

DVDs

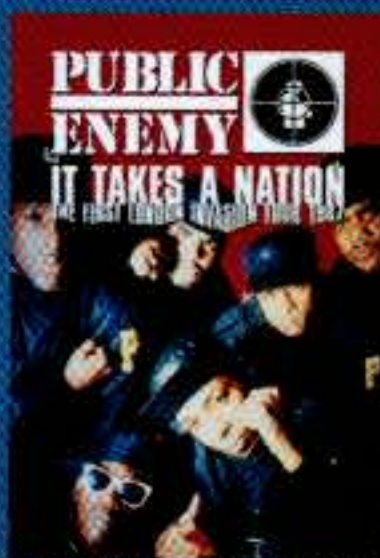


Woody Guthrie: This Machine Kills Fascists ★★★★★

PRODUCED/WITTEN/
DIRECTED BY STEPHEN GAMMOND (SNAPPER MUSIC)
Unlike many celebrities, Woody Guthrie did not go out with a dramatic bang; he simply faded away in a Brooklyn hospital bed—his mind limber but his body completely betraying him at 55. To this day, fans still hunger for information to help piece together the elusive life of one of folk

music's most enigmatic, intelligent and influential talents. *Woody Guthrie: This Machine Kills Fascists* offers an intimate look into that life, presenting a thorough exploration of Guthrie's childhood in addition to his later ramblings. Despite the fact that there exists very little visual media on Guthrie, the three-hour doc pieces together rare photos and period footage, giving the viewer a PBS-style ride. Of note are precious first-person accounts by those closest to Woody: his sister, former manager, friends (including Pete Seeger), children Nora and Arlo and countless Guthrie historians and archivists, plus narration by Billy Bragg. Though there are some perplexing choices (blurred contemporary footage, a stupefying non-Woody version of "Tom Joad"), this film paints a truthful—and complete—portrait of Woody Guthrie the prolific songwriter, philanderer, restless activist and struggling optimist.

—ROBIN AIGNER



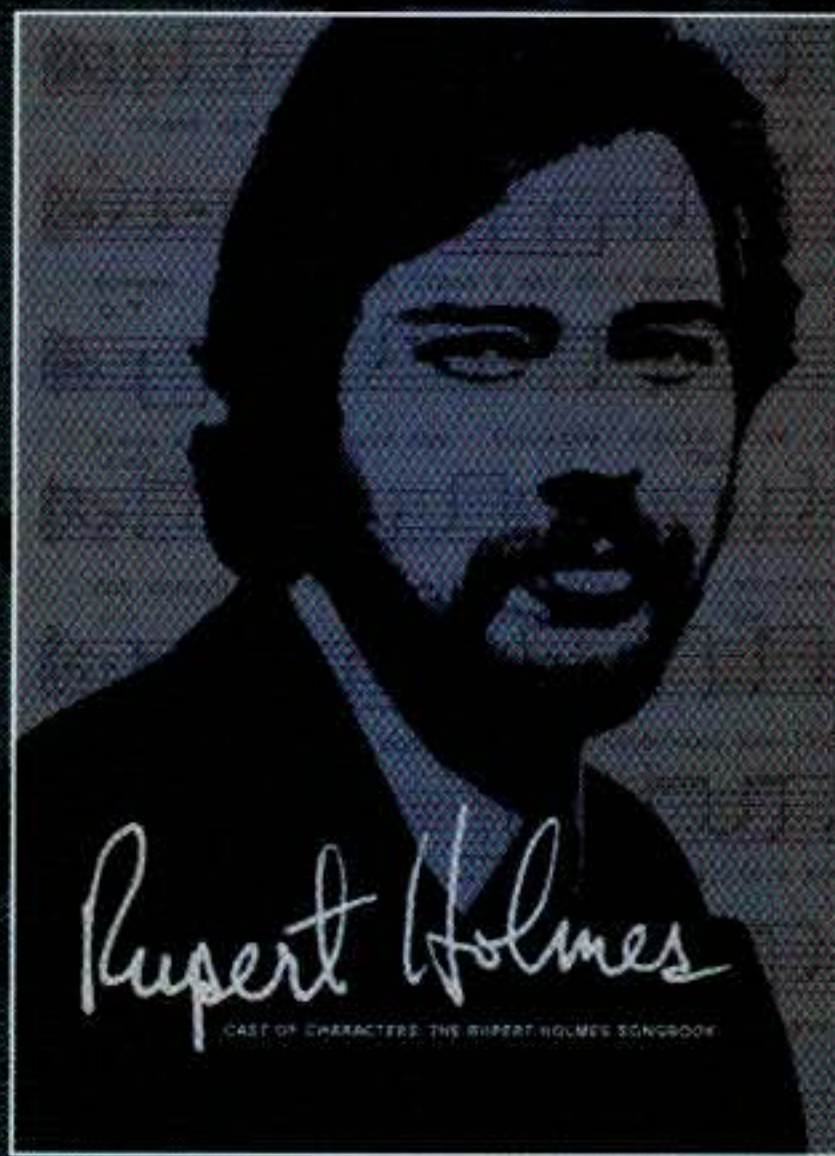
PUBLIC ENEMY It Takes a Nation: The First London Invasion Tour, 1987 ★★★★★ (MVD)

Public Enemy didn't invent politically conscious rap, but they certainly embellished and extended it—creating a body of work that brilliantly merged spirited protest, compelling presentation and creative production. During the '80s, they set the agenda for the under-

ground wing of the hip-hop universe just as completely as Run-DMC did for the pop/commercial end. This new DVD features footage from their first visit to England as part of the 1987 Def Jam Tour. The 60-minute project includes compelling, often inspirational, scenes and performances of such highly charged numbers as "Timebomb," "Bring The Noise," "Raise The Roof" and "Rebel Without A Pause." Interestingly, Public Enemy's main conceptualist, lyricist and lead rapper, Chuck D., openly acknowledged being heavily influenced by longtime New York sports broadcaster Marv Albert. And, he demonstrated the same flair with cadence, tone, pacing and emphasis that Albert brought to his coverage of pro basketball, pro football, boxing and numerous other events. But PE also nicely integrated many other aspects, from the Afrocentric verses and sentiments of Professor Griff to Terminator X's forays and Flavor Flav's comedic inserts and stage flair. PE was (and remains) a rap ensemble committed to both hardcore cultural activism and intense (yet entertaining) concert performances. This package also includes insightful and candid interviews, a bonus audio CD with some new remixes of vintage tunes and great photos. Plus, Chuck D offers some engaging "play-by-play" commentary, and there's a recent clip taken from a 2003 date in Australia. Ultimately, this is a revealing look at a very important time in the lives of a seminal rap unit. —RON WYNN

Rupert Holmes

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