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Shaolin Interpol

Wu-Tang mainman RZA takes Paul Banks to a higher plane

EVER SINCE STEVEN TYLER and Joe Perry got together with Run-D.M.C. for a raucous rap/rock attack on Aerosmith's "Walk This Way," white and black guys have come together in genre-jumbling, race-mixing hitmaking. Socio-culturally, this is a great show of unity—whether overground or underground—and huzzah to that. Aesthetically, though, it only works every so often. So, here is incendiary Wu-Tang Clan producer and emcee RZA and Interpol's placid Paul Banks making their steamy contribution to the black/white, alterna-duo list, Banks & Steelz, and mostly it's a fine, weird wine with chunky bits of cork in its bottling. ¶ New Yorkers both, RZA and Banks are opposites on the temperament pole, and that difference sounds off immediately on tracks such as "Giant." Starting on truck-horn-honking hip hop with its rumpled rhythm track way up front, baritone RZA enters the stage and commences/commits to a fast-paced, spittle-spraying flow, connecting



Banks & Steelz
Anything But Words

★★★★★☆☆☆

WARNER BROS.

the dots between East Coast and West Coast rap travels with time to discuss "cheesesteaks on a roll" in Philly. No sooner than RZA gets ready to boil over, Banks—who sounds like Ozzy Osbourne on his first solo album, no joke—comes in and slows things back to a bubble, atop a bridge that percolates with chiming, Beatles-

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ish charm. While RZA has never sounded so alive, Banks has never sounded so, well, dead.

This hot/cold, menace-and-moody pattern—it's what most of *Anything But Words*' song structures are all about, save for the hauntingly operatic "Ana Electronic"—succeeds in a cool, odd-couple fashion. Whether dipping into the shallow pool of clichéd sentiment that is the Latin lilt, clickety-clacking "Love + War" or the horror-show-hop of "Speedway Sonora," Banks & Steelz love the rinse-and repeat process. —*A.D. Amorosi*