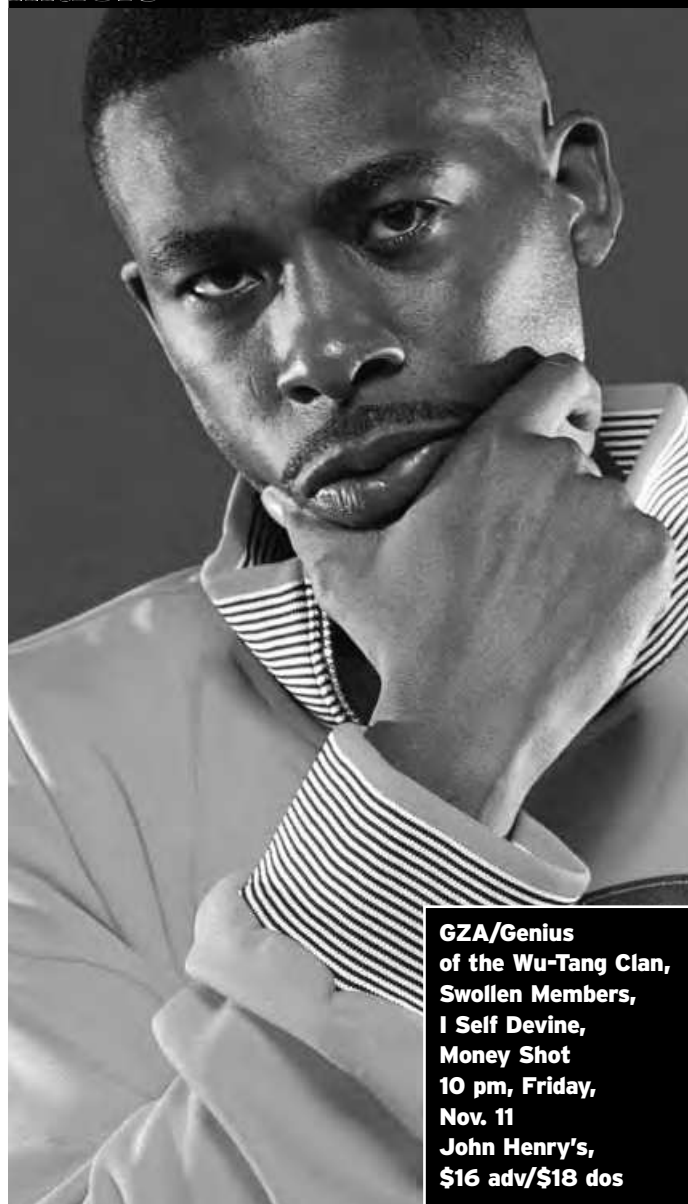




**GZA/Genius**  
of the Wu-Tang Clan,  
Swollen Members,  
I Self Devine,  
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# Elder Wu-Tang Statesman Goes Deep

The 'tang' is the sound of the blade hitting your neck.

In the early '80s, the Japanese introduced a now classic anime series to the US entitled *Fist of the Northstar*. Self-described as a "post-apocalyptic splatter fest," it followed the martial arts battles that ensued between the hero, Kenshiro Kasumi, and his archenemy, Shin. Kenshiro had a friend named Rei who practiced the South Star Waterfowl Fist style of fighting where he could use his hands as blades and slice up his enemies. As quick as lightning, Ray would jump at his enemies, make slashing motions with his hands, and land on the ground unscathed. The villain would then turn around and face Rei, grinning cluelessly, then all of a sudden begin to fall apart.

If you're familiar with the GZA (aka Gary Grice), his history as a founding member of the Wu-Tang Clan as well as his solo career, then you'll know how in a quick four bars the GZA can employ a number of heady lyrical devices to assert his dominance over any MC. Like Ray, the GZA leaves the competition absolutely unaware that they've just been beheaded. His words slice like knives through the air in blunt "WUs!" only to leave all adversaries with the "TANG!," the sound of the blade hitting their necks.

I caught up with the GZA in Olympia, Wash., where we talked about everything from his new album *Grandmasters* (which was co-created with DJ Muggs from Cypress Hill) to the future of the Wu-Tang Clan. As calm as the most disciplined of Shaolin monks, the GZA explained how after a certain point, the record labels stop putting the same amount

of promotion into his records that they used to.

"Wu-Tang as a group, we haven't been on TV or radio for years. But we still attract multitudes of people. We still have a hardcore fanbase," the GZA says.

"Major labels will tell you it's you. But you know it's not you 'cause you still got those fans out there. People are still die-hard Wu-Tang fans," he continues.

When asked about the popularity of all the flossy rappers out there now, he replies, "Some things is just not important to me." Attributing some of that popularity in part to the changing face of the rap world, he explains that he was never willing to compromise his style to make money or please the jiggy masses.

"Cars is not important. If I'm writing a rhyme that mentions a car, I say the car or the vehicle. I keep it simple. I don't name call. I can tell you how expensive the car was without actually telling you it was a Bentley. I can still describe it in a visual way."

*Grandmasters* sounds like a truly classic Wu-Tang album, resurrecting that eerie Wu sound circa 1993. Muggs digs deep into the Clan's aesthetic, crafting repetitive beats that are as compelling and grimy as the creepiest of RZA tracks. Pulling from a bag of clever metaphors as deep as the Atlantic Ocean, the GZA weaves tales so thick and cinematic, a simple one-time listen will only graze the surface of the story. I don't care if you're into Sage Francis or 50 Cent ... don't be an asshole and sleep on one of the most dominant MCs of all time. See the GZA.

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