



**PUBLIC ENEMY**

**It Takes A Nation: The First London Invasion 1987**

Sometimes as a writer I have to face facts, and as an older writer, one of these is the lack of education many young hip-hop fans suffer from in this 21st Century rap environment. Young people: you know the name Chuck D. You know the name Public Enemy. Thanks to reality television and the whores at that network, you definitely know the name Flavor Flav. But do you really know what all the hype behind these names is about? In the mid-80s, the name Public Enemy signified a change in rap music launched by Chuck D's remarkably eloquent methods of hitting you with political and social issues while you were standing there trying to keep your head from bobbing off. He did it so well that white kids (like me) forgot they were part of the problem and thirsted for the social revolution Chuck was speaking on. There was no way more effective than a live show for Public Enemy to hook you for life. I first saw PE perform in Atlanta in 1990. We were hyped to see this legendary stage show we had been hearing about for so long. We were six heads deep in my man Fat Boy's '64 Plymouth Fury. Everybody with an 8-ball on their back was in the house – me, Adam, Slack, Fat Boy, and the rest of the crew at that time. We knew we were hard as muthafuckas, rolling down Boulevard slow and gangsta-like, talking all that "last to fall" mess we used to talk. Chuck took the stage and announced, "This is the last stop on this tour, it might not be the best PE show you've seen, but it will be the longest." It was both. This was Public Enemy's heyday as a crew. On the stage was Chuck, Flav, Professor Griff and Terminator X behind the turntables. They were flanked on both sides by six S1W's (Security of the 1st World). PE was not only a group, not only a family, but a strictly disciplined crew. The S1W was not just a stage prop or a PE's equivalent to a dancer. They provided security for the crew. As well-trained security personnel who took full advantage of an American's right to bear arms, they were a sobering force. On stage, the S1Ws executed choreographed march formations, defensive moves and serious salutes. Until you have seen the whole thing go down live, it's impossible to understand the power this group brought to an arena.

In 1987, Def Jam took their rap to the shores of Europe and the UK, with Public Enemy rocking shows to huge crowds. This DVD features the entire London show, along with never seen in the U.S. interviews and commentary from Flav, ChuckD, and Professor Griff. While you can still bring that beat back, you can never recreate the social environment of the 1980s and the ripple effect that PE caused from Strong Island to the entire world. Watch this documentary piece end to end and you will be a step closer to understanding why, no matter who is talking trash about who, you never hear the name Chuck D or Public Enemy on the receiving end of even the weakest diss. Public Enemy stands in history as a rock that formed the foundation of a rap movement that has, to this day, yet to reach its full potential.

*Public Enemy's It Takes A Nation is available on DVD now from MVD.*

**FREESTYLE: THE ART OF RHYME**

Swirl Films

We're gonna leave the debate over the definition of "freestyle" alone. For the purposes of this film, we are talking about off the dome, straight from the onion, improvisational rhyming. Freestyle features some crazy rare pieces of footage. Director Kevin Fitzgerald (aka DJ Organic) spent the better part of 10 years assembling this impressive collection of footage. While there have been a handful of documentaries about the art of rhyme, to my knowledge, there has never been a collection quite like this. Take the rare interview with Kool Herc, recorded as he rolls through the neighborhood in his white Pontiac drop top. There is extensive footage of Supernatural and tons of interviews. Equal time is granted to Juice. A point of interest with this film is its decidedly West Coast angle, with mad Bay area cats getting shine. While the practice of freestyling may have been an east coast creation, it's more alive in Cali at this point than New York. There's a section of the film called "360" which focuses on DJs that seemed a little superfluous to a discussion of freestyling and battling, followed by a comparison of breakdancing and freestyle. Bobbito (identified as "radio DJ") makes the link valid, but it's loose. Interviews with The Last Poets really get into the ethereal end of rhyming off the top, and these cats can shed some light on the subject for you. Another high note is the refreshing (and simultaneously depressing) footage of Mos Def in his Black Star days. You've heard the audio, but check the full video of the Supernatural vs. Crag G battle that happened in '94 at the New Music Seminar. Check the Biggie footage shot in front of a bodega in Bedstuy – he's 17 years old and eating Mcs on the street up. Props are passed out to a lot of movements, rappers and crews that are just today making it into the rap record books as being influential, movements like Lyricist's Lounge and "The Wake Up Show".

With everybody from Kool Moe Dee to Pack FM getting a minute in the spotlight, Freestyle is more than worth checking. There is more exclusive interview and otherwise rare footage collected here than you will find in most collections. Honestly, you should buy this DVD just to see Supernatural rip Juice at his own show, now that is some real battling, the real art of freestyle.

*Check Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme out now on DVD from Palm Pictures.*

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