

Hip Hop is ALIVE and WELL

Written by Davey D ID3174

Friday, 15 December 2006 07:49 -

“No Disrespect to Nas, but somebody tell that man that Hip Hop is alive and well”. That was the sound advice given by Brother J of X-Clan from the stage of the packed out Mezzanine Nightclub in San Francisco the other night. The crowd roared with approval as Brother J sans his mentor the late Professor X and his best friend the late Sugar Shaft carried on the legacy of one of Hip Hop’s all-time greatest groups. The audience was assaulted with song after song and hit after hit –from ‘Grand Verbalizer’ to ‘Ways of the Scales’ to his new hit ‘Weapons X’. It was a moment to behold as the audience was brought to fevered pitch by 10:30 that night and Public Enemy had not even touched the stage. Brother J and X-Clan were on fire.

As you looked around the crowd you saw an accurate reflection of the Hip Hop community. You saw folks ranging from their early 20s to well onto their 40s. Believe it or not I saw a few folks in attendance with their adult kids. I saw a lot of women. I saw b-boy and b-girls, thugs, squares, cultural activists, academics, Nation of Islam members, revolutionary types, former Panthers, Hippies types, whites, Latinos, Asians, professional types and lots of women.

Some came for the political message the groups offered. Others came because they yearned to see and reconnect to the hey day Hip Hop’s famed Golden Era of the late 80s and early 90s. Others came because they like the new material put out by both acts over the past couple of years. A whole lot of folks came to see the TV phenom we call Flava Flav.

When he stepped on the stage that night in the middle of ‘Welcome to the Terrordome’ the crowd erupted and an already amped up crowd took it up a notch. In spite of the controversy Flav has caused with the VH1 TV show, and fellow band members like Professor Griff speaking out, what was clear was that once on stage, every member absolutely needed to be there. There was no denying the chemistry and more importantly the friendship and love they all have for one another and for their people. This was especially telling when Griff and Flav were on stage as the two clearly showed that despite the differences they have genuine love and support for one another.

You felt secure seeing Professor Griff and the martial arts trained S1Ws holding it down. Griff also doubled as band leader which included stellar musicians like his step son Kyle and longtime legend Brian Hargroove on bass. We also want to offer our heartfelt condolences to Griff who lost his sister to cancer jus two days before. In spite of the loss he brought his love and charisma to the stage and it was felt. You felt at home watching the long-time camaraderie of Chuck D and Flav as they went to and delivered a non stop energized 3 hour show that will go down in the history books. It was Hip Hop at it’s best. And so in many respects while Nas

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has a point in the fact that corporate media has ruined a lot of the music, it was more than apparent that they could not kill off the culture. There was no denying the infectious vibe that PE and X-Clan brought to the stage.

Earlier that day, I along with my radio listeners in the Bay Area, Atlanta, Portland, Fresno, Sacramento, Seattle, Anchorage and all around the world via satellite and internet got a chance to experience that vibe with a historic meeting of the minds. For the first time in their long histories Chuck D and Brother J did an interview together. We had an in depth, memorable conversation about everything under the sun ranging from Hip Hop and politics to the art of emceeing to the anniversary of Crip co-founder Stanley Tookie Williams' execution at San Quentin in part 1.

In part 2 we continued our discussion touching on topics like; Cointel-pro and the character assassination many Golden era political groups suffered. We talked about Hip Hop around the world and how the US is perceived. We talked about how Hip Hop went from being a subversive-secret code based communication that inspired and liberated people to one that came to be an extension of the dope game. We also talked about this insistence by forces outside the Black community to keep labeling Hip Hop as young people's music. Lastly we talked about the importance of valuing our history.

We talked about the significance of these two legendary groups touring together for the first time and why it never happened during Hip Hop's Golden era in the late 80s a/early 90s when both acts were arguably in their prime. Chuck D explained that there was never any rivalry or funk between X-Clan and PE despite their slightly different political approaches and philosophy. PE was influenced by the Black Panthers and were rooted within the Nation of Islam, while X-Clan were rooted in Black nationalist philosophies of the Blackwatch Movement headed by the late Sonny Carson.

Chuck D noted that by the time X-Clan hit the scene PE had already started touring outside the US and that the two groups simply weren't on the same page in terms of being able to hook up a tour. However both him and Brother J spoke to the importance of groups and people within the Black freedom struggle being able to come together and work for a common goal. The sense of history behind a Public Enemy and X-Clan tour was not lost on either man.

Adding to this importance was the fact that although absent from the tour, Brother J and KRS-One who once traded barbs over records around their political outlooks had buried the

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hatchet and become good friends. In fact some of KRS's Temple of Hip Hop members are on tour with Brother J included KRS's road manager Non-Stop who is serving as tour manager for Brother J.

In this particular segment we focused on how X-Clan and KRS-One deaded their once storied rivalry which centered on Black Nationalism vs. Humanism. It was interesting to note that Brother J was touring with several members of KRS's Temple of Hip Hop. He went into detail as to how that came about and how important it was for folks to know that the pair get along. It was the first time that Brother J had publicly addressed the issue. Also on the new X-Clan album 'Return to Mecca', he and KRS did a song together called 'Speak the Truth'.

We spoke with Chuck D about the art of emceeing. He explained how Brother J made him step his rhyme game up in a major way and that he was blown away by J's clarity and precision. Brother J noted that he came out of a Brooklyn based tradition which was personified by artists like Big Daddy Kane and the late ODB. J explained that for years he was a battle emcee who basically refocused his energy into political topics. Lastly in this segment we spoke about Black leadership and the anniversary of Stanley Tookie Williams. Both J and Chuck spoke about how we spend a lot of time and energy focusing on issues of mass distraction like the 50 Cent vs. Oprah and the Michael Richards calling Black people 'nigger' at a comedy club. Chuck noted that it goes beyond name calling and into the types of treatment we receive at the hands of people who don't care about us including the recent police killing of Sean Bell.

Also of note is Brother J's take on Nas doing a song addressing the police shooting. He challenged him and others to be more consistent with their activism and not leave people confused by doing songs like 'Ochie Wally' that seemingly undermine their credibilty as being conscious.

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