

# REEL DEAL

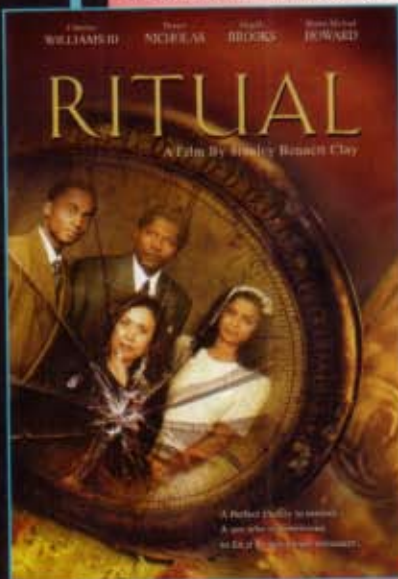
## RITUAL

Things are rarely ever what they seem on the outside. Celebrities may not be living the perfect life you think they are, overachievers might simply be overcompensating and picture-perfect families might be dealing with some major issues behind closed doors. Such is the case with Malibu's Becker family as their life is played out in the psychological drama, *Ritual*.

Written and directed by Stanley Bennett Clay (coincidentally the first *Black Beat* editor) and based on his award-winning stage play of the same name, *Ritual* follows the day-to-day lives of what many believe to be the perfect family. Clarence Williams III (*The General's Daughter*) plays Leon Becker, a successful and wealthy attorney who is the head of his flawless family. His opinion is that not only is his family a personal achievement, but they are a prime example of the American Dream come to fruition. Yes, it is possible, he believes, even if you are Black. However, despite what he thinks, Leon is completely oblivious to his family's many woes. In addition to his ethnic detachment, he is unaware of his wife's rampant alcoholism. His

daughter is a "cunning electra" who is seeking to take over the household in place of her mother, and her brother is brooding and suffering from depression so severe he drops out of his Ivy League school. Beneath their picturesque facade, the Becker family is dealing with issues that family's all across the nation suffer from and it's up to Leon to confront these problems while keeping his family's dream alive.

*Ritual* is presented in a full frame (1.33:1) format with 5.1 simulated surround sound. Extra features include previews for other UrbanWorks Entertainment releases and a Behind-The-Scenes feature.



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## STONES THROW 101

With the exception of a few obscure music channels available to those with expensive satellite television subscriptions, the occasional "hip" local access program or the Internet, there's really no way for fans of underground music to catch their favorite artists' music videos with any sort of regularity. For those of you ready to say it — no, MTV2 does not cover all the bases it should. Since MTV rarely plays any videos, even MTV2 has become

an outlet for mostly mainstream music. In steps the almighty power of DVD. While the format has been great for movies — providing extended cuts of films, deleted scenes and many other terrific extras — it's been even better for recording artists on the underground scene. Now, all those creative videos we never got the chance to see can be compiled into DVD compilations. For fans of DJ Peanut Butter Wolf's Stones Throw's stable of eclectic artists, this collection is just what the doctor prescribed.

Despite their borderline mainstream popularity, artists such as Jay Dee, Madlib and MF Doom probably never know by now that their music videos will probably never be seen on mainstream video programs/outlets. *Stones Throw 101* compiles all of Stones Throw's fifteen videos, dating way back from the mid '90s through 2004, from the likes of the aforementioned artists as well as Breakestra, Lootpack, Wildchild and Madlib's alter-ego, Quasimoto. These aren't your typical urban videos either, for these are bursting with unique creativity. Following in MF Doom's footsteps, Madvillian (a collaboration between Doom and Lib) released a comic book-styled, animated video for their single "All Caps." Quasi's "Come On Feet" is an eerie puppet video and Breakestra's "Getcho Soul Togetha" has a live band vibe full of dancing that'd make James Brown want to get down. This joint isn't short on extras either. Along with the videos are a documentary, bonus live events (one which even features a cameo from Mos Def), television appearances and the blueprint for the "All Caps" video. Adding to the overall value of *Stones Throw 101* is a bonus 42-track mix CD that features some of the label's hits, misses and unreleased tracks.

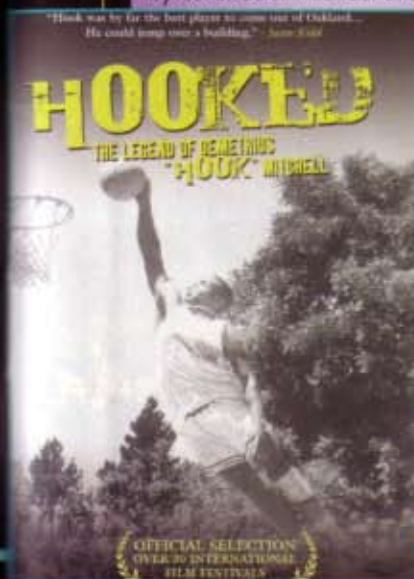
The image shows the DVD cover for 'Stones Throw 101'. It features a white, stylized graphic with the text 'STONES THROW' in a smaller font above the large number '101'. The graphic is set against a dark background with a subtle pattern.

## HOOKED: The Legend of Demetrius "Hook" Mitchell

Sometimes the best *don't* rise to the top. Despite undeniable talent and ability, there are plenty of people out there who never become what they are seemingly destined to be. If there were anyone to ever be considered a perfect example of this, it would have to be Demetrius "Hook" Mitchell. Though he is considered by many to be the greatest street baller they've ever seen, unfortunate circumstances and poor life decisions cost this "greatest player to never reach the NBA" a possible life of fame and stardom. *Hooked* chronicles the life of this Oakland playground legend in a way that is appealing to everyone – not just fans of basketball.

Directed and produced by Michael Skolnik and William O'Neill, *Hooked* introduces us to a young Demetrius. At a mere 5'9", "Hook" was a street-ball wonder who wowed local crowds with his unbelievable dunking ability. Once, he actually leapt over a Volkswagen to prove his dunking superiority. He grew up with NBA stars Gary Payton of the *Los Angeles Lakers* and Jason Kidd of the *New Jersey Nets*, each of them agreeing that Mitchell was a better baller than them. "Hook could jump over a building! He was, by far, the best player to come out of Oakland," states Payton in the documentary. "Hook was better than me, better than everybody. He would jump over trucks to win slam dunk contests." The question is, how did Mitchell *not* make it to the NBA like his friends and court peers? Fact is, crime and drugs played a major role in this man's downfall. Addictions lead to him committing crime and getting caught (embarrassingly, while under the influence) while holding up a Blockbuster Video store with a water gun. As stated by co-director Michael Skolnik, "*Hooked* is a com-

PELLING documentary of life lost and reclaimed through spirit and determination." Along with the included interviews with NBA stars and music by DJ Premier, this DVD release features additional one-on-one interviews with Baron Davis, Steve Francis and Master P; follow-up interviews; a segment on Hook's last day in prison; and a bonus inmate freestyle jam.



## SKIN DEEP

In this nation, there are plenty of politicians who'd like you to believe that all is good when it comes to racial equality. Equal rights, equal success and equal status – right? Wrong. Despite the fact that there are plenty of wealthy, hard-working minorities out there, the truth is that they are still not seen as equals, simply because of skin color. In *Skin Deep*, the award winning (American Black Film Festival's "Best Film" award and New York International Independent Film and Video Festival award for "Best Director") film by writer/producer/director Sacha Parisot, race becomes a major factor in a scandal that involves sex, love, betrayal and murder.

This fast-paced thriller finds actor Mailon Rivera (*The Shield/Arli\$\$*) filling the shoes of Anthony. Anthony is a young Black man who is living out the American dream – he's got a successful career in Silicon Valley, a model home, a beautiful wife and a sexy mistress. However, we soon learn that his personal life isn't all it's cracked up to be. His wife has become detached and their love life is far from what it used to be, while on the other end of things, his secret lover has become something of a nuisance, as she grows more and more demanding. On top of everything, Anthony still seeks respect in his professional life. Despite his financial success and association with a more affluent community, he still suffers from racial prejudice and paranoia – which isn't helped by his best friend Michael's constant reminder that Anthony is a "sell-out." Things really start to cave in when Michael and his wife come over to Anthony's for a night in the hot tub and one of the women turn up dead. In the end, "not all suspects are created equal."

Featuring a wide-screen presentation and 5.1 surround sound, the film also includes behind-the-scenes featurettes and two full-length audio commentary tracks.

