

VOLUME CONTROL

Bush
Golden State
Atlantic Records



With the release of its fourth studio album, *Golden State*, British alternative rockers Bush revisits the winning sounds and styles that made its 1994 album, *Sixteen Stone*, multiplatinum.

The two albums released since *Sixteen Stone* followed the band through electronica and techno productions, which brought the group little commercial success.

This release promises to please at least those insatiable fans whose very souls pulsed to the baseline in "Comedown," whose fists clinched with empowerment over the guitar rhythm in "Machinehead."

Often termed the pretty boys of early 1990s music, Bush flickered in Nirvana's shadow and Pearl Jam's wake, but as those storms calmed, Bush became one of modern rock's notable plaintive voices.

Listeners will find *Golden State* a cast back to the angry 1990s as lead singer Gavin Rossdale and company blend Bush's warm overdriven guitar rhythms and engaging base riffs with delicate lead guitar work, a facet of Bush music rarely found in previous work.

"The People That We Love," the disc's first release, has received loads of airplay in constant rotation at radio stations, and deservedly so. Bush returns to its fan-farming roots in this jam with explosive guitar parts and energizing baselines. The track garnered added publicity after Bush renamed it from "Speed Kills" after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Through "Inflatable," Gavin wears his broken heart on his sleeve, delivering a soulful eulogy for a love gone bad and protests the emotional abuses of the same situation.

Other tracks like "Headful of Ghosts" and "Superman" bleed with great guitar tone and overall musical splendor.

Simply put, those who liked *Sixteen Stone* should check out this disc, which is best described as a second volume to that album.

(Grade: B)

—Thomas Phillips

Wu-Tang Clan
Iron Flag
Sony/Columbia



It seems like only yesterday that Wu-Tang Clan fans waited at least three years for the group to release a new album.

While the wait sometimes seemed like an eternity, faithful fans could always rest assured that the Clan would deliver. Cut to 2002: only a year has passed since the release of *The W* and the rap group that many consider the greatest of all time has returned with another chapter to add to its ongoing saga with *Iron Flag*. It seems it has chosen to strike while the "iron" is hot. But just how much heat could it possibly bring after such a short hiatus? Apparently not much.

While the nine Clansmen are consistent in terms of lyrics, the beats on this album leave much to be desired. The fact that RZA did not produce every song will have some hardcore fans shaking their heads in dismay. While most of his contributions (about three-fourths of the album) are above average, little is reminiscent of RZA's groundbreaking work on classics like *36 Chambers* and *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*.

What makes things worse is the inclusion of beats by producers outside the camp, such as Trackmasters and Nick "Fury" Loftin, which break up the flow of the record. Known for his ability to skillfully produce an entire album, RZA has made a mistake by loosening his grip. While this is nothing new, it is the first time this problem has emerged on one of the Clan's group efforts. Where *36 Chambers*, Wu-Tang

Forever and *The W* each had their own distinctive feel, for the most part *Iron Flag* plays like a bunch of slap-dash B-sides and leftovers that did not fit on its previous albums.

Though few and far between, *Iron Flag* has a few highlights. The first single, "Uzi (Pinky Ring)" is the quintessential posse cut, with seven of the group members dropping verses in quick succession. RZA's keen ear provides the backdrop, with horn-laden samples that sound like a kung-fu flick scored by Al Green's backup band. Also of interest are "In the Hood" and "Y'all Been Warned," a worthy second single.

Unfortunately, this is where the quality hip-hop ends; the remainder of *Iron Flag* is not worth the time it takes to listen. In addition, the Wu are evidently starting to feel the effects of Ol' Dirty Bastard's absence, enlisting the talents of old school riot starter Flava Flav (of Public Enemy fame) for a zany guest appearance on "Soul Power." Perhaps the man they call ODB, who has been in prison for two years now, is the missing ingredient.

While possibly the best rap group in overall talent, the Wu-Tang Clan could work on its consistency. A disappointing pattern seems to be developing. It seems every great Wu album in recent years has been tainted by a sub-par follow-up. The trend continues in 2002, first with Ghostface Killah's flop (*Bulletproof Wallets*, a mediocre successor to 2000's incredible *Supreme Clientele*) and now *Iron Flag*. With chinks in its armor exposed, hopefully upcoming releases from Method Man and Raekwon will keep the Wu army's fickle fan base at bay for at least one more year.

(Grade: C-)

—Gabe Patterson

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Lucas, Christensen divulge little of *Episode II*

NEW YORK (AP) — Like everyone involved with the project, Hayden Christensen will not say a lot about the latest *Star Wars* prequel. Then again, there are some things he cannot say because he does not know them.

As Anakin Skywalker, the 20-year-old Christensen said he is clueless as to how his character's voice drops to James Earl Jones' distinctive boom.

"I think he becomes half-mechanical, and, um, the dark helmet," he says in the March issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine. "Maybe that has something to do with his voice getting lower?"

Series creator George Lucas will not say

much either about *Star Wars: Episode II — Attack of the Clones*, which opens May 16. But he will divulge that the romance between Anakin and Amidala, played by Natalie Portman, is "a love story in the *Star Wars* tradition."

"I'd call it a love haiku more than a love sonnet," Lucas told the magazine. "It's shorter than a traditional love story, and thinner than a traditional love story."

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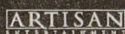
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