," by Cappadonna, The RZA and O.D.B., "Wu-Chronicles" comes off as a nicely packaged mix tape.

Critics of the gangsta rap genre will have plenty of their arguments confirmed with "Wu-Chronicles." While the musical styles may be varied, the lyrical subjects are fairly universal. Double breasted suits, enemies taken out with glocks and shotguns and the typical misogynistic blasts litter all of the tracks on "Wu-Chronicles."

The only other major gripe about "Wu-Chronicles" is that most of the tracks come from albums that were more focused and realized than their last collaborative effort, "Wu-Tang Forever." Taking them out of their context and pasting them together with the works of another group member is sort of like having an album full of Breeders and Frank Black singles. It may be a decent mix to do at home, but released on a large scale, it just doesn't quite gel.

Still, for casual fans, it's definitely worth the purchase. Better to find out your favorite rapper's tracks with the purchase of only one CD than to face poverty for a couple of months by buying each of the band's solo projects. Pick your favorite tracks off "Wu-Chronicles" and choose your own Wu adventure.

-Sean McCarthy

**BET, assorted artists
"Planet Groove"
Virgin Records
Grade: B+**

It seems these days, everyone is putting out a compilation album, a trend especially beaten to death in the hip-hop genre.

And every media outlet on the urban beat seems to think they can put out an album that will be the be-all and end-all of compilations.

Along with a variety of record companies, video channels such as MTV and VH-1 have all released sets of compilation albums. But who better to compile a mix of urban music than the music television channel dedicated solely to hip-hop, rhythm and blues and

rap? The answer is, of course, Black Entertainment Television.

This week, the folks at BET have released their first compilation - "The Best of Planet Groove."

Fans of the BET show could have probably picked hundreds of songs as the best of "Planet Groove," but BET narrowed it down to 15.

For the uninitiated, "Planet Groove" is more of the sultry side of R&B music. You won't find Tupac Shakur or Dr. Dre on the groove, but you will find a mix of artists that aren't on the gangster rap tip.

The producers selected only the greatest of R&B artists to appear on BET's debut compilation album. Mariah Carey, Brian McKnight and Erykah Badu are just a few that were tabbed as the best of "Planet Groove."

The first track, "I Get Lonely," featuring the sexy sounds of Janet Jackson, immediately sets the tone. Anyone trying to create an atmosphere will get the job done by popping this in the CD player.

One of the more erotic songs is "My Body" by LSG. Three legends of the game, Gerald Levert, Keith Sweat and Johnny Gill each provide lyrics that any Romeo would love to have in his arsenal.

The slow tune and beat of the music could lull someone to sleep or make their knees buckle. That is the quintessence of "Planet Groove."

Although most of the songs have the traditional harmony and style R&B music is known for, the lone problem with the album is some of the songs have been overplayed by radio stations and video channels.

Montell Jordan's "Let's Ride," fea-

turing Masta P and Silkk the Shocker was on the soundtrack to "Dr. Doolittle," and the video was seen everywhere and all the time.

But unlike most other compilation albums, this CD also has a nice mix of not so popular songs by very well-known artists.

R&B group Next, who shot on to the charts in 1998 with "Too Close," is on the album with "Butta Love," which was on its album "Rated Next."

SWV, which has had several top 40 hits, appears on the CD with its song "Rain." It is a solid ballad that didn't make a lot of people's best of list for 1998.

Obviously, the more well-known

songs are needed to sell records, but the mix of famous and obscure tracks creates a more well-rounded and representative R&B album.

That mix, along with the quality of songs, makes BET's "The Best of Planet Groove" one of the better compilation albums that have come out lately.

Fans of the show will love the album, and people that haven't turned their television sets to Black Entertainment Television will get a good look at an up-and-coming music scene.

-Jay Saunders

Indigenous

John Trudell and Bad Dog

Centennial Ballroom
Nebraska Union

Wednesday, April 7
8 p.m.

Homer's Unite

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