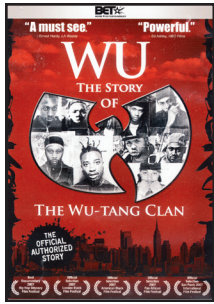


Wu: The Story of the Wu-Tang Clan



Rating: 4 out of 4

Straight outta the slums of Staten Island (a.k.a.

"Shaolin" in 'Tang terms), the Wu-Tang Clan "ain't nuthin ta'f' with." That proclamation, issued on the nine-member rap group's 1993 debut album, "Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)", was arrogant, yet accurate. In the 15 years since, Wu-Tang's name remains one of the most revered in the industry, as do the names of its members: RZA, GZA, Raekwon, U-God, Ghostface Killah, Inspectah Deck, Method Man, Masta Killah and the late, great Ol' Dirty

Bastard. Gerald K. Barclay's documentary, "Wu," chronicles "the black Beatles" (as Raekwon puts it) rise as a revered brand and fall as a high-energy, high-ego entity that ultimately burned out, only to re-emerge some years later to comparably less success. Barclay takes viewers through Wu history, from their kung fu-inspired guiding ideology and early appearances on Rap City to the members' successful solo careers, most notably Method Man, Ghostface and "the verbal chemist," O.D.B., and ends with O.D.B.'s incarceration and eventual death in 2004, which would irreversibly alter the Clan's fabric. A love letter to the revolutionary rap group that shaped his young-adulthood and career, Barclay's film is a must see for fans of rap, music and sheer ingenuity. — Hilary Crowe

Geoff Koch

If It Feels Good, Don't Do It

www.myspace.com/geoffreykochmusic

Area Show: Fireflies on Dec. 4

The latest release from St. Louis-based singer-songwriter Geoff Koch (pronounced "Jeff Coke") delivers. "If It Feels Good, Don't Do It" has the right combination of catchy melodies and heartfelt lyrics comparable to Wilco and Elliot Smith and watching Koch sing just adds to his charm. Musically, the album is solid, with help in the studio from Reeves Gabrels (David Bowie and Nine Inch Nails' live band) on lead guitar and Ken Coomer (Uncle Tupelo and Wilco) on drums. Straightforward and accessible doesn't mean you won't want to listen to this album on repeat. Check out "Chasing After You" for a more melancholy sound with cello and guitar mixing with additional vocals by Aimee Romero. Other favorites include the beautiful "The Answers You Want" and "Don't Leave Me Now," a harmonica filled bluesy rock track. — Jennie Raff

Starfucker

Starfucker

www.myspace.com/starfuckers



A word of advice for bands in the germinal stage — don't write a check your ass can't cash, or more specifically, don't name your band Starfucker if it lacks adequate punch to pull off the name. Linguistics aside, Starfucker's eponymous debut LP is almost as playful as their pejorative name. The album opens with two duds, but "Mike Ptyson" is pure endorphin-pumping, lo-fi electropop, complete

with handclaps, communal cooing and the occasional whistle, and the quirky "Rawnauld Gregory Erickson The Second" takes those syncopated, minimalist beats and exploits them to a T. The album is a bit too robotic for comfort — there'll be nothing organic aside from ghostly vocals and those go-to handclaps — and the twinkly techno sound wears thin after the first rotation, making Starfucker only as deep as their namesake allows. — Hilary Crowe

4 BEERS = EXCELLENT!
 3 BEERS = GOOD
 2 BEERS = AVERAGE
 1 BEER = POOR
 SPILT BEER = PARTY FOUL

Aterciopelados

Río

www.aterciopelados.com



The "Río" of Aterciopelados' new album is the Bogota River, which runs through the hometown of frontwoman Andrea Etcheverri. It's a polluted mess, and she wants you to know about it and a whole bunch of other stuff that's bugging her. "Aguita" shows her appreciation for all that water does for her; "Ataque de Risa" is a beautiful and colorful play on words calling for the firing of flowers, bombing with love, and millions of stars instead of wars; the title track personifies the aforementioned river, saying it's thirsty, it's coughing, it's sick and prays for its fish to return. The album does well with its catchy, upbeat sounds, often displaying the band's pure positive energy and eternal optimism that things will get better, and its strong lyrics about human rights. Atercio's manages to become increasingly adept connecting a host of Latin American music and electronica with serious themes — a formula that's been the band's strong suit during their two-decade run. — Alfredo Flores

Tom O'Connor

Frozen In Anticipation

www.myspace.com/tomoconnormusic

Area Show: Jammin' Java on Dec. 28

Binghamton, NY-born and Arlington-based singer-songwriter Tom O'Connor's debut album, "Frozen In Anticipation," is pop-folk at its smoothest. O'Connor's vocals are beautiful, and at times, swooning laments that melt into fluid strumming and quivering string arrangements. At his best, as on the satisfyingly cheesy second track, "Virginia Rain," O'Connor's songs are reminiscent of Eric Clapton's later solo work. Though no doubt a talented vocalist and practiced guitarist, O'Connor still has a ways to go before his lyrics and melodies stand out for their creativity. Still, his debut is much warmer and heartfelt than the name suggests; all 10 songs are penned with love won or lost in mind, and while the subject matter lends itself to more than a few clichés ("My Love") and trite tracks (opener "Worth Your While," "Tangled Up Tonight"), O'Connor's music is enjoyable nonetheless. — Hilary Crowe

The Wellingtons

Heading North For The Winter

www.myspace.com/thewellingtonsmusic



With their third album, The Wellingtons are packing up their virally catchy pop-rock and "Heading North For The Winter." The Melbourne, Australia natives scoop up all that is cute, sweet and peppy from their environs and chuck it into three-minute ditties about — what else? — love and crushes with a five-second rebound rate. "Come Undone" is by far the album's standout track and

delightfully reminiscent of the title song and namesake of the Tom Hanks-directed, Liv Tyler-acted 1996 fake band biopic, "That Thing You Do!" Hand claps, punchy synths and Monkees-style drumming make the tune a toe-tapper bound to get stuck between the ears, and on "Freak Out" the "whoa-ohs" beg singing along. The band's only downfall is that it's too damn catchy for its own good — being pelted with 10 rounds of sunshine is a bit much to take in one sitting. Then again, with the icy December weather, a sunburn from down under may be just what the doctor ordered. — Hilary Crowe

David Kitchen

Underground

www.myspace.com/davidkitchen



The first — and title — track off David Kitchen's latest EP, "Underground," is as reminiscent of Elvis Costello as Kitchen's geek-chic plastic-frame glasses and plaintive-yet-happy vocals, but that's where the similarities begin and end. The subsequent four tracks on the Alexandria native's five-track EP are an exercise in beautiful pop-rock: tried and true melodies flowing 'neath predictable lyrics. While it won't earn him too much attention, the EP is rife with pleasantly non-threatening beats and ignorance-is-bliss, hummable tunes like "Mean Old Mr. Gravity" and "You Know That I Will," a love song. — Hilary Crowe