

Hip Hop Pioneers Gang Starr to Drop CDDVD

Written by Robert ID3056

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Founded in 1987 by Guru, DJ 1,2 B Down, Mike Dee and various producers, such as Donald D, J.V. Johnson or DJ Mark the 45 King helping out, Gang Starr helped pioneer the New York City hip hop sound.

'Gang Starr is a reflection of the heart and soul of hip-hop culture and music. They are one of my favorite groups and one of the groups I've been most influenced by. I love Primo and Guru," says Common.

Critically acclaimed hip-hop duo Gang Starr hit the hip hop scene hard in 1989 and more than a decade of chart hits followed. Mass Appeal: The Best Of Gang Starr, is scheduled to be released December 26 by Virgin/EMI Music Catalog Marketing. The album gathers 21 of their best hip hop tracks for their first ever single-disc hits collection, including seven Top 10 hits and two songs originally released on film soundtracks. The new package includes liner notes by music journalist and author Soren Baker and a Deluxe Edition CD/DVD, to be released the same date, adds 13 music videos to the collection.

Gang Starr's DJ/producer, Premier ("Primo") and MC/lyricist, Guru, experienced their first critical embrace with the release of 1991's Step In The Arena. The album, an upfront sociopolitical departure from the prevailing style of the time, reached #19 on Billboard's Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and #121 on the Top 200. The title track and "Just To Get A Rep" both hit #5 on the Hot Rap Singles chart, while "Lovesick" reached #11.

Through the 1990s, Gang Starr's chart success improved steadily with each new album release. 1992's Daily Operation peaked at #14 on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and reached #65 on the Top 200, fueled by the #1 Hot Rap single "Take It Personal" and the #5 single "Ex-Girl To Next Girl." 1994's harder-edged Hard To Earn took the #2 position on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and #25 on the Top 200, with the chart-crossing hits "Code of the Streets," "Mass Appeal," and "Dwyck."

Four years later, Gang Starr returned with what would become their sole #1 album, 1998's Moment Of Truth. The album topped Billboard's Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and reached #6 on the Top 200, and The New York Times praised it as "classicism of the best kind." Moment Of Truth's radio hit, "You Know My Steez" found success across Billboard's Rap, R&B, Dance, and Hot 100 Singles charts and "The Militia" (featuring Big Shug & Freddie Foxxx) reached #38

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on the Hot Rap Singles chart.

In 1999, a 2-CD hits collection was released and Gang Starr toured across the U.S. with Rage Against The Machine. The Gold-certified Full Clip: A Decade Of Gang Starr reached #11 on Billboard's Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and #33 on the Top 200.

Gang Starr's most recent studio album, The Ownerz, followed in 2003, peaking at #5 on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and #18 on the Top 200. The Austin Chronicle praised the duo's career in an album review: "For more than a decade, Gang Starr has presented itself as one of the most dependable staples of the hip-hop universe."

Throughout Gang Starr's run and beyond, both DJ Premier and Guru have enjoyed great solo success. Throughout the 1990s to today, Premier has been one of the most important producers in hip-hop, with Jay-Z, Mos Def, Christina Aguilera, Common, D'Angelo, Jadakiss, Snoop Dogg, and Notorious B.I.G. among the artists he has produced, in addition to his own Gang Starr recordings with Guru. "He'll create a completely new sound," Christina Aguilera told journalist Soren Baker of DJ Premier in a February 2006 interview, excerpted for Mass Appeal's liner notes. The acclaimed singer had DJ Premier produce several songs on her chart-topping 2006 album, Back To Basics. "He'll make a song out of bits and chops and pieces," Aguilera continued, "I know a lot of producers do it nowadays, but he's so clean and so creative when it comes to that. I have so much respect for him."

Since 1993, Guru's jazz roots have been showcased in his acclaimed solo recordings and performances. For his own album releases, Guru has collaborated with a who-who of jazz, hip-hop and soul luminaries, including Roy Ayers, Herbie Hancock, Branford Marsalis, the Roots, Erykah Badu, Macy Gray, and Isaac Hayes. "The longevity comes from being in touch, connected with the streets, being a fan," Guru told Baker in a July 1999 interview also referenced in Mass Appeal's liner notes. "Premier and I are fans of the music. We listen to everything. We maintain that hunger, that same energy that we had when we first started in the game."

"Let's take it back to when the water was clear and not contaminated. Gang Starr is like a fresh glass of water ... They hit the spot every time! Primo is my brother from another mother 4 real, and Guru just sets the lyrical content straight as usual. This kinda music you can find in Pete Rock's CD changer, no doubt!" -- Pete Rock

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MASS APPEAL: THE BEST OF GANG STARR

1. You Know My Steez
2. Manifest
3. Step In The Arena
4. Mass Appeal
5. Ex Girl To The Next Girl
6. Skills
7. The Militia
8. Check The Technique
9. Dwyck
10. Take It Personal

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11. Put Up Or Shut Up

12. Above The Clouds

13. Lovesick

14. Now You're Mine

15. Soliloquy Of Chaos

16. Code Of The Streets

17. Just To Get A Rep

18. Royalty

19. B.Y.S.

BONUS TRACKS

20. Tha Squeeze (from Training Day soundtrack and The Owners

Japanese import)

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21. Natural (from Spin This soundtrack and The Owners Japanese import)

MASS APPEAL: THE BEST OF GANG STARR (Deluxe Edition CD/DVD)

DVD Tracklist

1. Step In The Arena

2. Just To Get A Rep

3. Who's Gonna Take the Weight

4. Ex Girl to the Next Girl

5. Take It Personal

6. Code of the Streets

7. Mass Appeal

8. You Know My Steez

9. The Militia

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10. Full Clip

11. Discipline (featuring Total)

12. Nice Girl, Wrong Place

13. Skills