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| 00:00:00 | Music | Transition | “Crown Ones” off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under the Stairs. |
| 00:00:05 | Oliver Wang | Host | <i>[Music continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]</i> Hello! I’m Oliver Wang. |
| 00:00:07 | Morgan Rhodes | Host | And I’m Morgan Rhodes. And you’re listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> . Normally, we invite a guest to join us to talk about a heat rock. You know, fire, flammables, an album that bumps eternally. But this week, we’re doing something just a little different. |
| 00:00:19 | Oliver | Host | 2020 marks the 25 th anniversary of not one, not two, but three hip-hop classics all by members of the Wu-Tang Clan. <i>Liquid Swords</i> by the GZA, <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol’ Dirty Bastard, and <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx</i> by Raekwon featuring Ghostface Killah. In honor of GZA’s birthday, which is this very week, we decided to recut and remaster our three episodes about those Shaolin sizzlers. |
| 00:00:48 | Morgan | Host | These are just small snippets of great conversations. So, please do check out the full episodes if you’re interesting in learning more about these albums. |
| 00:00:55 | Oliver | Host | First up, it’s rapper Open Mike Eagle talking about Ol’ Dirty Bastard’s <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> . |
| 00:01:04 | Music | Music | “Damage” from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol’ Dirty Bastard. |
| | | | <i>The Genius! Genius (The Genius)</i> <i>The Genius, the Genius</i> |
| | | | <i>I'll grab the mic and I'll damage ya</i> <i>Crush your whole stamina</i> <i>Here comes the medical examiner</i> <i>One verse then you're out for the count</i> <i>Bring the ammonia! Make sure he sniffs the right amount</i> <i>Wake him up and then ask him why did he attend this</i> <i>Competition to get a ass kicking so tremendous?</i> <i>Boy, you know you shouldn't bother this</i> |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:01:24 | Oliver | Host | So, because this is the first time we have gotten into any Wu-Tang album on the show, I thought we would open by talking about how we first heard Wu-Tang, but Mike, when we were talking before we started taping, you mentioned that ODB <u>was</u> your introduction to the Wu, which is surprising. ‘Cause I think I would have assumed most people would’ve come to the Wu through that first album. But yeah, tell us about that. |
| 00:01:45 | Open Mike Eagle | Guest | I would hear the name Wu-Tang Clan and, at the time—so, this was like ‘92, ‘93 and I’m first starting to hear their name. In my head, it was like Fu-Schnickens. It was like some wacky, crazy—you know, leaders of the new school kind of thing is what I had in my head. ‘Cause I wasn’t listening to a lot of rap, at the time. I was listening to a lot of like alternative and like college rock, at the time, when I was like 12. <i>[Chuckling.]</i> That was my hang. |
| | | | So, I would hear these names, and if there were songs on the radio, I would hear those. But I didn’t hear any Wu-Tang on the radio, not in Chicago where I grew up. And one day, I was watching television and we had The Box, in Chicago. And for those that aren’t—it was a |

music video channel that you would pick up the phone and dial their number and put in the code for the video you'd wanna see. And the video for "Shimmy Shimmy Ya" was the first thing I saw.

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| 00:02:49 | Music | Music | <p><i>[Morgan and Oliver hum in understanding.]</i> "Shimmy Shimmy Ya" from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol' Dirty Bastard.</p> <p><i>"Aw, I don't want to fuck you. You can't even sing!" You had to sing, or something, to get some pussy</i></p> <p><i>Ooh, baby, I like it raw</i> <i>Yeah, baby, I like it raw</i> <i>Ooh, baby, I like it raw</i> <i>Yeah, baby, I like it raw</i></p> |
| 00:03:06 | Mike | Guest | <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> Like, the image that I remember most in this moment is the part where they were doing a soul train line and he was like doing kung fu moves down the soul train line.</p> <p><i>[Morgan agrees.]</i></p> <p>And he like broke the board with his finger. And I was like, "This is content that speaks to me." You know?</p> |
| 00:03:23 | Music | Music | <p><i>[They laugh.]</i> <i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>For you to even touch my skill</i> <i>You gotta go through one killer bee and he aim for the kill now</i> <i>Chop that down, pass it all around</i> <i>Lyrics get hard quick cement to the ground</i> <i>For any emcee in any fifty-two states</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> |
| 00:03:34 | Oliver | Host | <p>This was such a profoundly strange album, which we were talking about before we started taping. But it is—it is a <u>weird</u> album.</p> <p><i>[Morgan agrees.]</i></p> <p>And I mean that in mostly the best ways possible. Yeah.</p> |
| 00:03:44 | Morgan | Host | <p><i>[Mike chuckles.]</i> I mean, it's weird from the start. Like.</p> |
| 00:03:48 | Mike | Guest | <p><i>[Laughing.]</i> That intro!</p> |
| 00:03:49 | Morgan | Host | <p>That intro!</p> |
| 00:03:51 | Music | Music | <p>"Intro" from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol' Dirty Bastard.</p> <p><i>Remember the time I told y'all</i> <i>When I got burnt, gonorrhea, yeah</i> <i>Well, this bitch, there's a new bitch, god damnit</i> <i>Oh, bitch burnt me again with gonorrhea</i> <i>So, I didn't get burnt one time, I got burnt actually two times</i></p> |

*If you really look at it
Yeah*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

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| 00:04:15 | Morgan | Host | I mean, to devote the better part of it to sort of a weird discussion about getting an STD— |
| 00:04:23 | Mike | Guest | Oh, there's so many STDs on this album. |

[Oliver laughs.]

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| 00:04:25 | Morgan | Host | It is like the whole thing is a health code violation. |
| 00:04:29 | Oliver | Host | They should've wrapped it in like a prophylactic or something. |
| 00:04:31 | Morgan | Host | <i>[Laughs.]</i> Or <u>something</u> , right? And then like—I mean, it's not just because I love Roberta Flack, but just to desecrate that song in the most perverse ways—I almost didn't make it through the album. I almost just stopped at the intro and was like, "This is crazy. And the dude in the soul train line with the afro and stuff, I'm just not here." That said, "Shimmy Shimmy Ya"'s a banger. |

[Mike laughs.]

And so, I sort of got past that. But it was just a hint of what was to come—that there were a lot of, um, uncomfortable things to listen to as a woman, both then and now. But you gotta have a strong stomach for that intro.

[Mike agrees.]

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| 00:05:20 | Mike | Guest | Strong stomach, indeed. So, my question is: when you came to this album, how did you get this album and where did you get this album? Did you buy it yourself? Mm. This might have been one of the first CDs I bought with my own money. |
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[Morgan affirms.]

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| 00:05:33 | Morgan | Host | And it was a record store down the street from my place. And I guess that I was just really getting into rap. So, walking into this record store—this little, tiny, mostly rap record store— |
| 00:05:34 | Mike | Guest | What was the name of it? Oh god, that I don't remember. I know it was on the 83 rd and Stony Island, but I don't remember the name of it. But I bought maybe my first seven to ten—you know—rap releases that I own, I bought at this place. And every time I walked in, it was just like eyes wide trying to take in everything. But I went straight for that. I just had to know what the rest of that thing sounded like. |
| 00:05:55 | Music | Music | "Baby C'mon" from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol' Dirty Bastard. |

*Ooh Yeeeah, oh yeaaaah,
Baby, baby c'mon, baby c'mon, baby c'mon
What the fuck anybody wanna do?
Right motherfucking now!
Ahhhh*

I'm the god who's the head of the Lords

*Dirty Bastard from the Wu-Tang squad
Can I get raw? Yes, I get Dirty to the floor*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:06:15 Oliver Host Were you—were each of you listening to a lot of the Wu-Tang solo albums heavy, in addition to the first group album? Because I mean, the year this comes out was nuts. I mean, it's '95. He drops this album. You have GZA's *Liquid Swords* comes out the same year, and then Raekwon and Ghost put out *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx* all in the same calendar year. So, if you had gotten a taste of Wu on the first—you know, *Enter to 36 Chambers* album, like '95 was just like a buffet and then some, in terms of the amount of content you could sift through. And of course, RZA's touching all of it.

[Morgan agrees.]

00:06:50 Morgan Host So, sonically, there's a great consistency running across these albums, too.
I liked Raekwon. I liked him as a storyteller. And I think I got into those albums a little bit—*Liquid Swords* and that a little bit more, because the Wu-Tang Clan to me was adept at telling stories that they created this mythical place that I hadn't heard of. I'm a tried-and-true west coaster, raised in LA. So, Shaolin Island was something mythical and fantastical and they really drew me in. I didn't like Ol' Dirty Bastard for that same reason—that, to me, he wasn't telling stories. It was like somebody got high in the studio, let my man go.

[They laugh.]

00:07:53 Mike Guest And it was just a bunch of—there was genius in there somewhere. But it was a mix of stream of consciousness and, "I'm in here messed up and I'm singing and—woo!" You know? Not animated in the same way as Busta Rhymes, where it was a device. It was just—he was disjointed. And so, I was drawn to the other stars, because I thought they were so nice! They were so nice with the bars. And I never thought that about Ol' Dirty. I thought he was funny and crazy. And that was the appeal, I guess, a little bit.
It's interesting, too. I read some interview where Meth was saying that a lot of the bars on Ol' Dirty's album—like, the ones that were coherent were ones that GZA wrote.

[Morgan whispers a shocked "wooo".]

'Cause a lot of that stuff was stuff from their old group—was it All In Together Now, I think?

[They confirm.]

Yeah. A lot of that stuff was stuff that he had just memorized that GZA wrote. That's why—on that song, "Damaged", that's why he ends up singing that same verse like three times through the album. 'Cause he would just come in and kick that one, 'cause that's what he had memorized.

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| 00:08:25 | Morgan | Host | <i>[Oliver laughs.]</i> That's interesting, 'cause of the nine, GZA's my favorite. Uh-huh. GZA's my favorite. |
| 00:08:30 | Oliver | Host | Ooh, that makes me wonder if a song like "Brooklyn Zoo", then—did ODB write that or is that someone else? Because that, to me, has one of the more coherent—I mean, the song itself is just really one long verse, but it's a very coherent verse. And to what extent like—who authored that? |
| 00:08:46 | Music | Music | <i>[Morgan agrees.]</i> "Brooklyn Zoo" from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol' Dirty Bastard. <i>I'm the one-man army, Ason I never been taken out, I keep MC's looking out I drop science like Cosby dropping babies Enough to make a n-gga go crazy In the G-Building, taking all types of medicines Your ass thought you were better than</i> |
| 00:09:03 | Mike | Guest | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> To me, that feels very much like him. 'Cause the rhythm of it is already disjointed. So, I feel like that fits where he would go with like his pen, his stream of consciousness, to me fits that more than it would like a song like "Damaged", which is very intricately written and back and forth between him and GZA. To me, it makes more sense that GZA wrote that, where I think "Brooklyn Zoo" is coherent thematically, but how it's constructed is very all over the place. |
| 00:09:34 | Oliver | Host | <i>[They agree.]</i> But to come back to this question—and you mentioned earlier that ODB was your intro into the Wu—the greater Wu. Did it turn you into, in general, a Wu-Tang fan? Were you listening to all the solo albums as a consequence? |
| 00:09:45 | Mike | Guest | I—when I got into the first album, gravitated towards Dirty, gravitated towards Meth, RZA, GZA. U-God, Masta Killa, Rae, and Ghost didn't really grab me at the time, because I think that what I was listening for was more character than actual like intricate writing or storytelling at the time. But I have a deep affinity for all of them. Like, there's some songs where like U-God's verse is like my absolute favorite. |
| 00:10:29 | Oliver | Host | <i>[Oliver agrees.]</i> Cappadonna, you know Masta Killa, you know, all of them. I really love their music, and I love the differences and nuances of their approaches. And it kind of all started with—my journey with them all started that year. Let's talk about RZA a little bit. Because his production on this album and all of the Wu efforts coming out of that first one through—the first waves of all the solo efforts. I mean, he is the glue that really holds together all of these efforts, sonically. For each of you, what was it about RZA's sound that was distinctive, that you think helped the Wu become who they became? |

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| 00:10:52 | Mike | Guest | When I first started hearing RZA's beats—especially after <i>Enter the 36 Chambers</i> —so, basically his beats on these first rounds of solo albums, they were the first beats that I heard that had me thinking about production. 'Cause to me, they sounded so different than other peoples. Like, the way he was sampling, like I felt like I could see the grids in my mind and like where he was putting stuff. And he tended to use this drum pattern that's like <i>[mimics the drum as the music fades in]</i> , like a lot of his tracks had that. |
| 00:11:28 | Music | Music | "Brooklyn Zoo" from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol' Dirty Bastard. |
| | | | <i>Shame— Shame on you when you step through to—</i> |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:11:35 | Mike | Guest | And for some reason, just even that rhythm was just—I just gravitated to that rhythm. And it sounded so different than, you know, a lot of the boom bap stuff that was—you know, the early '90s. There was a grit to it. |
| | | | <i>[Morgan and Oliver affirm.]</i> |
| | | | And I thought it was really awesome, especially listening back to this album, how he was able to tailor each album's—each solo album's production to that rhymers' styles. Like, Method Man sounded really dark, and it would swing poppy, but it sounded like really dark. Ol' DB's, it was chaotic. The production on this album is all over the place. But it fits his style perfectly. |
| | | | <i>[They agree.]</i> |
| | | | Like, loops start in the middle of a beat. You know, it all seems to fit him. And you know, and like the drama and a lot of like the Raekwon—in the Raekwon stuff. I think that I don't know if we've ever seen anything like that. You know? Where that sort of care was taken. And I think this is all pre-flood. Right? Wasn't there a flood—I think RZA had some sort of home disaster that wiped out—'cause he had beats made for every solo album. But then there was some disaster, and all that stuff got lost. And I think that like that's kind of a turning point in RZA's style, too. |
| 00:12:50 | Morgan | Host | When I think of his style, I think of the piano man. Shoutout to Billy Joel. You can't get away from the piano. The piano with the mix of kung fu. And in this album, the piano's so chunky. |
| | | | <i>[Oliver echoes the word.]</i> |
| 00:13:06 | Oliver | Host | And it's—it's chunky. |
| 00:13:07 | Morgan | Host | Yeah! It <u>is</u> chunky. Yeah. |
| | | | So, it seems like a little kid. <i>[Sings a few bars.]</i> And that's—Ol' Dirty's like sort of a kid. |
| | | | <i>[They agree.]</i> |

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| | | | Watching television, kung fu, all these influences. The hi-ya! Chop! And then the conversations. And that, to me, is the mind state of Ol' Dirty Bastard. And that's what it feels like to me. |
| 00:13:25 | Mike | Guest | That's true, too. And it's so interesting that you say that, 'cause I can remember messing around with pianos trying to reproduce the—and they were all very easy to do. They were all like super simple piano lines. |
| 00:13:37 | Morgan | Host | Fisher Price. |
| | | | <i>[Mike agrees with a laugh.]</i> |
| 00:13:40 | Mike | Guest | Yeah. Fisher Price. Yeah. Like, the chords in "Brooklyn Zoo" are super easy. The "Shimmy Shimmy Ya"—it's just like two notes. Like, yeah! There's a lot of that. And I think me being relatively young coming to it, all those things kind of worked in concert. Like, his image, the simplicity of a lot of that stuff is kind of what appealed to me, you know, as a young person. |
| 00:14:00 | Oliver | Host | I think the observation about the piano's great. I mean, partly because there is so much—keys that were on this album and part of that early Wu sound. And I think it also makes me think of the dissonance in how he uses some of those chords. And I think on one of the songs, which is at the very end of the conventional album, not including the bonus tracks that were on the CD. But "Cuttin' Headz", which is Ol' Dirty Bastard and RZA from a 1992 demo, which is why it sounds like shit. |
| | | | <i>[Morgan chuckles.]</i> |
| | | | But it actually really works that it sounds like shit. But I think that's actually a Thelonious Monk loop, and it really makes sense that—given Monk's experimentations with dissonance, that this would be also appealing to RZA. |
| 00:14:40 | Music | Music | "Blue Bolivar Blues" by Thelonious Monk. |
| | | | <i>[Song fades into the next.]</i> |
| 00:14:45 | Music | Music | "Cuttin' Headz" from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol' Dirty Bastard. |
| | | | <i>Isn't that powerful?</i> <i>Isn't that powerful?</i> <i>Isn't that power—</i> |
| | | | <i>Here it is, where's it at? In the back, got a stack</i> <i>The Dirty Bastard, yo, you Bastard, flip the phat track</i> <i>Here I go, here I go</i> |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:14:57 | Oliver | Host | Let's talk about the fire track on here. So—and I'll be curious to see what each of you picked for this, but let's start with you, Mike. What is the fire track off of <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> ? |
| 00:15:05 | Mike | Guest | The fire—so, that's like my favorite? Or the best? Or—? |
| 00:15:08 | Oliver | Host | It's—I mean, you can interpret it any way you want, but I think typically it would be like what's the <u>best</u> song on here? |

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| 00:15:15 | Mike | Guest | <i>[Morgan agrees.]</i> Whooh! Aw, man. Um. The <u>best</u> song on here is “Brooklyn Zoo”. That’s the best song. |
| 00:15:20 | Oliver | Host | Alright. Think—I—okay. Good. ‘Cause I think—I mean, “Shimmy Shimmy Ya”, not to take anything away from it. A classic. Certainly, the most popular song, but like “Brooklyn Zoo”, to me is it. |
| 00:15:32 | Morgan | Host | Is it. |
| 00:15:33 | Music | Music | “Brooklyn Zoo” from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol’ Dirty Bastard. |
| <p><i>Yeah, what? What? What?</i> <i>He ain't saying nothing, fuck him</i></p> | | | |
| <p><i>I'm the one-man army, Ason</i> <i>I never been taken out, I keep MC's looking out</i> <i>I drop science like Cosby dropping babies</i> <i>Enough to make a n-gga go crazy</i> <i>In the G-Building</i></p> | | | |
| 00:15:50 | Mike | Guest | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> Yeah. It’s just one of those songs that just perfectly captures the energy of something. And like one of those lightning in a bottle type songs. And I think, for what he was doing, it’s just like a perfect capturing of that. You know, rhythmically, energetically. I mean, you got your pianos. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> |
| 00:16:08 | Morgan | Host | You got your—listen, you got your pianos. |
| 00:16:10 | Mike | Guest | And it’s a song that—I mean, people that I was listening to music with around that time, like our whole generation—like, even people who were listening to like mainstream rap like really heavy at the time, everybody knows every word to this song. |
| 00:16:24 | Music | Music | “Brooklyn Zoo” from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol’ Dirty Bastard. |
| <p><i>Enough to make you break and shake your ass</i> <i>As I create rhyme good as a Tastykake makes</i> <i>This style, I'm mastered in</i> <i>N-ggas catching headaches, what? What? You need aspirin?</i> <i>This type of pain, you couldn't even kill with Midol</i></p> | | | |
| 00:16:36 | Morgan | Host | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> This is it. To me, “Brooklyn Zoo” is ODB’s coming out party. This is me. This is my style. I can flex. Love it. |
| 00:16:43 | Music | Music | <i>[Volume increases.]</i> |
| <p><i>How I don't even like your motherfucking profile</i> <i>Give me my fucking shit, chk-chk, blaow</i> <i>Last seen and heard, no one knows</i> <i>You forget, n-ggas be quiet as kept</i> <i>Now you know nothing</i></p> | | | |
| <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> | | | |

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| 00:16:55 | Morgan | Host | In “Goin’ Down”, which is another one of my favorite songs on here, he says his advantage is the slang. And I don’t know that that was his advantage. |
| | | | <i>[Mike bursts into laughter.]</i> |
| 00:17:10 | Oliver | Host | I don’t know that that was his advantage. |
| 00:17:13 | Morgan | Host | I don’t know! He’s convincing people to get glossaries—you know, glossary books to decipher it. |
| 00:17:21 | Music | Music | <i>[Struggling for words.]</i> Maybe. Can we—I’m not saying it was a disadvantage, but I’m saying he had other advantages. His appeal was larger than that. Can I we hear a little bit of that? “Goin’ Down” from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol’ Dirty Bastard. |
| | | | <i>Yo, I'd like to thank all the DJs across the country for playing my shit, and I'd also like to thank all you underground motherfuckers For keeping it real But I'd like to know who's in the motherfucking house There's Queens in the house, there's uptown in the house</i> |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:17:43 | Mike | Guest | I mean, you gotta love that. You gotta love that. He’s thanking people for listening to his shit <i>[laughing]</i> in the middle of the song! Like in the middle of the album! Like—he don’t know—I don’t know. I—that’s—all of that stuff, like and how he used to introduce—he was just like this... this showman, at the weirdest times. But that’s the type of stuff he <i>[inaudible]</i> . |
| 00:18:05 | Oliver | Host | He’s a carnival barker! |
| | | | <i>[They agree.]</i> |
| 00:18:07 | Morgan | Host | And so, I was just going to say that while he may have thought his advantage was his slang, I thought his advantage was his swagger, his self-confidence, and his humor. That’s what made Ol’ Dirty Bastard. And the fact that, compared to the rest of the band, your name is “old dirty bastard”. |
| | | | <i>[Oliver agrees and they laugh.]</i> |
| 00:18:39 | Mike | Guest | You know what I’m saying? You know, you got all these deep names, and then it’s just you, with the ill hair, the fronts, and your name is Ol’ Dirty Bastard. Love it. And he would say, “Oh, I’m stinking. I’m—” You know? <i>[Mimicking ODB.]</i> “Ol’ Dirty Bastard is dirty and stinking right now!” |
| | | | <i>[They laugh.]</i> |
| 00:18:42 | Oliver | Host | Ain’t no father to his style. |
| 00:18:43 | Morgan | Host | Ain’t no father to his style! For sure. |
| 00:18:45 | Music | Music | “Drunk Game (Sweet Sugar Pie)” from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol’ Dirty Bastard. |
| | | | <i>Sweet sugar pie, oh I wish you were mine Lookin' so good, like you know you should, yeah</i> |

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| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:19:04 | Morgan | Host | We ask our guests to describe the album that they chose in three words. So, if you had to describe this album in three words, what would they be? |
| 00:19:15 | Mike | Guest | Irreverent. Zany. Escapist. |
| | | | <i>[Morgan and Oliver "ooh".]</i> |
| 00:19:24 | Music | Music | "Hipba to Da Hoppa" from the album <i>Return to the 36 Chambers</i> by Ol' Dirty Bastard. |
| | | | <i>Ah shit, here I go once again Rhymes get shitty from the time that I spend I come old like toe fungus mold Ask my grand-pop pop duke gave my soul Then I came with that old Al Green shit Saaa-die, taught me the ballistic</i> |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:19:40 | Morgan | Host | By the way, Open Mike Eagle just announced a new album, today. So, be on the lookout for that in October. Up next, it's our conversation with music journalist David Ma, on GZA's <i>Liquid Swords</i> . |
| 00:19:52 | Music | Music | "I Gotcha Back" from the album <i>Liquid Swords</i> by GZA. |
| | | | <i>I gotcha back, but you best to watch your front Cause it's the n-ggas that front, they be pulling stunts I gotcha back, but you best to watch your front Cause it's the n-ggas who front (they be pulling stunts)</i> |
| | | | <i>I was always taught my do's and don'ts For do's I did, and for don'ts, I said I won't</i> |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:20:08 | Oliver | Host | Dave, you gave us a few options of album picks, but you emphasized you really, really wanted to talk about <i>Liquid Swords</i> . |
| | | | <i>[David laughs.]</i> |
| 00:20:15 | David Ma | Guest | Why is that? Well, you know, I mean, it's one of those albums that's sort of spine tingling right from the top. You know. In the same way that David Bowie's <i>Ziggy Stardust</i> starts off with "Five Years" or how Velvet Underground's <i>Andy Warhol</i> starts off with "Sunday Morning" or how <i>Low End Theory</i> kicks off with "Excursions". It's one of those first tracks where you know you're in for something special, but there's a feeling of uneasiness. So, you know, when the album kicks off and he's like, "When I was little, my father was famous," and that dialogue sample kicks in, you right away are just intrigued. And it just struck me immediately. |
| 00:20:53 | Music | Music | "Liquid Swords" from the album <i>Liquid Swords</i> by GZA. |
| | | | <i>When I was little, my father was famous He was the greatest samurai in the empire</i> |

*And he was the Shogun's decapitator
He cut off the heads of 131 lords
It was a bad time for the empire*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

| | | | |
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| 00:21:16 | Morgan | Host | Some of what we ask our guests when they come in—because we are interested in how you came to acquire the album that you chose—so, can you remember the moment that you got <i>Liquid Swords</i> , where you got it, how you got it? |
| 00:21:29 | David | Guest | Yes! Absolutely. So, you know, I was in high school. And this was back in the time—I don't know if you guys remember The Warehouse. |

[Oliver and Morgan confirm.]

| | | | |
|----------|--------|------|---|
| 00:22:21 | Oliver | Host | So, you could go to The Warehouse. You could go there and buy anything you want. And then if you don't like it, turn it right back for store credit. It was one of those where I used my revolving store credit, you know, umpteenth times and came back with <i>Liquid Swords</i> and certainly kept it right away. And you know, it was a time when the mystique hadn't been completely punctured, yet. So, it was like, "Who are these Wu-Tang guys? Everything is fire. Everything is mind-blowing." And then here comes GZA—you know, the aforementioned guy who anchors all the posse cuts. It's like he has his own solo album? And this is on the heels of like, you know, <i>Tical</i> had just been out already. So, we were just—I was just super excited, and I mean it completely delivered. I would've thought that after <i>Enter the 36 Chambers</i> blew up, GZA being kind of—you know, the head, the Voltron head, right? |
|----------|--------|------|---|

[They chuckle and agree.]

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| 00:22:52 | David | Guest | As Ed McMahon once described him as. It would've made more sense to me that GZA would've had—his solo album should've come first, and then whoever else. You know, Meth, Rae, ODB. And while, you know, fourth in line—and Ghostface was still after that, it's—I don't know if the order really matters that much, but it always surprised me that GZA's album, his solo album, didn't come sooner compared to some of the other folks. I got really lucky and got a chance to interview him, and it was one of those times where he had availability for a little press window, I think to work on—to talk about the album that he did with DJ Muggs, and it was one of those times where it was like, "Hi, GZA. You know. Thank you for your time. We love the new album, but let's talk about <i>Liquid Swords</i> ." You know? And it was one of those where you're kind of afraid that the artist doesn't wanna break everything down, but he was very gracious with his time. And the whole sequencing thing, it sounded as if the blueprint was already there. I mean, just as we probably read in all the Wu-Tang books and stuff. |
|----------|-------|-------|--|

I mean, RZA was the mastermind. He knew who he wanted on first and who he wanted on second and who to play shortstop. You know what I mean?

[They agree.]

And GZA was so foundational. I mean, on the album, he raps like he's on a grid. Everything's just sort of perfectly measured. And on *Words From the Genius*, I mean, there are moments where he's a little bit—he's rippity-rapping a little bit. You know.

[They laugh.]

But on this, I mean all that is just—all that's just jettisoned. And everything he says—I mean, it's just so vivid. You know? And the tone of the production—I mean—certainly matched the lyrical imagery like to a T.

00:24:08 Oliver Host

And do you have an idea of—so, you think RZA is the one who chose which artist got to go—whose albums came in what order? Yes, 100%. I think that was a master—he was the mastermind behind that. And I think, just from reading—you know—some journalism stuff, he wanted Meth to go first, because you know, it seemed like he had the most mainstream appeal.

00:24:15 David Guest

[Morgan agrees.]

00:24:28 Oliver Host

And Method Man had been a big single.

[They agree.]

And Dave, to come back to your earlier point that you mentioned around the transition—or really, the transformation of *Genius* to GZA, which I think is still really remarkable, because even though there's really only at most—what? Two, three years between *Words from a Genius* to *Enter the 36 Chambers*, but in both vocal sound and style and of course—as you pointed out—in musical sound and style, those three years—it's like night and day. In fact, if we can just spin back to one of the singles from that *Words From a Genius* album from '91. This is *Genius* plus some new jack swing, “Come Do Me”.

[Morgan laughs.]

00:25:05 Music Music

“Come Do Me” from the album *Words from a Genius* by GZA.

*I said lovely: "I be The Genius and how you doing?
I'm on a chase and you're the one that I'm pursuing"
She said: "It's a pleasure, Genius, I'm doing kinda fine
But what's on your mind?"
I said*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:25:16 Oliver Host

And then you just fast forward a few years, and then you get GZA on “Swordsman”, and just compare and contrast.

00:25:22 Music Music

“Swordsman” from the album *Liquid Swords* by GZA.

*Yo, I'm not caught up in politics
I'm no black activist on a so-called scholar's dick
I come through with the Wu and drop math
And versatile freestyle bombs and phonographs*

| | | | |
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| 00:25:34 | Oliver | Host | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> I mean, that's <u>wild</u> ! That is a wild shift. |
| 00:25:37 | Music | Music | <i>[They agree.]</i> <i>[Volume increases.]</i> ... on how living things relate Cause at a young age, I was molded in a religion I relied on And got caught up in superstition Scared to split pole, ducked black cats |
| 00:25:47 | Oliver | Host | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> We will be right back with more of our Wu-Tang medley episode after a few words from our sibling Max Fun podcasts. Keep it locked. |
| 00:25:56 | Music | Transition | "Crown Ones" off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under the Stairs. |
| 00:25:58 | Promo | Clip | Music: Guitar strums as singer counts out "One, two, one two three four." Up-tempo guitar and harmonica music plays in the background. Justin McElroy: Hi, everybody! My name is Justin McElroy. Dr. Sydnee McElroy: I'm Sydnee McElroy! Justin: We're both doctors, and— Sydnee: Nope. Just me. Justin: Okay, well Sydnee's a doctor and I'm a medical enthusiast. Sydnee: Okay. Justin: And we created <i>Sawbones</i> , a marital tour of misguided medicine! Sydnee: Every week I dig through the annals of medical history to bring you the wildest, grossest—sometimes dumbest—tales of ways we've tried to treat people throughout history! Justin: Eh, lately we do a lot of <u>modern</u> fake medicine. 'Cause everything's a disaster. But it's slightly less of a disaster every Friday, right here on MaximumFun.org , as we bring you <i>Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine</i> . And remember: Sydnee: Don't drill a hole in your head. |
| 00:26:40 | Promo | Clip | <i>[Music ends.]</i> Music: Inspirational music. James Arthur: Hi, I'm James, host of <i>Minority Korner</i> , which is a— ? Speaker 1: Podcast that's all about intersectionality. It's hosted by James with a guest host every week. |

Speaker 2: Discussing all sorts of wonderful issues; nerdy and political.

Speaker 3: Pop culture—

Speaker 1: Black, queer feminism.

Speaker 4: Race. Sexuality.

Speaker 5: News.

Speaker 6: You're gonna learn your history. There's self-empowerment. And it's told by what feels like your best friend.

Speaker 2: Why should someone listen to *Minority Korner*?

Speaker 7: Why not?

Speaker 8: Oh my god. Free stuff.

James: There's not free stuff.

Speaker 1: The listeners of *Minority Korner* will enjoy some necessary lols, but mainly a look at what's happening in our world through a colorful lens.

Speaker 2: People will get the perspective of... marginalized communities.

Speaker 1: I feel heard. I feel seen.

Speaker 9: Like you said, you need to understand how to be more proactive in your community? And this is a great way to get started.

James: Join us every Friday on MaxFun, or wherever you get your podcast.

Multiple speakers: *Minority Korner!* Because together, we're the majority.

[*Music ends.*]

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| 00:27:30 | Music | Transition |
| 00:27:33 | Morgan | Host |
| 00:27:41 | Oliver | Host |

"Crown Ones" off the album *Stepfather* by People Under the Stairs. And we're back with our Wu-Tang medley episode. Right now, we're talking with David Ma about GZA's solo LP, *Liquid Swords*. Where does *Liquid Swords* rank amongst the Wu-Tang's solo albums?

[*Morgan "ooh-wee"s excitedly.*]

| | | |
|----------|-------|-------|
| 00:27:48 | David | Guest |
|----------|-------|-------|

Is this your favorite of the solo joints, Dave?
For me, it certainly is. And it's one that, you know—like I said, due to the sort of depth of the storytelling and just the way the lyrics marry with the atmosphere of the beats, it's certainly my favorite. I know that there's always sort of this debate between *Liquid Swords* or *Cuban Linx*. And you know, I find myself thinking *Cuban Linx* has

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| 00:28:17 | Oliver | Host | <p>amazing moments, but <i>Liquid Swords</i> just as a whole, I think it's hard to top.</p> <p>One of the things I really liked reading in your interview with GZA about <i>Liquid Swords</i> was him saying that he actually—that GZA likes just doing Meth's verse from "Shadowboxin'", because he had so much respect for that.</p> |
| 00:28:29 | Music | Music | <p>"Shadowboxin'" from the album <i>Liquid Swords</i> by GZA.</p> <p><i>I breaks it down to the bone gristle Ill speaking scud missile, heat-seeking Johnny Blazing, nightmares like Wes Craven N-ggas gunning, my third eye seen it coming before it happened You know about them fucking Staten kids, they smashing Everything, huh, in any shape form or fashion Now everybody talking 'bout they blasting, hmm</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> |
| 00:28:51 | Oliver | Host | <p><i>[Oliver and Morgan hoot excitedly.]</i></p> <p>En fuego!</p> |
| 00:28:53 | Morgan | Host | <p><i>[David chuckles.]</i></p> <p>And I mean, you know, he just came with that, "You know my steez." I mean, this is my favorite song on the album. It's just a banger, and even though I think Meth's verse was fire, I think that GZA did well for the middle. He didn't anchor this one, but he came—</p> <p><i>[David agrees.]</i></p> |
| 00:29:15 | Music | Music | <p>He came—he came right in the middle and has one of my favorite lines on here, that says:</p> <p>"Shadowboxin'" from the album <i>Liquid Swords</i> by GZA.</p> <p><i>Most rap niggas came loud but unheard Once I pulled out, round 'em off to the nearest third Check these non-visual n-ggas, with tapes and a portrait</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> |
| 00:29:22 | Morgan | Host | <p>For somebody that's not good in math, this was a revelation. I was like, "This is incredible! Short but sweet!"</p> <p><i>[David agrees.]</i></p> |
| 00:29:39 | Oliver | Host | <p>And I think that everybody talks about Method's verse, which is hands down fire, but I like what GZA had to say on here. Short, sweet, and in the middle and to the point.</p> <p>See, it's all these five percenter guys. Of course, they understand today's mathematics. So.</p> <p><i>[Morgan and David laugh.]</i></p> <p>They got their fractions down. They got their fractions down. Let's bring this back to the GZA, though, because if there's something</p> |

that's gonna give this album some deductions—and this is—I'm just saying, this is me speaking. I'm not speaking for Morgan. I'm not speaking for Dave, just for me. The skits are too long. The fact that it begins with—and I timed this, because it was so fricking long. The album begins with 80 seconds from—was it *Shogun Assassin*?

[David affirms and Morgan laughs.]

And why does it need to be that long? And here's the general rule to artists—

00:30:09 Morgan Host
00:30:10 Oliver Host

[Laughing.] Come ooon.

This is the rule. If you're gonna do a skit like that, it's gotta be at the backend of the song so you can skip over and then get to the beginning of the new song. But I don't wanna have to like put on the song I like and then sit through 30 seconds of VHS tape kung fu dialogue.

00:30:24 David Guest

I definitely feel you. I mean, I think good skit works when it doesn't feel long. You know what I mean? But you know, for this one especially when it first came out—and to like go back and find out that these were from the *Shogun Assassin* series—were just amazing. And I do agree that it is long at the start, but I think it just centered the whole thing like perfectly. It just set the mood for the whole album. And it could be about 20 seconds shorter, but I do love that dialogue sample, though.

00:30:52 Music Music

"*Liquid Swords*" from the album *Liquid Swords* by GZA.

*They were supposed to kill my father, but they didn't
That was the night everything changed*

*See, sometimes
You gotta flash 'em back
See, n-ggas don't know where this shit started
Y'all know where it came from*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:31:13 Morgan Host

Speaking of samples, just wanna name check a few that were featured on this album, if I could. Of course, with *Liquid Swords*, we've got "Groovin'", Willie Mitchell.

00:31:24 Music Music

"Groovin'" by Willie Mitchell.

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:31:29 Music Music

"*Liquid Swords*" from the album *Liquid Swords* by GZA.

*I represent from midnight to high noon
I don't waste ink, n-gga, I think
I drop megaton bombs more faster than you blink*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:31:38 Morgan Host

On "Gold", we have "Aires"—Cannonball Adderley and the Adderley Sextet.

00:31:45 Music Music

"Aries" by Cannonball Adderley.

This is Aires [inaudible]

*Ruled by the planet Mars
God of war*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:31:55 Music Music

"Gold" from the album *Liquid Swords* by GZA.

*Yo, anybody get caught flinging over here
I'm returning 'em, that's my word, they getting blasted
Anything from 220 to 140, that's mine
Y'all need to step the fuck off
Y'all n-ggas ain't crazy for real*

Yo, the fiends ain't coming fast enough

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:32:10 Morgan Host

"Shadowboxin'", we've got that beautiful, beautiful, very short—but one of the things that made that so funky for me was the Ann Peebles "Trouble, Heartaches, & Sadness".

00:32:20 Music Music

"Trouble, Heartaches & Sadness" by Ann Peebles.

Woah, old man Trouble

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:32:28 Music Music

"Shadowboxin'" from the album *Liquid Swords* by GZA.

*I pledge allegiance to the hip-hop, allegiance to the hip-hop
(Goddamn, Maximillion, Maximillion, uh)*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:32:36 Morgan Host
00:32:41 David Guest

Speaking of favorites, what track for you is the fire track on here? Oooh. You know, I think "Gold" is my favorite track.

[They react with surprise.]

I mean, you know. When they're mentioning—you know, being buried with all that money in her tomb, like when he's talking about his mother. And again, I just think that's one of the greatest examples of storytelling. It's just so vivid. He goes really quickly between images and sort of scenes from the movie, if you will. And I just—I really think the way his voice is captured on that as well is just—it's just so perfect.

00:33:11 Music Music

"Gold" from the album *Liquid Swords* by GZA.

*The plan was to expand, catch seven figures, release triggers
And live large and bigger than my n-gga
Who promised his moms a mansion with mad room
She died and he still put a hundred grand in her tomb
Open wounds, he hid behind closed doors
And still organizes crime and drug wars*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

| | | | |
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| 00:33:27 | David | Guest | I think it's as good, as vivid, as anything like Slick Rick has ever done. You know what I mean? Except for it's about ten years removed, and grimier. And you know, he's deep down in the backstreets. You know? Like, it's just so dark. I love it. |
| 00:33:44 | Music | Music | "Gold" from the album <i>Liquid Swords</i> by GZA. |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:33:54 | Morgan | Host | Is GZA the best—the nicest with the verses out of the Wu-Tang? Out of the Clan? |
| 00:33:59 | Oliver | Host | Oh, you're gonna—you're gonna come with that as a closing question? Ooooh! |
| 00:34:01 | Morgan | Host | My bad. Well, you can put it somewhere else in the— <i>[laughs]</i> . |
| 00:34:03 | Oliver | Host | No, no, no, no, no. |
| 00:34:04 | Morgan | Host | —in the interview, but if you had to rank them. |
| 00:34:07 | David | Guest | Yeah, you know, I think if you're thinking in terms of pure rhyming—and you know, he doesn't depend or sort of fall back on any gimmicks. Like, you know, ODB's the wild one. GZA's not the wild one. Method is the sex symbol with the sexy voice. GZA's not either. You know? GZA's sort of the quiet scholar genius. So, it works out perfectly. I think. |
| 00:34:30 | Oliver | Host | Thing is, Morgan, I think if you had asked me this question let's say ten years ago, I probably would've said—without hesitation, I would've said Ghostface. And I think partly it's because Ghostface, especially in the '90s, especially off of <i>Supreme Clientele</i> which I mentioned earlier, I just thought he was so creative. Like, between the voice, the flow, the lyrics of course, Ghost really, really stood out to me coming off of that particular album. I think with the benefit of time, though—I think GZA to me is, if not the clear number one, is at least the arguable number one. |
| | | | <i>[Morgan agrees.]</i> |
| | | | For all the reasons that you already stated. And I think—you know, there's a reason why he was the head of the Voltron robot, is because he was the most experienced. He was the most senior alongside RZA. And he just had gravitas. You know? And I think that counts for a lot, especially when you think back over the passage of time. |
| 00:35:27 | Music | Music | "Labels" from the album <i>Liquid Swords</i> by GZA. |
| | | | <i>The soft comedian rap shit ain't the rough witty On the reel to reel, it wasn't from a Tuff City N-ggas be game, thinking that they lyrical surgeons They know they mic's a phone to Virgin And if you ain't boned a mic, you couldn't hurt a bee That's like going to Venus driving a Mercury</i> |
| | | | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:35:44 | Oliver | Host | So, Dave, as a writer this is usually what ties up our other guests who are writers, but if you had to describe <i>Liquid Swords</i> in three words, what would your triplet be? |
| 00:35:52 | David | Guest | Alright. So, I think I would go with cinematic for, you know, obvious reasons. Because I mean, every time we talk about the album, it's like you're watching freeze frames from a film. You know. So, that |

would be one for me. The second would be observational, because I think with him, obviously the album is filled with like so much braggadocio stuff, but at the end of the day, it's sort of like GZA sitting there—in the same way like *Illmatic* is, where he's just painting a picture of his surroundings and what he's sort of seeing. You know what I mean?

And the third word, I'm just gonna go with an easy one. But I think it's kind of genius.

[They laugh.]

00:36:28 Morgan Host
00:36:32 Music Music

I love it. Love ittt.

"Swordsman" from the album *Liquid Swords* by GZA.

RZA let's defraud the hoax

*When a motherfucker steps out his place
And gets slapped in his goddamn face
Just because the n-gga would've tried to base
The G.O.D., the G.O.D*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:36:45 Oliver Host

And to round out our Wu-Tang episode, here is our conversation from earlier this year with Havoc of Mobb Deep about Raekwon's *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*.

00:36:56 Music Music

"Can It All Be So Simple (Remix)" from the album *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...* by Raekwon.

*Back in days, crime pays in mad ways
Sporting Tommy Hil' with caves, three-sixty waves
And no searching for loose ends, now I flex 300 Benz
Mad Timbs with mad diamonds
Now that's the life of the good life, sometimes n-ggas act trife
I paid the price throughout my hood life*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:37:11 Oliver Host
00:37:13 Havoc Guest
00:37:15 Oliver Host
00:37:19 Havoc Guest

Havoc, welcome to *Heat Rocks*.

Thank you for having me.

Let's start here: how did you and Raekwon first cross paths?

Uh, me and Raekwon first crossed paths back in, I would say, it would've had to been '94. Uh, we was label-mates, of course, um, and Steve Rifkind used to have us doing—us, Mobb Deep and Wu-Tang—doing a lot of functions together. And, you know, I can't remember exactly specifically the moment I met Raekwon, but I know that during that era like, we kinda gravitated more towards Ghost and Raekwon, you know what I mean? For whatever reason it was, and, uh, you know, we was cool ever since.

00:37:54 Oliver Host

I always thought that your career with Mobb Deep really paralleled that of the Wu, and in particular I—I always think about the ways in which you and Prodigy, along with RZA and GZA, all of you had these first albums that maybe didn't quite capture your full potential. And it took the second albums, in which case—you know, for RZA and GZA would have been the *Enter the 36 Chambers*. Obviously for you and P, it would have been *The Infamous*, and that

those are the albums that really cohered for people what you all were about.

And I'm wondering, to the extent that there was this transition point that both you and Prodigy were going through, that the Wu was going through it as well, all around the same time. To what degree were each of you in your camps really listening to one another's music?

00:38:38 Havoc Guest

You know, I couldn't really tell, during that time, if they was listening to our music, but I know that we was listening to theirs. You know what I mean? Um, they already had put out the *36 Chambers*. Huge success, it was crazy, they was playing it everywhere, um, you know, and I kind of was listening to it, after a while, as sort of a template, you know what I mean?

00:39:06 Oliver Host

What is it that you were learning from it?

00:39:08 Havoc Guest

It—it didn't sound processed, like these, like, manufactured hits. The—uh, some of the beats was like really—really muddy and grimy but at the same time, powerful.

00:39:21 Music Music

"Spot Rusherz" from the album *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...* by Raekwon.

...for selling

Word up, pushed up, man got mushed up

Seen him at a rap show acting like fat cat though

Glasses gold, shining like a real big boy

This n-gga had mega ice on Chips Ahoy!

Cats surrounded, this political brown kid

All out the wind yo, my man walked in

Pulling mints out son had mad clientele

00:39:37 Oliver Host

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

What were your expectations going into *Cuban Linx*? And had you heard any of the early versions of the songs when they were still working on it in the lab?

00:39:45 Havoc Guest

I didn't hear none of the early songs off of Raekwon's album. I wasn't even privy to that. And I guess they was holding it tight to the vest, right? But when I knew that Raekwon was gonna put out his solo album, *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*, and when I finally heard it, I didn't expect anything less. And I think that I was even more, like, I was like, I was bugging off of the songs that he was coming up with. I was like, "Yo, that *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*?" It made me wanna go back to the drawing board, 'cause the album was just super dope.

00:40:26 Oliver Host

I think *The Infamous* came out—I mean, *The Infamous* came out in April. Cause it just celebrated its twenty—if—twenty-fifth anniversary.

[Havoc affirms.]

Only Built 4 Cuban Linx came out if I recall, later on that summer. So, if—you feel like if the release dates had been flipped, listening to *Only Built* first, would have sent you back to maybe tweak some stuff on your own album if you had the chance?

00:40:45 Havoc Guest

I—I believe I would have you know, but I think the A&Rs, Matty C and Schott Free, would have stopped me.

[Oliver laughs.]

You know, Prodigy and them would've stopped me. Because I—because—

[Everyone laughs jovially.]

Because—because to be honest, I could work on an album forever. You literally have to peel me away from production, 'cause I'll work on it forever.

00:41:05 Oliver Host

Yeah. Bringing this back to Raekwon specifically, what do you think made him distinctive as an MC? Like, what was he doing stylistically that made it unique to him—to himself? Raekwon?

00:41:15 Havoc Guest

[Oliver confirms.]

I think that he was just lyrically legible, like you could understand every word that he said. Sometimes when—you know, when rappers rap, you know, you'll be like, "What did—? What was that word he said?" With Raekwon, you understand every word he said so it was—it's easy to relate to.

00:41:36 Music Music

"Incarcerated Scarfaces" from the album *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...* by Raekwon.

*But all I need is my house, my gat, my act
Bank account fat, it's going down like that
And pardon the French but let me speak Italian
Black stallion, dwelling on Shaolin
That means the island of Staten
And n-ggas carry gats and mad police from Manhattan
Now, yo, yo, what up yo, time is running out*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:41:52 Havoc Guest

Only Built 4 Cuban Linx, when Raekwon dropped it, it couldn't have came at a more perfect time.

00:41:57 Oliver Host

Say more though. Like, what do you mean by that?

00:41:59 Havoc Guest

Well, you know, you had Biggie. He dropped his joint. You got Nas; everybody dropped their joint. Mobb Deep. Mobb Deep dropped—you know, I'm only naming East Coast. I don't mean to leave anybody else out, but everybody was dropping dope albums that year, in that time period. That two-year span, right? All these dope albums come out, and then here comes *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx* with the icing on the cake, and he did it. He did it well. It's like, the album, you could play it from front to back. And I just played it the other day, and it don't get old.

00:42:41 Oliver Host

I don't mean to put you on the spot, but do you think this is the best of the Wu Tang solo albums?

[Morgan hums, intrigued.]

00:42:47 Havoc Guest

[Sighing] Man, um—

[Oliver laughs. Morgan hums again.]

Uh, you know what, I'll just say this. That was an incredible album, man. You know, I can't say that it was the best of the solo albums, because each one individually, when they all did their solos, was

dope for their own project. But I think *Only Built* really—it stopped time when it came out. It just stopped time, and everything stopped, and it was that—it turned into “The Purple Tape”.

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| 00:43:26 | Music | Music | <i>[Oliver agrees.]</i> “Criminology” from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. <i>Yo, first of all, son, peep the arson Many brothers I be sparking and busting mad light inside the dark Call me dough snatcher, just the brother for the rapture I hang glide, holding on strong, hard to capture Extravagant, RZA bake the track and it's militant Then I react like a convict and start killing shit It's manifested, the gods work like appliances</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> |
| 00:43:44 | Oliver | Host | Havoc, what to you is the fire track off of this LP? Like, even now, 25 years later, you listen to it, what's the song off here that just jumps up and smacks you in the face? |
| 00:43:55 | Havoc | Guest | Uh, “Ice Cream”. |
| 00:43:57 | Music | Music | “Ice Cream” from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. <i>Your whole shell baby's wicked like Nimrod Caught me like a fresh-water scrod, or may I not be God Attitude is very rude, Boo, crabby like seafood It turns me on like Vassey and Lahrule They call me Starky Love-hun, check the strategy By any means, Shirley Temple cross was done by Billie Jean's Black Misses America</i> <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i> |
| 00:44:13 | Havoc | Guest | I get the chills every time I hear that song. Like, straight up, all jokes aside. When I hear that song, it puts me in a time. It puts me—it's like I feel like I'm there, like I remember when that song was popping. I had the Camry with the broken windows, and I was just like, listening to that. Oh, man. Damn. It gives me the chills. |
| 00:44:38 | Oliver | Host | What is it about that song in particular? |
| 00:44:41 | Havoc | Guest | I mean, number one, first of all, the video was crazy, right? |
| 00:44:44 | Morgan | Host | <i>[Emphatically]</i> Yes, it was. Yes, it was. <i>[They laugh.]</i> |
| 00:44: | Havoc | Guest | The video—the video makes you like the song even better, you know what I mean? Because it was just—they was Wu-Tanged out, you know what I mean? <i>[Morgan agrees.]</i> |
| 00:45:12 | Music | Music | And they had—they had all the hood chicks like—you know what I mean, right? On some ice cream thing, and the song was—and then Cappadonna comes in there <u>killing</u> it. “Ice Cream” from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. <i>Bitches' paranoia for the sting, who want the most of me Only a hard dozen want to be calling me cousin</i> |

*Thirsty for my catalog, baby shopping spree you're loving
Call me if you want to get dug like the pockets
I jizz them like a giant break brooms out of their sockets*

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| 00:45:25 | Havoc | Guest | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> |
| 00:45:29 | Music | Music | And then you got Method Man, he's just bodying the hook. <i>[Volume increases.]</i> |

*Watch these rap n-ggas get all up in your guts
French-vanilla, butter-pecan, chocolate-deluxe
Even caramel sundaes is getting touched
And scooped in my ice cream truck, Wu tears it up*

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| 00:45:40 | Havoc | Guest | <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i> <i>[Morgan and Oliver both respond emphatically.]</i> |
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| 00:45:54 | Oliver | Host | Oh my god! And yo, there's mad songs on that album that I could've easily just went to, but just, "Ice Cream" gives me the chills. Because it had a video to it, so I'm like, yo. You know what I mean? And—and the loop was ill. |
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[Morgan groans ecstatically.]

I mean, that loop that RZA hooked up was—woo!

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| 00:46:00 | Morgan | Host | <i>[Havoc agrees.]</i> |
| 00:46:02 | Music | Music | Smoking. "A Time For Love" from the album <i>Late Night Guitar</i> by Earl Klugh. |

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| 00:46:12 | Music | Music | <i>[Song fades seamlessly into "Ice Cream".]</i> "Ice Cream" plays again. |
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*Yo honey-dips, summertime, fine Jheri dripping
See you on Pickens with a bunch of chickens how you're clicking
I catch shooting strong notes as we got close*

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| 00:46:19 | Oliver | Host | <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i> |
| 00:46:22 | Morgan | Host | Morgan, how about you? What are your fire tracks off this album? It's hard to pick one. Um, I love "Ice Cream" but if there's one that gives me stank face, where I just am like, "I can't move on", it's "Incarcerated Scarfaces". |

[Havoc and Oliver agree emphatically.]

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| 00:46:35 | Music | Music | That's a knocker. "Incarcerated Scarfaces" from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. |
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*For real, it's just slang rap democracy
Here's the policy, slide off the ring, plus the Wallabees
Check the status, soon to see me at
Caesars Palace eating salads
We beating mics and the keys to Dallas
I move rhymes like retail, make sure shit sell
From where we at to my man's cell*

From staircase to stage

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| 00:46:51 | Havoc | Host | <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i> Can I—can I take my headphones— <i>[Morgan and Havoc laugh uproariously. Somebody applauds.]</i> |
| 00:46:59 | Morgan | Host | “Incarcerated Scarfaces” is dope. Yo. Yo. |
| 00:47:00 | Havoc | Guest | <i>[Oliver laughs.]</i> Oh my god. I told you, this album made me want to go back to the drawing board. I’m telling you. It was crazy. And I—and I say that truthfully, like woah. |
| 00:47:13 | Morgan | Host | I mean, that one is the one. And I think also, too—and it doesn’t get talked about as much, but I really like “Verbal Intercourse”. |
| 00:47:20 | Music | Music | “Verbal Intercourse” from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. <i>... funny style n-ggas roll in the pile Rooster heads profile on a bus to Riker's Isle Holding weed inside they pussy with they minds on the pretty things in life Props is a true thug's wife It's like a cycle, n-ggas come home, some will go in Do a bullet, come back</i> |
| 00:47:33 | Havoc | Guest | <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i> When that “Verbal Intercourse” dropped, it was like a gift from the gods. It’s like, “Wait a minute.” Like, that beat, you never even heard a beat like that before. <i>[Laughs.]</i> It was crazy. It was just—it was almost like it wasn’t fair. <i>[Morgan laughs.]</i> |
| 00:47:52 | Oliver | Host | That’s—that’s how good these songs were. We like to ask about favorite moments on the album, and I’m gonna circle back to something I was saying earlier, which is about the beginning of “Knuckleheadz”. Because—and I’ve listened to this album more times than I can remember over the last quarter century, and it doesn’t matter how many times I hear it, I never quite predict when the drums and the piano come in, because RZA didn’t put it onto a standard kind of 4-4 track. It just—they drop in where they drop in, and so to this day, where that—the beat really begins is—it still catches me off balance, and I just love the fact that he, already, from the beginning of this album, I feel unsettled. I don’t know what’s coming, and “Knuckleheadz” personifies that on a sonic level. |
| 00:48:36 | Music | Music | “Knuckleheadz” from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. <i>GHOSTFACE KILLAH: So, let's do this the fuck up, roll up like tropical kid Don't play me like I got a flowerpot head kid Just chill man</i> |

RAEKWON:
*On the real let's go get this money fast son
I know how we gotta do this kid*

GHOSTFACE KILLAH:
Scrungey-head motherfucker

RAEKWON:
*Lay on the crime scene, sipping fine wines
Pulling nines on, UFO's, taking they fly clothes
They eyes closed, we getting loot
No doubt, check the word of mouth, unheard about*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

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| 00:48:54 | Oliver | Host | Morgan, how about you? What are your favorite moments off of this album? |
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| 00:48:57 | Morgan | Host | I got to say, a stand-out moment for me—besides “Striving For Perfection”, which I already mentioned, ‘cause I love that opener—but for me, it’s the beginning of “Rainy Dayz”. |
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| 00:49:06 | Music | Music | “Rainy Dayz” from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. |
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*Of how to conquer these rainy days
(You sang beautifully just now)
(I sing for him, and he isn't here.)*

*It's going down, man, word, man
(What's up, black?)
N-ggas just fucking robbed my gate, man
(Word?)*

*It's raining, he's changing
(Fucking—yo, I'm gonna murder somebody)*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

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| 00:49:39 | Morgan | Host | And I just love—it’s like a whole movie in one—disparate parts together, and then it just starts. And that, to me, is probably my favorite moment on the album. |
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| 00:49:51 | Oliver | Host | Havoc, how about you? Do you have a favorite moment off this LP? |
| 00:49:55 | Havoc | Guest | Oh man, the whole album is a moment to me. |

[Everyone laughs.]

The whole album. But you know, just to highlight something off the album that people probably really don’t talk about too much. Well, they probably do. Um, “Biterz”.

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| 00:50:11 | Music | Music | “Shark N-ggas (Biterz)” from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. |
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*You know what I'm saying?
For real, 'cause I'ma—I'm approach a n-gga, man
For real, man, I don't want nobody sounding like me, man
For real son, you know
(No doubt)
Bad enough, n-gga, I don't want nobody sound like nobody from my Clan, man*

*Keep it real, get your own shit man, and be original
(Word up)
That's all, man
(And you'll be a better man)
And—and you gonna—you gonna come out on your own way
(Word up)
Whatever how you gonna take it, man, fuck it*

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| 00:50:29 | Havoc | Guest | <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i> Ghostface's lingo is just so crazy in there. He's like, "Yeah, you know, you say your little word, and then here they come with the word, taking your word." |
| 00:50:40 | Morgan | Host | <i>[Havoc and Morgan laugh.]</i> He's like, "Be an original." |
| 00:50:42 | Havoc | Guest | You know what I'm saying? I could listen to it all day. Like, you know, their slang, their accent, it's just everything, man. |
| 00:50:51 | Oliver | Host | It's funny, because I think that song, that interlude, and the aforementioned Prodigy's "Infamous Prelude" are two of my favorite skits from that entire era. Partly because you just assume that they're basically subtweeting people, and in your mind you're just trying to figure out, who are they talking about? |
| | | | <i>[Havoc agrees.]</i> And with—with "Shark"—with "Shark Biterz", I didn't realize at the time they were talking about Biggie. And of course, in hindsight, now it makes total sense in terms of, right, the cover of <i>Ready To Die</i> , comparing it to the cover of <i>Illmatic</i> . But I didn't realize until years later that there was even beef between those two camps, or at least just these accusations flying back and forth. And I guess I just love the ways in which you have a little bit of inside baseball happening within this album. And Havoc, to your point, if you knew, and if you didn't know, it still sounds good, because you just like hearing people talking shit. And that's exactly what that skit was. |
| 00:51:42 | Music | Music | <i>[Havoc agrees with a laugh.]</i> "Shark N-ggas (Biterz)" from the album <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i> by Raekwon. <i>These n-ggas is biting off your album cover and shit Boom, bad enough they biting lines like n-ggas killed me When they came with some Nas— N-ggas bit off of Nas, shit! You know what I'm saying? Word, n-ggas, n-ggas, n-ggas, n-ggas caught his little album cover, boom Then done did a Nas for that shit I'm like, damn, what the fuck, man? It's like...</i> |
| 00:51:58 | Oliver | Host | <i>[Clip fades out.]</i> Havoc, let me ask this, with "Shark Biterz", did you know what they were talking about? I gotta assume you did, but more to the point, what was your reaction when you heard them basically calling out Biggie indirectly? |

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| 00:52:10 | Havoc | Guest | <p>No. I would've loved to say yes, I knew who they was talking about at first—</p> <p><i>[Oliver affirms.]</i></p> <p>—but I definitely didn't know who they was talking about. And I— and I consider myself to be on the inside, right? But when I finally found out, I was surprised, but then I wasn't surprised, you know what I mean? Because I thought there was a lot of camaraderie you know—camaraderie there between Big, the Wu, and Nas and everybody. But then when I found out what it was over, and what it represented, I said, "Okay, yeah, it makes sense."</p> <p>But I don't think it ever, you know, went off of the tape. Right? You know what I mean? It wasn't—you know what I mean, it was just people expressing themselves. But yeah, but when I finally found out, I was like, "Oh, shit."</p> <p><i>[Havoc and Oliver laugh.]</i></p> |
| 00:52:56 | Oliver | Host | <p>Wow.</p> <p>They kept it hip hop, as they say.</p> <p><i>[They agree.]</i></p> <p>Is there a sleeper jam off this album for you, Havoc? Something that maybe when you first listened, it wasn't the thing that was hitting for you, but as time has gone by, it's a song that you've come back to and rediscovered in a way.</p> |
| 00:53:10 | Havoc | Guest | <p>Hmm. Let me see. I would have to say "Spot Rusherz".</p> <p><i>[Morgan and Oliver both hum delightedly.]</i></p> |
| 00:53:20 | Music | Music | <p>That's one of those hidden gems on the album.</p> <p>"Spot Rusherz" from the album Only Built 4 Cuban Linx... by Raekwon.</p> <p><i>Like anchors on ships flooded with all diamond chips Back pockets: two clips, four-fifths with rubber grips Laying, two bottles of brass I was slaying Meditating, red dot be waiting for my payment Heard the key in the lock, cocked the Glock Turn the lights out, dip behind the couch Kion, gag his mouth Infra-red at his head when he entered</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i></p> |
| 00:53:36 | Oliver | Host | <p>Havoc, if you had to describe <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx</i> in three words, what three words would you choose?</p> |
| 00:53:42 | Havoc | Guest | <p>That's my shit.</p> <p><i>[Everyone laughs and Morgan agrees.]</i></p> |
| 00:53:51 | Music | Music | <p>"Wisdom Body" from the album Only Built 4 Cuban Linx... by Raekwon.</p> <p><i>Fake n-ggas who tried to flex hard came and went</i></p> |

*They couldn't match up with the fly n-gga
With his back against the wall
Heads clocked once I came in the door
I played the speaker, sipping a Kahlua
Saw this bad bitch with a switch*

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| 00:54:03 | Morgan | Host | <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i> And that'll do it for our special episode on all of the Wu-Tang albums we've discussed on this show so far. Like we mentioned earlier, if you liked these clips, please take a listen to the full episodes. |
| 00:54:13 | Music | Transition | "Crown Ones" off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under the Stairs. |
| 00:54:14 | Oliver | Host | You've been listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> with me, Oliver Wang, and Morgan Rhodes. |
| 00:54:17 | Morgan | Host | Our theme music is "Crown Ones" by <i>Thes One</i> of <i>People Under The Stairs</i> . Shoutout to Thes for the hookup. |
| 00:54:23 | Oliver | Host | <i>Heat Rocks</i> is produced by myself and Morgan, alongside Christian Dueñas, who also edits, engineers, and does the booking for our shows. |
| 00:54:31 | Morgan | Host | Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and our executive producer is Jesse Thorn. |
| 00:54:35 | Oliver | Host | We are part of the Maximum Fun family, taping every week live in their studios in the West Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. |
| 00:54:43 | Sound Effect | Transition | <i>[Music fades out.]</i> Cheerful ukulele chord. |
| 00:54:44 | Speaker 1 | Promo | MaximumFun.org . |
| 00:54:46 | Speaker 2 | Promo | Comedy and culture. |
| 00:54:48 | Speaker 3 | Promo | Artist owned— |
| 00:54:49 | Speaker 4 | Promo | —Audience supported. |