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Method Man - Live From Sunset Strip

Label: Music Video Distributors Format: DVD (Region 0, NTSC), HD-DVD

Unlike most of their contemporaries, who play up the "gang" aspect of "gangsta", the Wu-Tang Clan, while still retaining that element, always seem to be structured more like a superhero team to me, like some crazy kung fu version of the X-Men. Even to the point of spinning off into their own solo titles, although these days Ghostface Killah seems to have cornered the market in solo Wu stuff. Back when the "first wave" of side-projects showed up, arguments raged as to which was the best from a shortlist of three - GZA's Liquid Swords, Ol' Dirty Bastard's Return To The 36 Chambers - The Dirty Version or Method Man's Tical.

Tical was generally the smoker's choice, and by the looks of this DVD Meth has lost none of his passion for the weed. Opening with a recorded intro about the individual's right to put whatever they want into their own body, he smokes a blunt and takes the stage, his familiar booming, lisping voice cruising its way through a selection of classics, both from his own solo back catalogue and the Wu's in general. As is often the case with live hip-hop on screen, there's a lot of audience call-and-response stuff which was probably a lot more fun if you were actually there, but the crowd seem to be lapping it up, and there's no denying Meth's stage presence. In many ways, MCing is probably closer to stand-up comedy than rock and roll when it comes to captivating an audience using nothing more than your words and your movements, and Meth is such a consummate professional at times you start wondering whether he actually does smoke as much dope as he'd have you believe - I'd be sat in the corner of the stage eating nachos, most likely, rather than being able to actually engage a crowd of people. Then you realise he almost certainly does, and is just VERY, VERY GOOD at it.

It's often said that Wu shows of all kinds are something of a gamble.

This is certainly a night when Meth (or maybe I should call him Mr Man) is on form, and makes it all seem so easy that you keep having to remind yourself just how complex and clever some of the guy's rhymes actually are. He may be the most stoned of the Clan, but he's a man fully in control of his faculties. While a lot of the late Ol' Dirty Bastard's appeal came from the way everything seemed to be just about to go horribly wrong but never quite did, Meth is at the other end of the scale, laid-back and focused, though still able to jump around and stagedive like a motherfucker. Also on the DVD is an interview with the Man himself in which he comes across as a smart, genial guy, and does a really interesting routine about the line between rhyiming and acting, which takes me back rather to my earlier point about about MCing being akin to stand-up comedy. And he expounds at length about his love of comics, which is, from my point of view, enough to endear me to the guy forever.

As the man himself would say, roll that shit, smoke that shit, light it.

Only I'd add - and when you've done that, go buy the DVD.

-Deuteronemu 90210 is smokin'-