

# Wu Tang Clan co-founder O.D.B. succumbs at 35

NEW YORK (AP)—The rapper O.D.B., a founding member of the Wu-Tang Clan whose erratic behavior and incessant legal troubles made him a figure as wild as his lyrics, collapsed and died inside a recording studio at age 35.

The cause of death was not immediately clear, but O.D.B. had recently finished a prison sentence for drug possession and escaping a rehab clinic. He had complained of chest pains before collapsing Saturday, and was dead by the time paramedics arrived, said Gabe Tesoriero, a spokesman for O.D.B.'s record label, Roc-a-Fella.

O.D.B. would have turned 36 on Monday.

From his first appearance in the early 1990s, O.D.B. — also known as Ol' Dirty Bastard, Dirt McGirt, Big Baby Jesus or his legal name of Russell Jones — had an unorthodox delivery that stood out even in the nine-man Clan, which featured such future stars as Method Man, RZA and Ghostface Killah.

The Wu-Tang blueprint was for each member to pursue solo projects, and O.D.B.'s were among the best. He released hit singles such as "Shimmy Shimmy Ya" and "Got Your Money," and appeared on remixes with artists like Mariah Carey.

"There's nobody like him in the game," RZA told The Associated Press in an April interview, when asked if O.D.B. could resume his career after prison. "He's got a lot of problems he's got to iron out, of course, but as far as a one-of-a-kind person, a one-of-a-kind artist, he's one of a generation, one of a life-



RAPPER O.D.B.

time. He's a very rare commodity."

But as his fame increased, so did his erratic behavior, and fans came to expect the unexpected from O.D.B.

When MTV News followed him around at the height of his popularity, he took the camera crew and several of his kids (he was said to have more than a dozen, by numerous mothers) to the welfare office — in a limousine — to get an allotment of food stamps. And he received them.

In February 1998, he crashed the stage at the Grammy Awards and hijacked a microphone from singer Shawn Colvin as she accepted an award, apparently upset over losing the best rap album Grammy to P. Diddy (then known as Puff Daddy). He complained that he spent a lot of money for new clothes because he thought he was going to win. The rapper later apologized.

Over the years, he was wounded in shootings and arrested on a veritable laundry list of charges, including menacing security officers, illegally possessing body armor, driving with a suspended

license, shoplifting and threatening a former girlfriend.

In 2000, after escaping a court-ordered stint in a California rehabilitation center, authorities searched for him for a month. He was finally arrested in Philadelphia — three days after performing in a New York City concert with his Wu-Tang clique.

He was sentenced in 2001 to two to four years in prison for drug possession, plus two concurrent years for escaping from the clinic. He was released in 2003 and immediately signed with Roc-a-Fella.

He heralded his return with a news conference alongside singer Carey — pop fans may know him best for his memorable cameo on her hit "Fantasy," featuring rhymes like "me and Mariah, go back like babies with pacifiers."

His mother, Cherry Jones, said she received the news of her son's death in a phone call, which she called "every mother's worst dream."

"To the public he was known as Old Dirty Bastard, but to me he was known as Rusty. The kindest most generous soul on earth," her statement said. "Russell was more than a rapper, he was a loving father, brother, uncle, and most of all, son."

Tesoriero said O.D.B. had been working on his comeback album for more than a year and was almost finished.

"Russell inspired all of us with his spirit, wit, and tremendous heart," Roc-A-Fella founder Damon Dash said in a statement. "The world has lost a great talent, but we mourn the loss of our friend."

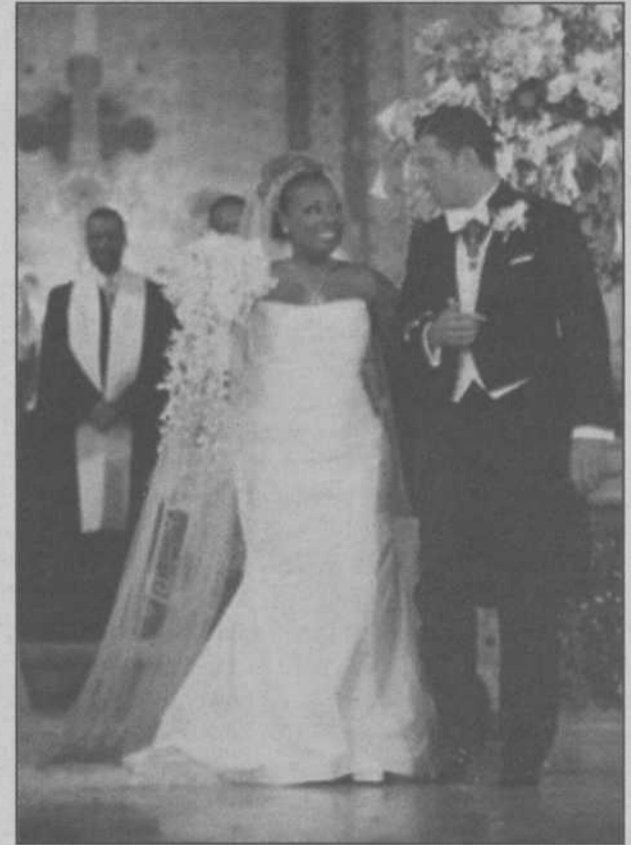
# Star Jones gets married in glitzy New York bash

NEW YORK (AP) — Star Jones, co-host of ABC's "The View," married banker Al Reynolds in a star-studded Park Avenue bash.

Notables ranging from Spike Lee to Hillary Clinton packed into St. Bartholomew's Church Saturday to watch Jones, 42, who wore a designer strapless wedding dress with a 27-foot veil, exchange vows with Reynolds.

"The train was so long it took about seven people to carry it," said friend and guest Valerie Simpson, songwriter and half of the R&B duo Ashford and Simpson.

With songstress Patti LaBelle performing, and a bridal party including Natalie Cole, Vivica A. Fox and Holly Robinson Peete, the storybook wedding lasted until 8 p.m. before moving to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel for an equally



Star Jones, co-host of ABC's 'The View,' and banker Al Reynolds walk down the aisle at their glamorous, star-studded, wedding in New York on Saturday evening.

celebrity-heavy reception. Walters. "I was happy for her. She had the biggest smile I've ever seen."

## Dance

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"Harlem Today: A Cultural and Visitors Guide," which features Mitchell. "If you list the top Black dance companies in the world, the Dance Theatre of Harlem would be on that list."

But the company is not a stranger to hard times. In 1997, financial difficulties resulted in a strike, and subsequent financial belt-tightening. Mitchell has been criticized for purportedly micro-managing the company.

"It's a tough period. It's a period where Mr. Mitchell is doing, not just soul-searching, but a lot of things are happening. This year was his 70th birthday. It's the 35th anniversary of the company," Zeisler says.

Mitchell told the Amsterdam News in September that the company's board of directors, now disbanded, was simply not

able to give the company the support it needed and he is now developing a "long term strategic plan, a business plan, and a succession plan."

While the theatre continues on hiatus, the company plans to re-open the school within a month with the assistance of the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., Zeisler says. She says Mitchell has gained key advisors such as Kennedy Center President Michael Kaiser. A new executive team will soon be in place, she says.

"While the company is on hiatus I'm going to erase the deficit," Mitchell told the Amsterdam News. Donations can be sent directly to the company at 466 W. 152nd Street New York, N.Y. 10031. Says Zeisler, "Whether you send a check for a dollar or a hundred dollars, it is all of use."

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