

## Give Hip Hop Credit for Anti-War Songs

Written by Davey D ID2971

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The other night ABC News did a special report on the growing popularity of anti-war protest songs. The report focused on how all these musicians were now coming out and providing a sound track to the growing discontent many of us are having with the war in Iraq. It talked about how people are more accepting of such songs and how major record labels were loosening up in the aftermath of the Dixie Chicks who got lambasted and later boycotted for speaking out against George Bush and his policies in 2003.

The report also brought to light the impact anti-war songs had on fueling the Anti-war movement against Vietnam in the late 60s and the question was raised as to what sort of impact today's rash of songs would have.

I can't remember all the singers they profiled, but I did recall seeing country singer Merle Haggard, Rock-N-Roll icon Bruce Springsteen and pop sensation Pink. What surprised me was not seeing any mention of Hip Hop especially with the exception of KRS-One, since it was artists in the rap community that up to date have released more anti-war songs and were the first to unabashedly do so right after 9-11.

If we take a short walk down memory lane, folks may recall that the day after 9-11 Bay Area Hip Hop activists from organizations like Lets Get Free, The Ella Baker Center and Minds Eye Collective put together a rally that was held in Snow Park in Oakland. Close to 500 people attended this event which focused on the loss of human life and questioned the foreign policy missteps of the Bush administration. It was at this rally that many of us heard our last poem from the late June Jordan.

We also heard an incredible song from Michael Franti & Spearhead calling for healing and peace. A couple of months later, Franti appeared on Conan O'Brien and performed the anti-war song Bomb the World to Pieces only to find that his sentiments angered producers who threatened to censor the song when the show aired. Community outrage led to O'Brien's people eventually showing the performance.

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Early on we heard anti-war songs from acts like the Beastie Boys (World Gone Mad), Nas (Rule), Wu-Tang Affiliates Known Associates (World So Cold), Talib Kweli (the Proud), J-Live (Satisfied) and Mr Lif (home of the Brave). Of course we also have numerous joints from Immortal Technique including "The Poverty of Philosophy". All in all there are more than 150 anti-war songs that have been recorded by Hip Hop artists.

The song that really made heads turn was by Bay Area artist Paris who came out of retirement and released a 6 minute missive called What Would You Do? that went into great detail about The Carlyle Group, Bushs relationship to the Bin Laden family and the hawkish action plans of the Neo-cons serving in Bushs cabinet. Paris gave the song away for free and then followed it up with an entire antiwar album called Sonic Jihad which went on to sell over 200 thousand units.

Another stand out effort came from San Francisco based Freedom Fighter records who released the first anti-war compilation featuring Bay Area artists called War Times Report From the Opposition. A year later LA based Hard Knock Records followed up with a critically acclaimed anti-war compilation called What About Us.

The most visible anti-war effort to date came from former San Jose resident Fredwreck who has produced tracks from everyone ranging from Eminem to Snoop Dogg and Ice Cubeto name a few. Using the name STOP Movement he gathered up a number of popular artists including Mobb Deep, WC of the Westside Connection, Daz of the Dogg Pound, RBX, Defari, Soopafly, Cypress Hill, Mack 10, KRS-One and Dilated Peoples just to name a few and released two anti-war songs called Down With Us and Dear Mr. President.

Fredwreck like Paris gave away the songs for free and even held a press conference only to find local commercial stations would not touch the record in spite of the big name artists he had assembled. In fact sources inside one popular station in LA, KKBT, noted that their deejays were instructed not to play those songs because they were too controversial. Whats even more ironic was Fred was supposed to be profiled in the ABC story. He was flown to NY but not shown in the report that I saw.

The other irony was after ABC aired the report one of the anchors decided to comment and naively noted that she never heard any of the songs from the artists they profiled on the radio therefore they must not be hits. We could do an entire column on what goes on behind the scenes and what it really takes to get records on the commercial airwaves, but suffice to say if

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what happened to Fredwreck is any indication of how key power brokers at radio get down, then of course we would not hear any of these songs on radio. However, it does not mean those songs or those artists are not popular or that people are not appreciative of their songs.