

Public Enemy raps Dartmouth



by Simon Kennedy

Public Enemy is a rap group of contradictions: they talk like B-boys but are university educated; they sing of racism's evils but are accused of being racist themselves, they're black militants relying on white fan support. Last Sunday's concert at the Dartmouth Sportsplex is a case in point.

The concert was long — from 7:30 pm to midnight — but Public Enemy's set lasted less than an hour. The controversial group, comprised of rappers Chuck D and Flavor Flav, DJ Terminator X, Professor Griff and the band's bodyguards, the S1Ws, had trouble with a flight from England and arrived two hours late.

Lead rapper Chuck has a reputation for marketing genius, but Sunday's show had the organization of a flea market. From the moment the gates opened, it was clear arena officials hadn't the slightest idea how to run a concert: ushers didn't enforce seating, no one knew if T-shirts were being sold, the sound system was bad, and there was almost no

security.

For the 1200 ticket-holders, it was a depressing situation. Opening acts MC J & Cool G and Down By Law did their best to entertain the crowd, but as the night wore on, patience grew thin. When a MuchMusic host, on hand to tape the concert, announced Public Enemy would be late, she was greeted with a rousing "kill the messenger."

By 10:30 pm it seemed obvious the night was a write-off. Public Enemy hadn't shown up yet, and upon arriving they'd likely be jet-lagged and forced to rap in a half-empty stadium of angry fans.

But the group stayed true to their reputation for contradiction, and gave a far better performance than such a pathetic turnout warranted. They even debuted a soon-to-be-released single, "Welcome to the Terror Dome," dedicating it to the fans of Halifax/Dartmouth. Their enthusiasm was incredible: at concert's end Flavor Flav had to be dragged off stage, as he screamed "let's do just one more song."

Their choice of songs was equally surprising. "Public Enemy No. 1," the jam that made them famous, was absent, as was the rest of the work from their first album, *Yo! Bum Rush The Show*. Almost all songs performed were from their more political *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*.

"Fuck him (Elvis) and that wrinkly-faced horse-ridin' motherfucker, John Wayne,"

And the concert was definitely political. Public Enemy repeatedly hurled abuse at the media, whom they blame for accusations that the group is anti-Semitic, and called the United States "one big prison." The group even interrupted their song "Fight the Power" to discuss American idols Elvis Presley and John Wayne.

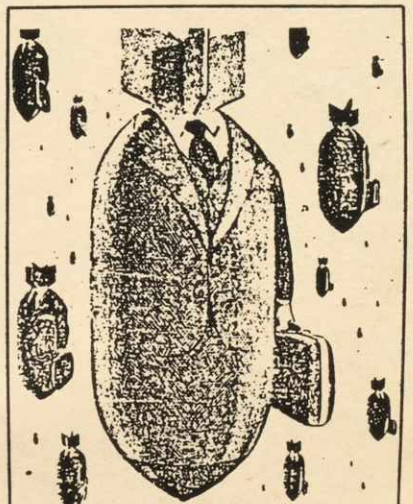
"Fuck him (Elvis) and that wrinkly-faced, boot wearin', horse-ridin' motherfucker, John Wayne," said Flavor.

But despite their militancy, the overall message was of peace, and they urged the audience to live together as brothers and sisters. At the request of the group, the once-tense audience raised their arms and formed peace symbols with their fingers.



Never ones to miss an educational opportunity, Public Enemy also asked the crowd to stay away from drugs and to stop watching television. Their advice accompanied two favourite songs, "Night of the Living Baseheads" and "She Watch Channel Zero."

By show's end, Public Enemy had managed to turn a concert disaster into a dope jam, bring together peacefully hundreds of young blacks and whites (a depressingly rare event in Metro), and dispel any myths they are hate-mongers. Let's hope they rap for years to come.



NUCLEAR WAR BALLOT
 YES Let's have a nuclear war.
 I'm sick of waiting.
 NO I'd rather wait a little longer.
You only have one vote.

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