

MONDO IRLANDO

REVIEW ARCHIVE

THE DUKE WATCHES
PUBLIC ENEMY
"IT TAKES A NATION -
LONDON INVASION 1987"

Sometimes a while back, roughly eight days, three hours and fifteen minutes ago, give or take, a curious craving latched onto The Guts De Duke. What the hell it all might relate to, is the fact that I was in the mood for some hippin', hoppin, booty-shakin' etc. I'd managed to acquire a booty, one fit for any amount of shakin', and so arranged the iTunes playlist thing in such a way that I would be hit in the ear-tubes with burst after burst of randomly selected "rap" and / or "hip-hop".

I sat back, put my feet up as high as I could bear without givin' myself a nose-bleed, and hoped some fine, fine fuck-laced urban mania would erupt right the hell there.

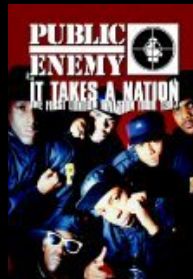
Twenty three track selections later, I still ain't hopped my hip a motherfucking inch. Track after track of "Intro" and "Skit" and "Motherfuckers out Outkast talkin' bout smokin' the weeds and doin' the filth".

I think I either threw the Personal PC in front of a bus, or shut it down in disgust. Either way, weren't a damn booty shook.

What a fella needs, I realised there and then, is some prime Public Enemy. Unfortunately I realised this all too late, and the PC was already doin' that eerie backwards banshee howl it does when it's set to die.

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I was gonna have to plough through these mountains of Compact CD's, mountains that have, at irregular intervals, been impeccably arranged in easy-to-find categories, but, inevitably, end up de-categorised and flung to the furthest reaches of my home mere moments later.

But I fucking must have some Public Enemy, I realised. Any amount of excavation will be worth it.

A man can't hope to start these sortsa shenanigans on a full bladder, so I had to take a moment for to go piss before commencing. Wandering past the front door, I saw a parcel lain on the hall carpet, a parcel containing a DVD, a DVD which I discovered, as I walked upstairs, was nothing less than Public Enemy - It Takes A Nation: The First London Invasion Tour 1987.

I took this miraculous occurrence as definite proof of two hypotheses I've long nurtured; Not only is God only too happy to help a fella in need of a chunka Chuck D, but also, the most amazing things in life are to be found on the way to or from the toilet.

Let me tell you this shit right here;

When it comes to records set to blow the flesh off of your jaws and splatter the walls behind your head in all manner a jaw-gunk, It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back by Public Enemy is up there with anything by Black Flag or The Dead Kennedys or Michael Bolton.

Q Magazine listed it a few years ago as one of the ten best political records ever made, and mused something along the lines of how "Rock music sounded bloodless after this." I didn't hear it for ages after it came out, so who knows if Q Magazine had their facts right, but one thing's for sure - when The Duke eventually done picked up said record, I can tell you here and now that 90% of my record collection suddenly seemed horribly limp.

What this It Takes A Nation DVD concerns itself with, is capturing Public Enemy, via a live show in London, at that moment, that precise point when all those whistling noises and mangled samples and paint-strippin' rage all truly gelled. It represents not a glorious birth, but a glorious maturity, the promise hinted at via Yo! Bum Rush The Show materialising right there in the eyes and ears of all who had the damn sense to be paying attention.

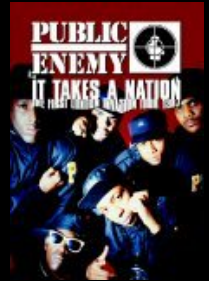
I wasn't one, I was too busy worryin' bout the impending

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onslaught of puberty, but ain't no harm in showin up late, so long as the party was worth the bother.

This right here is hip-hop, but it's also pure, raging Punk Fuckin Rock.

It's fair to say the video quality on the DVD's Main Feature ain't exactly wonderful, obviously taken from a VHS source. It's fair to say the sound ain't the best sound you ever heard. It's fair to say none of that matters a newscaster's wank.

What this presents to a fella's ignorant hide, is the sights and sounds of a band, an *incredible* band, showing up in the UK and blowing the molten fuck out the place.

The second the feature kicked off, with that air-raid siren, with the Security Of The First World marching round the stage with their camouflage and their UZI's, the second "London, England" was instructed to "Make some fuckin' noise!", some kind of flaming drill-bit pierced me at the arse-bone and blazed a trail along my spine, eventually penetrating the back of my skull and causing no enda motherfucking ruckus in the brain-sauce.

This shit is just astonishing, is what it is.

Over the course of the sixty minute feature, we get to see plenty of Public Enemy off-stage, too; Doin' the rounds with journalists, doing some wandering around the Hilton Hotel where they were staying, doing plenty explaining of the ethos and the ideals, plenty talk of the work Public Enemy were involved in aside from showing up and knocking folks lungs out with some of the most incendiary hip-hop known to humanity.

The interview snippets are fantastic, stuff like Chuck D discussing the "third-world countries" ("The first men were Africans, Africa is a *first-world* country"), the position of the black male in America and all sorts of ideological and sociological concerns with various, it must be said, rather patronizing English journalists. Even if a fella finds it hard to get behind everything Chuck D has spouted in his time (his views on homosexuality in particular can't help but cause a bit of the head-shaking and sighing), a fella could listen to him all night, an articulate, intelligent, radical-minded visionary of some kind, and holy mother of fuck, when he starts spittin' rhymes from the stage, it's all a fella can do to keep from dropping to his knees and gazing slack-jawed at the screen.

Needless to say, the Chuck D commentary is fantastic.

The uninterrupted concert is included on the disc, too, free of the back-stage banter and press jaunts and so on. There's also some stuff taken from a 2003 show in Australia. I don't know if it's appropriate to refer to such material as "Extras", since they're pretty much essential viewing.

Chuck D yacks on the commentary about how this is the first in a series of Public Enemy DVD's, and talks of an upcoming special edition of the album itself featuring a load more footage from the period.

Till then, this shit here is more than enough to keep a man engrossed.

In addition, this package contains a bonus audio CD with the concert from the DVD (with, sadly, fairly shoddy sound quality), plus a few extra remixes of Nation Of Millions... album tracks, and a sneak peak at some forthcoming material, which sounds fucking great, I might add.

The simple facts of the case are something along the lines of this shit here;

If you dig Public Enemy, if you can't help but holler from the motherfucking rooftops every time My Uzi Weighs A Ton pops into your head, then there ain't a reason in the world to ignore this release. The audio / visual quality is ropey, but the sight of the SLW marching round with those shades and those berets as Terminator X tears the fuck out some helpless 12", with Flava Flav and Chuck D bouncing rhymes off of one another, the majesty of that tomfoolery makes up for any amount of technical limitations.

Bring the motherfucking noise, is all a fella can hope to ask.

Thank you, Kirsten. You bring my noise, is the truth of it all.

Thanks folks.

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