



PRESS RELEASE

**Wu-Tang Clan completes sale of one-of-a-kind album
Once Upon A Time in Shaolin... through Paddle8**

Sole copy of the new album by the Wu-Tang Clan sells to an American collector

Paddle8 is pleased to announce that the sole copy of the Wu-Tang Clan's album, *Once Upon A Time in Shaolin...*, has sold to an American buyer for an undisclosed figure in the millions. The album is a unique work of art that was available for sale to one single collector, with no physical or digital duplicate in existence.

The sale represents the final chapter in the Wu-Tang Clan's ambitious project to restore both economic and experiential value to music by presenting an album as a unique work of art. Stored in a vault at the luxurious Royal Mansour hotel in Marrakech, Morocco since its completion in 2013, *Once Upon A Time in Shaolin...* includes contributions by the entire surviving Wu-Tang Clan, and marks a historic moment in the group's three-decade career. As *The Independent* wrote upon the announcement of the album's intended distribution, it serves as "a challenge to the increasing disposability of music in the digital era." The concept was spearheaded by the group's de facto leader, The RZA, and long-time Wu-Tang-affiliated producer Cilvaringz, who conceived the idea of selling a single copy as a work of art.

In March, the Wu-Tang Clan announced *Once Upon A Time in Shaolin...* would be available for private sale exclusively through Paddle8, and launched a special site with a provisional track list and interviews with Wu-Tang Clan founding member RZA at paddle8.com/wu-tang. RZA, Cilvaringz, and Paddle8 also collaborated with MoMA PS1 to organize an intimate listening event and panel with Genius editor Sasha Frere-Jones, presenting the album within the context of a fine-art museum and featuring a never-before-heard, 13-minute medley of tracks from *Once Upon A Time in Shaolin...*. The event, which was attended by some of the most influential leaders of the art world, 36 fans, prospective buyers, and select members of the media, served as the first and only time that the public would hear excerpts from this album for 88 years, as stipulated by the terms of the sale. The response from music critics was overwhelmingly positive, with Rolling Stone writing: "simply put, if the full, 128-minute *Once Upon A Time In Shaolin...* is as solid as the 13 minutes heard on Monday night, it could be the group's most popular album since 1997."

Over the intervening six months, Paddle8 served as agent of the sale and worked closely with select representatives from the Wu-Tang Clan to vet potential offers for the album. The ultimate buyer is a private American collector. The buyer and seller agreed to the sale in May, and spent months finalizing contracts and devising new legal protections for a distinctive work whose value depends on its singularity. Paddle8 was represented by Pearlstein & McCullough LLP in the transaction.

While conceived and introduced as a work of art, this sale also achieves a new record for the price of a single album and places the Wu-Tang Clan among a select pantheon of musical artists. It surpasses the \$300,000 paid earlier this year for a rare acetate recording of Elvis's first song (purchased by Jack White), as well as the estimated \$306,000 value of *That'll Be the Day*, the sole album by The Quarrymen—the band that evolved into the Beatles—owned by Paul McCartney.

"The Wu-Tang Clan have always been driven by innovation, and this marks another moment in musical history. From the beginning, we hoped that this concept would inspire debate and new ways of seeing creativity. Both of those goals have been achieved, and the ideas continue to evolve. As this was never about personal gain but about the essence of value, we have donated a significant portion of our profits to a variety of charities including The Truth About Cancer to support their global quest for



alternative cures for cancer, as well as to the Children Literacy Society to help inner city children learn to read and focus on academics. We hope that the impact of this historical sale will echo through the ages and maybe remind us every now and then that music is a great art form that should be valued as such.” – RZA, Wu-Tang Clan founding member

“I’m pleased that we were able to execute and conclude a concept that many said was impossible. From the day we announced this work, it became more and more evident how unique this approach to music really was. From the unconventional way the album was recorded in secret to creating new legal structures for a sale that had no precedent, it has been a fascinating journey and I’m pleased to have seen this idea evolve from a rebellious impulse into a memorable cultural achievement.” – Cilvaringz, Wu-Tang Producer

“Paddle8 is delighted that we have, in collaboration with RZA, Cilvaringz and the Wu-Tang Clan, placed Once Upon a Time in Shaolin... in private hands. We pioneered a new type of intellectual property regarding the sale of a work that is simultaneously physical and digital, creating previously unexplored legal protections for a unique work that cannot be reproduced. This marks an exciting new model of distribution for the music world and we look forward to playing an ongoing role in this innovative model. We congratulate RZA, Cilvaringz and the Wu-Tang Clan on this historic sale and the apotheosis of their vision.” – Alexander Gilkes, cofounder, Paddle8

About Once Upon A Time in Shaolin...

With a cinematic narrative in the inimitable Wu-Tang vernacular, *Once Upon A Time In Shaolin...* has been envisioned from execution through distribution as both a work of art and an audio artifact. A sonic sculpture presented in a hand-carved nickel-silver box, it is accompanied by a 174-page manuscript containing lyrics, credits, and anecdotes on the production of each song, printed on gilded Fedrigoni Marina parchment and encased in leather by a master bookbinder. The conditions of sale stipulate that the buyer will agree to not commercialize the content of the artwork to the public for a period of 88 years.

Once Upon A Time In Shaolin... is a retrospective soundscape that threads 31 songs, skits, and stories into a 128-minute-long aural screenplay. Recorded in part in the Wu-Tang Clan's home enclave of Staten Island, New York, the album marks not only a geographic return to “Shaolin”—the philosophical home of the Wu-Tang Clan—but a sonic homecoming as well. In addition to the original Clan members, the work reunites the diaspora of MCs related to the Clan into a compelling narrative, featuring appearances from longtime Wu-Tang collaborators like Redman, members of an extended brethren including Killarmy and Sunz of Man, and the familiar scene-setting of long-time backing vocalists Tekitha and Blue Raspberry. *Once Upon A Time in Shaolin...* is produced by RZA and Tarik “Cilvaringz” Azzougarh, who has collaborated with Wu-Tang Clan since being discovered and introduced to The RZA by Ol’ Dirty Bastard in 1997.

The work, which includes the sole existing exemplar of the music, the hand-carved nickel silver box designed by Yahya, a gold-leafed certificate of authenticity and a leather-bound book containing the album’s lyrics and stories behind each song, also includes an addition that had not been previously announced: a pair of customized PMC MB2-XBD speakers worth \$55,000, included after consultation with PMC. The British company is synonymous with the highest recording values in the industry. With the addition of the speakers, the buyer is able to achieve the ultimate, museum-quality sonic experience with the same speakers that RZA and Cilvaringz used to master the album.

“To be asked to complete the works with a set of MB2-XBD was incredible. We are honoured to be part of this piece of music history.” – Peter Thomas, PMC owner and founder

“We mastered the album on these speakers and sonically they do the album the most justice.” – RZA



“We spoke with PMC about the possibility of curating the listening experience of the buyer, similar to how contemporary artists curate the exhibition of their works. PMC was on board with our concept, these monster speakers are the only way to truly release the essence of the music within the album.”
– Cilvaringz

Explore *Once Upon A Time in Shaolin* at paddle8.com/wu-tang.

About Paddle8

Paddle8 is the premiere collecting destination, presenting online auctions of extraordinary art, design, jewelry, watches, and collectibles. Using innovative technology, we’ve streamlined the collecting experience, combining the excitement and expertise of an auction house with efficient operational solutions and an international perspective. Founded in 2011 by Alexander Gilkes, an auctioneer and LVMH veteran, and Aditya Julka, a Harvard Business School MBA and serial entrepreneur, Paddle8 has over 100 employees worldwide, with teams in New York, L.A., and London. Paddle8 is funded by the investors behind Uber, Vimeo, BuzzFeed, Paperless Post, Warby Parker, and Bonobos, among others, as well as art-world insiders including artist Damien Hirst, art dealer Jay Jopling, and Matthew Mellon. paddle8.com

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