

00:00:00	Music	Transition	<p>“Crown Ones” off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under the Stairs.</p> <p><i>[Music continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]</i></p>
00:00:04	Oliver Wang	Host	<p>Hello! I’m Oliver Wang, flying solo today. But Morgan Rhodes will be back soon. Every episode here on <i>Heat Rocks</i>, we invite a guest to talk about a heat rock. That is an album that sizzles its way into the collective consciousness. And today, we will be serving up the flavor of the month by revisiting the debut 1991 album by Dres and Mista Lawnge, aka Black Sheep.</p>
00:00:29	Music	Music	<p>“Try Counting Sheep” from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.</p> <p><i>So, move to a rhythm that's quite uplifting Just when you thought that nothing would rise, I'm drifting Higher (higher) Yeah, higher I'm not a king, a prince, a ruler or a squire I'm not a prophet and I'm not a messiah I'm not a wolf or another flat tire</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:00:47	Oliver	Host	<p>On the intro to the album, the group warns us that there’s always a black sheep in the family. And Dres and Mista Lawnge were holding themselves out as the redheaded stepchildren in the Native Tongues family that also included De La Soul, A Tribe Called Quest, and The Jungle Brothers. Indeed, on this their debut, Black Sheep showed some of the humor that De La was known for while their production could roll with both the funk of The Jungle Brothers as well as all that jazz that Tribe was collecting. But you wouldn’t have confused the group with any of their kin. They were the class clowns, the casually offensive jokesters who are also secretly the smartest kids in school, offering a perfect mesh between Dres’s alacrity as an MC and Mista Lawnge’s prodigious talents as a producer as well as a decent second fiddle on the mic.</p> <p>Especially for ’91, this album embodies the spirit of inventiveness, smarts, and charm that made this moment in hip-hop’s golden era so precious to those of us who lived through it. <i>A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing</i> wasn’t trying to be a world beating, statement making LP for the ages, but it had vision and thought. And almost 30 years on, it’s still worth a listen, especially for those who slept.</p>
00:02:00	Music	Music	<p>“Flavor of the Month” from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.</p> <p><i>For a second, I reckon, I got ya double checking Then again when to your needs did I beckon? Hold me only if you wanna get naked Play me for the crowd only if you wanna wreck it The name is Dres, like silk I get slick Drop rhymes like a basehead Bic flicks Constantly, yes it's me D-R-E-S</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>

00:02:20 Oliver Host A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing was the album pick of our guest today, author and screenwriter Adam Mansbach. He recently joined me on one of our mini episodes talking about reggae covers, and I wanted to have him back for a formal episode. When I first met Adam, about 15 or so years ago, he was a young novelist with already a few titles to his name, including *Shackling Water* and *Angry Black White Boy*. He's been a prolific author in the time since. Most famously for his profane, quasi-children's book, *Go the F to Sleep*, and its equally profane sequel, *You Have to F-ing Eat*.

[Adam laughs.]

When he's not busy writing screenplays such as that of the 2016 young Barack Obama biopic, *Barry*, or touring the country back when you could do such things with longtime Florida humorist Dave Barry as part of their collaboration on their book, *A Field Guide to the Jewish People*. Adam is also a consummate record collector with some of the nicest record shelving I've ever seen.

[Adam laughs.]

00:03:24 Adam Mansbach Guest He is joining us from the hills of Berkley California. Adam, welcome back to *Heat Rocks*.
00:03:25 Oliver Host Thanks, man. Good to be here.

00:03:25 Oliver Host To give some context to folks as to why it is that we're talking about this particular album—besides its merits on its own—this goes back to a debate that began between Adam and I probably well over ten years ago. And I don't even remember what the origins were with it. But we got into a debate around what was either the better or more influential album from 1991: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing by Black Sheep or the self-titled Cypress Hill debut. And as we just recently did an episode about *Cypress Hill* album with another Bay Area person—scholar Felicia Viator—it seemed only right to circle back to the Black Sheep album as kind of a companion episode. And so, to be clear, at the time in which we first had this debate, I was team Cypress Hill and Adam was team Black Sheep. And I assume that nothing has changed in terms of where we stand on this.

00:04:22 Adam Guest So, Adam, I'm not asking you to defend your choice, but I do wanna know what do you think makes this Black Sheep album so great? It's a lot of things. And you know, as with any album that comes out at such a formative time in your life—because I was—I was like 14 when this album came out. And I was an MC, and I was spending most or all of my time engaged in various hip-hop related pursuits—if you construe hip-hop related, you know, widely enough to include like trying to get some weed and, you know, trying to get girls to talk to me. It resonated with me because for one thing it was very relatable. Not that I was rolling around town Big Willie style the way that Dres was talking about, but there was a mundanity and an everyday-ness even to the braggadocio that he was engaged in. And there was an aspiration to be slick and smooth, and a certain arrogance and cockiness that seemed both larger than life and well within reach, if that makes sense.

[Oliver hums thoughtfully.]

You know, it was a time. Like, '90, '91, '92, I just remember this feeling suddenly that I could relate a lot more easily and directly to some of the records that were coming out because they spoke about and embodied so many of the things I was actually doing. You know? MainSource was another one. Right? I remember listening to "Just Hanging Out" and being like check, check, check. Like, these are the things I do. You know?

[*Oliver laughs.*]

00:05:57	Oliver	Host	You know. Yeah. Young Adam Mansbach was hanging out and hustling with his friends. Is this what we're saying?
00:06:01	Adam	Guest	Yeeeah! Fucking right I was! Yeah!

[*Oliver laughs.*]

So, I think—you know, I think part of it was that was aging into a certain kind of relatability. You know? Which wasn't the case, whatever, three/four years earlier when KRS-One was talking about like shooting up the dudes who rushed the herb gate. You know? I couldn't relate as strongly to that as I could to like—you know, rolling around town buying records and talking about plans for the weekend and feeling like you're the man and haters could give you the finger if they didn't like it. And you know, that type of energy resonated with me.

In terms of why this album specifically spoke so strongly to me, it was just a consummate rap album of the moment. It's interesting, I was thinking about this in the leadup to this call, and I was thinking whether or not to advance this argument. And I've decided that I can make this argument, which is that for the year 1991, Dres wins the year. Dres is the best MC of 1991. It's a weak year in an incredibly fruitful time period, in terms of who's dropping albums, in terms of who is like, you know, at the top of the pile. Right? Like, in 1990, Brand Nubian dropped an album, X Clan dropped an album, KRS-One dropped an album. And '91 a little bit less so—lyrically, I mean Tribe and De La dropped incredible albums. Ice Cube dropped a big album. Del drops an album.

But like, Dres I think, pound for pound, wins the year. He carries effortlessly and single-handedly a 20-track album. And he's killing it from front to back on this album. He's versatile. He's witty. He is covering various topics with equal kind of style and illan. And by the same token, in an incredibly competitive year with *Low End Theory* and *De La Soul is Dead*, I think you can make a pretty good argument that Mista Lawnge wins the year on the production side. I think what he's doing with samples on this album is crazy. The sources he's drawing from, the layering. I don't think anybody was really fucking with him. And when I listen to this album now, I still feel that way.

00:08:22	Music	Music	"To Whom It May Concern" from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.
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You know what?

*I'm sick and tired of rappers not real
And suckers making it with a pop feel
Labels signing acts for 'nuff bills
Tax write off, cause you have no skills
You go make a demo
Get a deal and start to sprout
Gold, platinum, and then start selling out
You get a Benz and trash the Nova
Double platinum*

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

00:08:40 Oliver Host So, because the Black Sheep were the black sheep of the Native Tongues family, I was of course very curious to see what this latest group family member was gonna be like. And “Flavor of the Month”, which was the lead single, was nice. I mean, it wasn’t like—to me, it’s not the fire track off the album, but it’s a very serviceable single. Until we heard from Biggie and “Hypnotize”, it was the first time that I ever thought Herb Alpert put together something that would be—you know, worth from a hip-hop head’s perspective—like worth getting down to.

00:09:08 Music Music “In A Little Spanish Town” from the album *Sounds Like...* by Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass.

[One song fades into the next.]

00:09:16 Music Music “Flavor of the Month” from the album *A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing* by Black Sheep.

*I heard you got the fever for the flavor
I heard you got the fever for the flavor
I heard you got the fever for the flavor
Hurry up and get a scoop before it's gone*

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

00:09:26 Oliver Host But it really wasn’t until “The Choice is Yours (Revisited)” remix came out that I think people really, really sank into this particular album, because that single—and we can talk about this in the second half, but that single was obviously sooo, so key. So big. This is where Funkmaster Flex would start pushing his bomb button, right? And so, I think what stands out to me upon especially relistening to this album—and this is an album that I do go back to quite a bit—is that there’s a kind of meta level irreverence and humor that these two have. And this is an album that opens with effectively like a concept song, right? Which is making of gangster rap. I wanna come back to that point later.

And for '91, this seemed really ahead of its time. And certainly, folks like De La were self-aware in the same way that I feel like Black Sheep were. But Black Sheep took that self-awareness even a step further, because there are multiple points on this album where they’re being active trolls as we would say in today’s parlance. But they were doing this back in '91. And this is definitely an album where both Dres and Mista Lawnge—you definitely get the sense that they have their tongue in the cheek, even as they’re rapping.

00:10:41	Adam	Guest	Yeah! I mean, that intro is hilarious and stands up really well. It's really over the top. It's hyperbole done with incredible skill. And it's funky! And it's fast, and it sounds as good or better than most of the shit that actual gangster rappers were talking about.
00:11:00	Oliver	Host	You're bugging.
00:11:01	Adam	Guest	And then it turns out—to be a— <i>[burst into laughter]</i> .
00:11:02	Oliver	Host	My dude, I know you're like an east coast guy even though you've been living in the west coast and Bay Area for well over ten years now, but it does not sound better than the best gangster rap coming out of the west coast. Like, come on.
00:11:13	Adam	Guest	Alright. I mean, okay. Whatever.
			<i>[Oliver laughs.]</i>
			Maybe, you know, the—it's that Bar-Kays sample, right? They flipped the Bar-Kays sample and Dres is talking about like the mailman came so I cut his motherfucking throat. Aaaaa! Waiting for the motherfucking school bus! Aaaaa!
			<i>[Oliver laughs.]</i>
00:11:37	Music	Music	It's—I mean, it's one of the funniest things committed to wax in hip-hop to that point, I would say. "U Mean I'm not" from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.
			<i>Woke up, didn't choke up Saw my AK, it was broke up Put it together like a jigsaw Got my nine and my Rambo knife off the floor Went to the bathroom, and beat the rush Yo, who the fuck used my toothbrush? Went to my sister's room, yo bitch, wake up You stupid ass, dirty ass</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:11:53	Oliver	Host	And '91 seems like a really pivotal year for this backlash and pushback against the success and the rise of gangster rap. You know, this is the same year that Tim Dog's "Fuck Compton", for example, comes out.
00:12:06	Music	Music	"Fuck Compton" from the album <i>Penicillin on Wax</i> by Tim Dog.
			<i>All you suckers that riff on the West Coast I'll diss and spray your ass like a roach You think you're cool with your curls and your shades I'll roll thick and you'll be yelling out, "Raid" A hard brother that lives in New York Where suckers are hard and we don't have to talk Shut your mouth 'fore we come out stomping Hey, yo Eazy! Fuck Compton</i>
			<i>Fuck Compton</i>

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

00:12:28 Oliver Host For the most part, I feel like hip-hop has settled into a very live-and-let-live kind of big tent. Like, whatever is your thing, man. Just do it. Right?

[Adam agrees.]

Not in '91. Like, people are drawing lines in the sand and going at the people that they perceive on the other side. And what do you think that was about?

00:12:45 Adam Guest I think that everything you said is very true, but I don't know that I see "U Mean I'm Not" necessarily as a drawing of knives or a drawing of a line in the sand. To me, it's very playful. And it's—

00:12:55 Oliver Host Oh, sure! Sure. But it's a diss. It's a diss song! I mean, it's not like—they're not being polite about it. They're making fun of all these—yeah.

00:13:02 Adam Guest There's a difference between a diss and a parody, though. Right? This is actually, to me, a parody rather than a diss. And I might seem like I'm making sort of pointless semantic distinctions here, but a parody gets to be playful. A parody doesn't get you in trouble. And in this case, the parody circles back to them, because the dream that Dres wakes up from is a dream that he was hard. So, the first thing he does on his own album, his debut album, essentially is cop to not being hard—at least by the rubric of west coast gangster rap. And that's ultimately kind of a self-deprecating thing to do. Right? He spins out this whole crazed fantasy about shooting everybody and like—you know, he shoots his mom in this song! You know?! *[Chuckles.]* Like, he goes—you know, it's a wild, over the top song. So much so that I think it goes into the realm of parody and outside the realm of diss.

And like, nobody took offense to it. The west coast was not mad at these guys. Mad people have caught mad flack for single lines, for talking slick—you know, misperceptions. You know, like—you know, Tribe Called Quest—you know, got jumped for saying "not a new jack swing" you know what I mean? Like—

00:14:28 Oliver Host Okay, good point.

00:14:29 Adam Guest And this is a different category to me. This is something that's a lot more playful. And also, it's gotta be—I gotta say also, this is a beautifully sequenced album. This is not a rushed or thoughtless arrangement of the songs. This has as much thought in it as like a Public Enemy album.

[Oliver agrees.]

So, you hear Dres's voice. "Yo! Yo, what the fuck was the dream about, G?" And he's like—

00:14:52 Music Music "U Mean I'm Not" from the album *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* by Black Sheep.

I dreamed that I was hard (hard, hard)

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

00:14:55 Adam Guest And then, the next thing you hear is like the kicking snare.

00:14:57	Music	Music	<p>“Butt in the Meantime” from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.</p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:15:10	Adam	Guest	<p>It’s a whole different vibe. You know? And it’s kind of the rope-a-dope. It’s the set up and then the pulling out of the rug. So, Dres gives you all of that. And then, he leans all the way back in the driver’s seat and takes it down to 25 and starts cruising in the neighborhood.</p>
00:15:24	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p>... then it's gotta be style What happens now? A better man can hold the mic and do the proving Dres of the Black Sheep Yo, let's Get the Sheep moving I'd like to pay a tribute, to what? To knocking boots I'm single and I mingle if ya jingle I play roots But there's another, the other The brother on the cover</p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:15:40	Oliver	Host	<p>Let’s just kind of dig a little bit deeper, here. I think—you know, to your earlier point about Mista Lawnge in particular doing stuff on here you weren’t seeing a lot of other producers doing—again, I might quibble with that a little bit, but there is absolutely to me there’s no question that this album is very, very imaginative in terms of where it’s looking for its sample sources. In fact, I feel like the same conversation came up when we were talking about the Cypress Hill album with Felicia Viator is that Muggs, in the same way, by ’91 people were—had moved beyond P-Funk. They had moved beyond the James Brown catalogue. And this is really the—kind of the beginning towards the height the so-called digging in the crates era of production, where people are just mining whatever they can find.</p>
00:16:38	Adam	Guest	<p>This album certainly has a ton of standouts. What are some of your favorite examples of the group flipping a sample?</p>
00:16:43	Oliver	Host	<p>I mean, let’s not overlook “The Choice is Yours” just because it was like a huge song.</p>
00:16:46	Adam	Guest	<p>You’re talking about the LP version or the remix? I’m talking about the remix with the McCoy Tyner bassline.</p> <p><i>[Oliver agrees.]</i></p>
00:16:54	Music	Music	<p>Yeah! I mean, that’s an incredible use of that sample. “Impressions” by McCoy Tyner.</p>
00:17:06	Music	Music	<p><i>[One song fades into the next.]</i> “The Choice is Yours (Revisited)” from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.</p> <p><i>Here they come, yo, here they come</i></p>

Here they come, yo, here they come

This or that?

This or that?

This or that?

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

00:17:14 Adam Guest It's not an obscure record in the sense that it costs a million dollars. It's a pretty easy record to find. That was a record that for years afterward, if you were digging somebody—digging with somebody, you could pull it out and it would be \$4, and you could be like, “Yo, you know what this is?”

[Oliver confirms.]

00:17:34 Oliver Host I mean, the flip of the Freddie Hubbard joint on “Black With NV”.
“Povo”.

00:17:35 Music Music “Povo” from the album *Sky Dive* by Freddie Hubbard.

[One song fades into the next.]

00:17:47 Music Music “Black With NV (No Vision)” from the album *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* by Black Sheep.

Now, I was told to never bite off more than I could chew

But then you better bite enough for if you don't, my boy, you're blue
Now I wonder

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

00:17:54 Adam Guest That was exciting for me. Again, because I was able to find that record at the time. You know?

[They laugh.]

Which, you know, I only had like \$7. So, you know. Any record you could come across and know what it was and be able to buy it. You know.

00:18:08 Oliver Host It's funny, 'cause for me, the standout is the use of Gary Bartz's “Celestial Blues” on “To Whom It May Concern”. And “To Whom It May Concern” is one of my favorite songs off of the album. And I think a large part of that is because of that Gary Bartz bassline. And to what you were saying a moment ago, in terms of being able to find the original sample source, is—once I discovered what it was, and you know, back—I probably ended up getting the album sometime in the late '90s or early '00s. And I'd been searching for it for a while, but because of the sampling and because it's also just an amazing album—that Gary Bartz album's incredible. But it was a tough find. And it wasn't something that I wanted to drop—you know—100 bucks for. I think I probably ended up copping it for somewhere between \$40-60.

But when I was in my 20s dropping—you know—two sawbucks for a record was a big deal. It meant something more, because it's like, “I've been looking for this thing.” And it's not that the only reason I would've wanted it is because of the sample, but it's why I even

knew about that song and that album to begin with at all. And so, I certainly can relate to sort of what it meant to find the sample source. And that, to me, “Celestial Blues” is top tier in terms of it meant something really big to me to be able to finally buy the album.

00:19:27 Music Music

“Celestial Blues” from the album *Anthology* by Gary Bartz.

00:19:38 Music Music

[One song fades into the next.]

“To Whom It May Concern” from the album *A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing* by Black Sheep.

*I’m sick and tired of rappers not real
And suckers making it with a pop feel
Labels signing acts for ‘nuff bills
Tax write off, cause you have no skills*

00:19:47 Oliver Host

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

We will be back, more with our conversation with Adam Mansbach about *A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing* by Black Sheep after a brief word from some of our sibling Max Fun podcasts. Keep it locked.

00:19:58 Music Transition
00:20:01 Promo Clip

“Crown Ones” off the album *Stepfather* by People Under the Stairs.
James Arthur: Hi, I’m James, host of *Minority Korner*, which is a—
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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.
[Cheering crowd.]

00:20:53 Promo Clip

Danielle Radford: Mmmacho man, to the top rope!

[Thump!]

Danielle: The flying elbow! The cover!

[Crowd cheering swells.]

Speaker 2: [Distant; impact on each word] One! Two! Three!

[Ding ding ding!]

Danielle:: We've got a new champion!

Music: Excited, sweeping music.

Lindsey Kelk: We're here with Macho Man Randy Savage after his big win to become the new world champion! What are you gonna do now, Mach?!

Hal Lublin: [Randy Savage impression] I'm gonna go listen to the newest episode of the [Tights and Fights](#) podcast, oh yeah!

Lindsey: Tell us more about this podcast!

Hal: [Continuing impression] It's the podcast of power, too sweet to be sour! Funky like a monkey! Woke discussions, man! And jokes about wrestlers' fashion choices, myself excluded! Yeahh!

Lindsey: I can't wait to listen!

Hal: [Continuing impression] Neither can I! You can find it Saturdays on Maximum Fun! Oh yeahhh! Dig it!

[Music fades out.]

00:21:39 Music Transition
00:21:41 Oliver Host

"Crown Ones" off the album *Stepfather* by People Under the Stairs. And we are back on *Heat Rocks*, talking with author Adam Mansbach about Black Sheep's debut, 1991 album, *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*.

Black Sheep are one of the standout examples of early '90s artists who were amazing in the moment. But like a lot of other artists of that same period—and I mean, we're talking a very micro niche like

'90, '91, '92. By the time their second album comes out—it's *Nonfiction*. The name of the album is *Nonfiction*. It comes out in '94. So, it's not that many years later. But they just—to me, as a listener, as someone who's a huge fan of that first album, they just did not sound as compelling to me by '94, especially when you're up against—at that point, you're up against the Wu. You're up against Nas. You're up against Biggie, Black Moon, etc.

00:22:33 Music Music

"Without a Doubt" from the album *Non-Fiction* by Black Sheep.

*Black Sheep, in your house, party people you remember
The two that served your whole crew like the bartender
It's dynamic D, don't you panic
Cause we won't stop until hip-hop is all it could be, now
You can't checks it when I flex it, yo I wreck shhhh
You're turning me off*

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

00:22:49 Oliver Host

Some other artists from the early '90s were able to make that transition through the mid '90s. I feel like Black Sheep were not ones that were able to make that. And I'm sure you at the very least you certainly probably went out and picked up *Non-Fiction*. I don't know what your thoughts on it are. But why is it that you feel like Black Sheep wasn't able to survive that transition?

00:23:10 Adam Guest

Man, you know, I wish I knew. Because, as you say, a lot of their contemporaries did. De La, Tribe. I wish I knew. It was a very disappointing album. I've tried over the years to like it and to go back to it, and I can't. And it's really too bad. It's one of the—it's one of the more depressing album-to-album fall offs in hip-hop history.

00:23:36 Oliver Host

Was it the group? Or was it hip-hop in general?

00:23:39 Adam Guest

The playfulness that you've mentioned a couple of times here—the playing field looks significantly different in '94. There is a self-seriousness.

[Oliver agrees.]

There is a rugged aesthetic. You know. That almost really begins, you could argue, in '92. You know? Like, from the gear people are wearing. Like, '92 was really when motherfuckers decided that they had to look like they worked sanitation in subzero temperatures at all times.

[Oliver laughs.]

00:24:08 Oliver Host
00:24:11 Adam Guest

You know? You had the—

So, it's the Timbos and the Bubble Goose *[inaudible]* coming out. The 40 below—yeah, the 40 below Timbs and the Carharts and a lot of rappers pivoted towards a harder aesthetic. You know, and the other thing is like, I gotta say, going back and listening to this record today in preparation—you know, the misogyny of the record is of a particular stripe. And I'd be remiss not to like mention it and talk about it. Dres talks about hoes on every song practically, aside from "Black With Envy", on this album. And that word is hard to listen to now. Hard to hear so cavalierly. But I would also say that the misogyny of the record doesn't run very deep, as compared to

00:24:56 Oliver Host the real, brutal anger that you heard on a lot of records directed toward women at this time. I get what you're saying, and I'm glad you brought this up. I do think amongst the things that don't age well on this album—and really, most of the album to me still ages really quite well. But it is the casual sexism. And I get that both of them are using “hoes” with this wink and nod, but it's a wink—but at whose expense? It's not really at their expense. And even on a skit like “L A S M”. What? “Ladies Against Sexist Motherfuckers”.

[Adam echoes the full title.]

They're ultimately—even though they're kind of putting themselves up for ridicule, at the same time what they're also ridiculing is—and of course, this terminology didn't exist in '91—is they're making fun of sort of woke people. Right? And if wokeness is being—especially within the Black community and the particular kind of—that era of gender wars that existed. And it's one of those things where even in '91, I was like, “This—I don't find this that funny.” And I don't even know why they need to double down on this, per se. Except, as I said earlier, the two of them had this persona as trolls, and trolling people who get mad at casual sexism was one of their troll moves. Which, by 2020 standards, definitely hasn't aged well. And even in '91, I was like, why—I mean, why is this even necessary in life, per se? But you know. It was—but it was an integral part of how they presented themselves on this particular album, even though—to your point—this is not a deeply misogynistic album in the same way that, you know, *Ziggaz4Life* by NWA was a deeply, deeply misogynistic album. This, not so much. But just because it's more casual doesn't mean it's not there.

00:26:29 Music Music *[Adam agrees.]*
“L A S M” from the album *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* by Black Sheep.

Speaker: *Wait a minute. Do you call you mother or sister or your grandmother a ho?*

Mista Lawnge: *Basically, I do. They half hoes. You know what I'm saying? That's my point.*

Speaker: *Mista Lawnge, what do you mean by this 9.5 thing?*

Mista Lawnge: *Could we talk about that some other time?*

Speaker: *But the people want to know.*

Mista Lawnge: *Not right now.*

Speaker: *But—but—*

Mista Lawnge: *Look, I said, “Later, man.”*

Speaker: *I can dig it.*

Mista Lawnge: *[Under his breath.] I'll bet she can. Hoes all in my business...*

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

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| 00:26:52 | Oliver | Host | Alright, we've been super meta so far. Let's get really back deep into the tracks, and let's start it off with this: off of the LP—which means you can't go with “The Choice is Yours” remix. Off of the LP, what is the fire track for you? |
| 00:27:06 | Adam | Guest | I'm gonna say, “Gimme the Finga”. That bassline is just incredible. And again, though, the sentiment—you know, I wanna—I wanna make the argument that the persona that Dres invents for himself and occupies on this album is really predictive of where hip-hop would go, that the swagger that he brings really stood out in '91. |
| 00:27:33 | Music | Music | “Gimme the Finga” from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> by Black Sheep. |

*Got an accountant named Mel, a lawyer named Jay
My engineer Lyle who lives in Studio A
My manager Chris keeps my pockets well-fed
Got a honey for each box spring coil in my bed
My crib's all that without introduction
Do I read books? Nah, I read instructions to
The things you see when you window wish
Sipping on a soda to help wash the knish
I do what I want, and I answer to who?*

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

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|----------|--------|-------|---|
| 00:27:57 | Oliver | Host | So, I don't know if this would have been my answer in '91—and I was actually really trying to remember like what was the one song I heavily gravitated to when I first heard this album? It might have been “To Whom It May Concern”—which, as I said, it was still—is still one of my favorites to this day. But if I'm going with the idea of the fire track being something that just kind of jumps out and slaps you upside the head, I gotta go with “Have U.N.E. Pull”. |
| 00:28:18 | Music | Music | “Have U.N.E. Pull” from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> by Black Sheep. |

*What's going on kid?
It's time for Dres to begin
I see you grinning I'm beginning to think that we're friends
And if we are friends, then we are far from fools
So, I will then kiss and
Let you into my sphere, cool?*

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

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|----------|--------|-------|--|
| 00:28:28 | Oliver | Host | It's especially those thick, heavy Shades of Brown drums. It's one of my favorite drum breaks of that era. |
| 00:28:38 | Music | Music | “The Soil I Tilled for You” from the album <i>S.O.B.</i> by Shades of Brown. |

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

00:28:44 Oliver Host The first time that drum break gets used is by—I think it's Tribe with "Excursions", which comes out a month before this album does.
00:28:54 Music Music "Excursions" from the album *The Low End Theory* by A Tribe Called Quest.

*If you got the money, Quest is for the booking
Come on everybody, let's get with the fly mode
Still got room on the truckload of Black boom
Listen to the rhymes, then get a mental picture
Of this Black man and Black woman fixture
Why do I say that?*

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

00:29:07 Oliver Host But I'm wondering if—because, obviously, they're both part of the Native Tongues family—did Q-Tip and Mista Lawnge—were they, you know—did they rap about this album with one another? You know, kind of shared this fun like, "Yo! You should try looping this!" Because the fact that it ends up a month apart on these two different albums by interconnected producers does not seem to me to be a coincidence. Regardless, though, the way in which this track—especially now listening to it—just hits you upside the head, to me this is the fire track.

00:29:37 Music Music "Have U.N.E. Pull" from the album *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* by Black Sheep.

*You try to fresh on that
And if the source is yours of course
I get a verbal bat
Until I get through
That we are rich with wealth
Can you understand that you should be yourself?*

*'Bah, bah Black Sheep', have U.N.E. pull
'Bah, bah Black Sheep', have U.N.E. pull*

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

00:29:50 Adam Guest Yeah. I mean, this is another one of my favorites. There's a few things that I would say. First of all, certainly Tip and Mista Lawnge both knew they had that record. Maybe there was one copy of that motherfucker that they were trading back and forth.

[Oliver laughs.] I was reading—rereading Brian Coleman's chapter on the making of this album in *Check the Technique Vol. 2*.

00:30:11 Crosstalk **Adam & Oliver:** *[In unison.]* Shoutout to Brian.
00:30:13 Adam Guest You know. He allowed me to lace him with the intro to that book. So, you know, my name's in very small print on the cover. Brian is a great dude and that's a great book. And Dres or Mista Lawnge, in that chapter, makes a reference to a song that was on a Black Sheep demo. And he's like, "Yeah, the loop on that song—A Tribe Called Quest ended up using it later on one of their songs. And I was like, "Word?! Like what—I wonder what that was?"

So, you know, clearly there was some interplay between them. Another thing notable about this song to me is that it's addressed to

a young Chi Ali, who's the kid on the intro who Dres thought of as a younger brother. And it's—you know, it's not "One Love". It's not like an epistolary song, but it is at least nominally sort of addressed to the kid at the top of the skit who's kind of like young and trying to figure out who he is and who he wants to be.

00:31:08 Music Music

"Have U.N.E. Pull" from the album *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* by Black Sheep.

*Dag, I wish I was like Jordan
So I could just fly through the air no one could ever stop me
Or, or like Mike Tyson
So I could just knock people's heads off
Nah, more like Prince
So I could pull all the honeys
Well, a brother like Chi Ali is pulling all the honeys anyway
But still, it would be nice*

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

00:31:27 Adam Guest

And that's an interesting framing. And it influences the way that Dres goes about rhyming in this song.

00:31:33 Oliver Host

Mmm! That's a great—it's a great point. You know, I previously disqualified "The Choice is Yours (Revisited)" because it doesn't appear on the original release of the album. This was a remix that appeared in the 12-inch, but I think for a lot of Black Sheep fans, if you're just talking about the body of work, this would be the consensus fire track. And what's funny to me about this song in particular is, number one—as I alluded to in the first half, it is really, really hard to overstate how hype this remix was at the time. To the extent, though, that—and I don't remember exactly when this happened. Probably at some point in the late—maybe early '00s. I think this song got like a ten-year run amongst hip-hop DJs. And then it was unofficially retired by the collective, by the hip-hop DJ massive, alongside of I think this song, "'93 Til Infinity" and "They Reminisce Over You" were all unilaterally retired from play sets because DJs were like, "Okay, this shit is just way too played out at this point."

00:32:37 Music Music

"The Choice is Yours (Revisited)" from the album *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* by Black Sheep.

*Who's the black sheep, what's the black sheep?
Know not who I am, or when I'm coming, so you sleep
Wasn't in my realm, or wasn't in your sphere
Knew not who I was, but listen here
Dres, D-R-E-S, yes, I guess I can start
If it's all right with you, I'll rip this here joint apart*

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

00:32:51 Oliver Host

Now, this said, what are—you know, what were your impressions of "The Choice is Yours (Revisited)" when you first heard it?

00:32:58 Adam Guest

First of all, nobody listens to the album version anymore, but the album version is dope too.

[Oliver agrees.]

00:33:05	Oliver	Host	It's really a dope song.
			Yeah. It's not as good as the remix, but it's not a flawed song by any means.
00:33:09	Adam	Guest	Yeah. Not at all. Like, you can see why that would've been the single even without a remix. It would've made sense. But yo, first of all, let me say—back to the point I made about an hour ago about how Dres wins 1991—there is nobody with a bigger song in 1991. You know. There's nothing—you know, among the sort of other contenders for the crown of like best MC of 1991. Dres's re-envisioning of this song on the remix, and then he just comes with the fire third verse, which is the one. I mean, that's the song—that's the verse everybody knows.
00:33:46	Music	Music	"The Choice is Yours (Revisited)" from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.
			<i>Engine, engine, number nine On the New York transit line If my train goes off the track Pick it up! Pick it up! Pick it up!</i>
			<i>Back on the scene, crispy and clean You can try, but then why, 'cause you can't intervene</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:34:00	Adam	Guest	You know, before that song got retired, I feel like there was a two- or three-year period of time where all DJs were really allowed to do was come in on the third verse.
			<i>[Oliver agrees with a chuckle.]</i>
			You know what I mean? But like the energy of that song, it's so hype. And the video, let's not forget, was really well done and ingenious. It had some really simple but really cool effects where they're reaching toward the screen and like crumpling up the screen as if it was, you know, a piece of paper. Do you remember what I'm talking about? <i>[Inaudible]</i> .
00:34:29	Oliver	Host	Yeah, know, it was a very creative video for its era. Yeah.
00:34:31	Adam	Guest	Yeah! But you know, like—yeah! I mean, shit, put this up against "Scenario" or, you know, anything on that De La album or anything on these other contending albums. Like, this stands the test of time. This is a classic!
			<i>[Oliver agrees.]</i>
00:34:46	Music	Music	"The Choice is Yours (Revisited)" from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.
			<i>You can get with this, or you can get with that You can get with this, or you can get with that I think you'll get with this, for this is where it's at You can get with this, or you can get with that You can get with this, or you can get with that You can get with this, or you can get with that I think you'll get with this, for this is where it's at</i>

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

00:35:04 Oliver Host Now, in terms of—bringing things back to the album as a whole here, do you have any favorite moments off of the album? And for me, the one that I think still tickles me to this day—and this is less like a single bar or two bars. It’s really the whole second set of verses from “Strobelite Honey” where Dres is trying to come up with excuses for why he can’t hang out with this woman that he previously had been hitting on in bad lighting.

00:35:30 Music Music “Strobelite Honey” from the album *A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing* by Black Sheep.

*I think I lost my coat, and plus I'm double parked
I thought you was my girl, you see I can't see in the dark
Anyway I'm out, out is what I be
I've got to step
(With the viscosity)
When you see a honey by the strobe light
Black I hope you got good sight*

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

00:35:43 Oliver Host It’s so clever and it’s so funny. And you know, to your previous points just about all the work that Dres is doing and how flexible he is as an MC, this to me is just kind of a gem of him at his most playful, but also very smart from a lyrical point of view. So, what are some of your favorite moments off of this album?

00:36:02 Adam Guest Yeah, “I got to step with the viscosity.” That’s hilarious.

[Oliver chuckles.]

No, I mean—I mean, this song is a—it’s a fucking *Curb Your Enthusiasm* episode. You know what I mean? Like, it’s slapstick comedy. And Dres is able to balance having himself be the fool and also having himself be smooth and a player. It’s a delicate balancing act, and he’s doing it all with a lot of grace. Um, favorite moments on this album. You know the skit before “The Choice is Yours”—the original “Choice is Yours”, like I still find that shit hilarious all these years later. Like, Dres—and again, it’s like it’s so—I mean, like Dres is surrounded by a bunch of hard dudes who are basically about to kick his ass because he doesn’t rhyme about the various ridiculous things they want him to rhyme about.

00:36:57 Music Music “Are You Mad” from the album *A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing* by Black Sheep.

Leader: *Yo, man, why don't you be kicking some records about, you know, the upliftment of the Blacks?*

Hardhead #1: *Word up, about the black sky ships—*

Hardhead #2: *And the eating of the dolphins—*

Hardhead #3: *Fur coats!*

Hardhead #4: *And the hole in the ho-zone—*

Dres: *Yo, bust it, I kick about things that I know about, you know what I'm saying?*

Leader: *I don't wanna hear that! If you don't start making some records that I like and I can put my mind into, we are going to*

00:37:20	Adam	Guest	<p>All the Hardheads: <i>(In unison.) FUCK YOU UP!</i></p> <p>When somebody—I don't know who it is, but like whoever is like, "Dolphins!" That shit never fails to crack me up. Like it's just—it's hilarious! But it's also very smart, because like—you know, it's a humorous depiction and dramatization of the kinds of critiques rappers were getting. Right? Whatever you rap about, you're not rapping about the right thing. You know. You're not rapping about enough issues. Somebody on the skit is like, "And the hole in the ho-zone!" You know?</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>I mean, this shit is hilarious. Like—and Dres maintains, you know, at his own peril, his own bodily peril, that he raps about what he wants to rap about.</p>
00:37:57	Oliver	Host	If you had to describe <i>Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> in three words, what would your three words be?
00:38:03	Adam	Guest	Quintessential '91 soundtrack.
00:38:06	Music	Music	<p><i>[Oliver "ooh"s.]</i></p> <p>"The Choice is Yours" from the album <i>A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> by Black Sheep.</p> <p><i>Need a sexy honey for a twilight stroll Gave up on sushi, give me an egg roll At A&W, get to the Root, with a boot or sneaker Get near a speaker, demo to a single To the kind with fly ho, damned the scenario And pass a plate or cross the fader</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:38:23	Oliver	Host	For our audience members who really enjoyed listening to us talk about <i>Wolf in Sheep's Clothing</i> , what album should they put next on their listening list? And for me, I would suggest that if you were into this Black Sheep album, you should check out a different 1991 hip-hop album, <i>Mr. Hood</i> by KMD, which I think was also a really sophisticated, a very smart, very funny concept album by a talented pair of artists who also like Black Sheep did not take themselves too seriously. Shoutout to Zev Love X, AKA MF DOOM, which people these days would know—be more familiar with. RIP his brother, Subroc. Shoutout to Dante Ross, who A&R-ed this project. And he and the Stimulated Dummies produced a couple of the tracks on <i>Mr. Hood</i> , including "Humrush".
00:39:08	Music	Music	"Humrush" from the album <i>Mr. Hood</i> by KMD. <p><i>Yeah, a brown man is getting down and To this funky sound and you'll check it out, Subroc's the sound man I'm just the R&B's beats kickers kicking lingo 'til comes, my payday, if rap was soccer I'd be Pele</i></p>

Scoring hard, I eat no porkchops or lard

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

00:39:23 Adam Guest

Nobody ever wants to talk about Onyx the Birthstone Kid, man. What the fuck.

00:39:27 Oliver Host

Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. *[Inaudible]*.

[Adam laughs.]

00:39:30 Adam Guest

My bad. My bad. I always forget that he's—I always forget that he's on here as well.

Never! No—no mention! Nah, that's a great—I mean, Mr. Hood is an incredible album, and similarly, sort of true to its own conceptual framework. You know? I mean, more so because they're sampling throughout the same like language instruction record. But it's right beside this record in still being hilarious where it needs to be hilarious all these years later, still being vulnerable and funny and virtuosic all these years later. I think that's an incredible pick, Oliver. And I would say to round out the trilogy of '91 hip-hop releases, I think *De La Soul is Dead* is a perfect companion piece.

[Oliver agrees.]

00:40:35 Music Music

Another group that is at the height of its creativity, really doing what the fuck they want. Sophomore album, not a debut, so you also get the added bonus of them having like a chip on their shoulder about their own success and the way they've been pigeonholed on the first album and killing themselves off. Yeah, I think *De La Soul is Dead* would be another good place to go from here.

"A Roller Skating Jam named 'Saturdays'" from the album *De La Soul is Dead* by De La Soul.

Girl meets boy on Thursday night

Boy was high, girl fly like kite

They hold hands until next day

Boy then lets go, hit his way

Boy rules butt, brags to his boys

Erection brings sad boy joy

Boy thinks of that big fat back

Big Black fat love, big Black fat

Girl calls boy to stand him up on Saturday

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

00:40:55 Oliver Host

The other thing worth noting too is that that might have been the first time a lot of people even heard Black Sheep, because they are the recurring characters who are shitting on the De La album. I forget the names of their characters. Dick Snot I think is one of them?

[Adam laughs and confirms.]

00:41:10 Adam Guest

But they're the ones who—they come repeat—
[In an angry, nasal voice.] "Hated it!" Yeah.

00:41:11 Oliver Host Exactly, they pop in repeatedly throughout this album. So, you know, even before their own debut came out, they were already introducing this kind of very knowing wink-wink set of personas through the *De La Soul is Dead* album. So. Yeah. Great pick.

00:41:26 Music Music “Skit 2” from the album *De La Soul is Dead* by De La Soul.

[Ding.]

Speaker 1: *No, no, no.*

Speaker 2: *Yo, b-but, yo. “Bitties” was kinda cool, that’s pretty fly. I kinda liked it.*

Speaker 1: *“Bitties”? Uh, if you were to flip it on 45, so I could dance to it, it’d be kind of slamming. It’s wack, man, wack!*

Speaker 2: *I give that one props too*

Speaker 3: *No, no, no. Why y’all dissing it? I like it, man!*

[A slap, Speaker 3 begins to cry.]

Speaker 2: *Yo, G!*

Speaker 1: *Onto the next one! Onto the next one!*

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

00:41:48 Oliver Host Well, that will do it for this episode of *Heat Rocks* with our special guest, Adam Mansbach.

[Theme music fades in.]

00:42:59 Adam Guest If, for folks who did not hear the mini episode that you joined me on, you wanna let folks know what you’re working on right now? Uh, yeah! I’m working on a few things. I have a memoir in verse coming out next year with One World, which is a imprint of Random House, called *I Had a Brother Once*. That’ll be my next book. I’m working on a bunch of screenwriting and TV projects. Some of which presumably will come to light once we’re allowed to congregate within six feet of each other. That’s makes going into production a little difficult. But you know, I’m staying busy in the interim working on some of those things.

00:42:28 Oliver Host And where can people find you online?

00:42:30 Adam Guest Uh, they can find me at AdamMansbach.com or Adam Mansbach on Twitter and Instagram, if you wanna see pictures of my records and children and the occasional funny quip.

00:42:43 Oliver Host Sounds like a good combo. Adam, thanks so much for joining us today.

00:42:46 Adam Guest Thank you!

00:42:47 Music Transition “Crown Ones” off the album *Stepfather* by People Under the Stairs.

[Music continues under the dialogue.]

00:42:48 Oliver Host You’ve been listening to *Heat Rocks* with me, Oliver Wang, and Morgan Rhodes.

00:42:51	Morgan	Host	Our theme music is “Crown Ones” by Thes One of People Under the Stairs. Shout out to Thes for the hookup.
00:42:57	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.
00:43:04	Morgan	Host	Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and our executive producer is Jesse Thorn.
00:43:09	Oliver	Host	We are part of the Maximum Fun family, taping every week live in their studios in the Westlake neighborhood of Los Angeles.
00:43:17	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Cheerful ukulele chord.
00:43:18	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
00:43:20	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
00:43:22	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
00:43:23	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.