

Ents&Tech music reviews

Still fighting the power

Twenty-five years in rap is a significant achievement; to still be dealing knockout blows is remarkable. Public Enemy, the combative Long Island crew who arrived in 1987, have this summer achieved their highest charting single (Paralympics theme *Harder Than You Think*), been nominated for the Rock'n'Roll Hall Of Fame and have continued to buck convention by releasing two albums simultaneously. Not bad for a bunch who, as frontman Chuck D says, occupy the 'senior circuit'.

PE gratifyingly keep to the 'ain't broke' formula that has served them so well. Production builds a frenetic momentum of rock/metal riffs, DJ Lord's stabbing cuts and scratches and sinuously funky hooks (although there's unexpected experimentation on *The Evil Empire Of Everything*). They are enthusiastically self-referential: the title of *Most Of My Heroes...* paraphrases the well-known *Fight The Power* line. Guests are fellow old-school names – Bumpy Knuckles; DMC – and young disciples, such as Brother Ali.

Lyrically, Chuck is on bellicose form, with tough words about the situation for the poor and minorities in the US, and the



THE BIG RELEASE PUBLIC ENEMY MOST OF MY HEROES STILL DON'T APPEAR ON NO STAMP/THE EVIL EMPIRE OF EVERYTHING Enemy Records/Wienerworld ★★★★★☆



power monopoly of the 'one per cent'. He's been saying this for a quarter of a century – but it seems even more on point than ever. Standout *Catch The Thrown*, meanwhile, is a blazing attack on *Watch The Throne's* flaunting of obscene wealth when 'people are bleeding from the greed'.

And Flavor Flav is... well... just Flavor, hitting the hypeman mark better than he carries his own numbers.

Not everything works: amid tracks such as *I Shall Not Be Moved* and *Get It In*, there's less captivating fare, for example *Broke Diva* and *Fassfood*. But, overall, these albums show PE remain heavyweight champs.

Siobhan Murphy