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Chuck D of Public Enemy
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By [Greg Prato](#)

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Despite offering up some of hip-hop's greatest anthems – "Fight the Power," "Bring the Noise," "You're Gonna Get Yours," etc. – surprisingly, [Public Enemy](#) never scored a true hit single in the United States. But England is another story, as they've logged quite a few legitimate hits there throughout their career. And PE have just obtained their highest-ever charting single overseas, "Harder Than You Think," which has reached number 4 on the latest chart.

As many artists are doing nowadays, Public Enemy completely bypassed radio – the song (originally released in 2007) was featured in an advertisement for the Channel Four "Meet the Superhumans" campaign for the 2012 Paralympics, which began airing throughout the U.K. in July.

"The music supervisor thought it would be a perfect fit," Chuck D tells *Rolling Stone*. "In the midst of releasing a new album, a lot of people also thought it was a brand new cut, because we had one of our songs exposed – which really makes you look at, like, if these exposure areas would expose more artists and better songs, then these reactions would be natural, instead of a company that just hogs up the air, forcing a lot of meaningless songs down people's ears.

"If they played 'Harder Than You Think' on urban radio two times a day, three times a day, it would probably do the same thing here," he adds. "And the thing about the U.K., they blasted it through television. So that shows the power of being able to have opportunity on major media – even more so than the strength of the song."

Lyrically, the song is a well-deserved pat on the back for Public Enemy's longevity. "The song was basically saying we're the Rolling Stones of the rap game. We're 'rolling stones' – we go around the world, over and over again. It's really a point back to the Muddy Waters song ['Rollin' Stone'], as opposed to just the group . . . although I don't know if I'm Keith or Mick or Flavor [Flav] is Keith or Mick. We probably switch and flip them.

"But 25 years' longevity for a rap group is uncanny, unprecedented, and you can make the statement that *Rolling Stone* and all these magazines don't speak enough about the longevity of black groups – especially a black rap group like Public Enemy, who has 84 tours in 83 countries under its belt. The song speaks to that. The song was basically celebrating the 20 years of Public Enemy in 2007, and now it just seems to be a better fit – 25 years, our silver anniversary."

Public Enemy's 12th studio album overall, *The Evil Empire of Everything*, will drop on October 1st as an iTunes-only download, before being released on CD and vinyl two weeks later. On September 11th, the group is offering a special track, "Everything," to fans who pre-order the album.

The new song, says Chuck, is "very different – the most riveting song that Public Enemy has ever made. The artwork is going to be done by a good brother I know, who has muscular dystrophy. He doesn't have the use of his hands or his feet, but he's going to do the cover of 'Everything.' The song talks about those people that think that they have it all might not have anything. And those people that feel like they don't have anything might have it all if they look at themselves. It has nothing to do with material things."

Besides the release of *Empire*, the rapper's main focus these days is his music distribution company, [SpitDigital](#), which he co-formed with producer Gary G-Wiz.

"SpitDigital is our main thing. It's the first urban-centered digital application system. We provide artists with label tools, and some of the people that we're talking to now are Erick Sermon, Grandmaster Flash, Marley Marl, Christopher Martin from Kid 'n Play. We're showing them all digital labels. And we've been accepted by iTunes, Amazon, Rhapsody and eMusic. That's the biggest thing that I'm involved in – we want to have a One Million Label March in 2013, of digital artists."

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