

Legendary Hip Hop Group Public Enemy to be Honored

Written by Robert ID2986

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Legendary hip hop group Public Enemy, lead by rap artist and hip hop political activist Chuck D, will be honored with the Hip-Hop Founders Award at the Billboard R&B Hip-Hop Awards show, taking place on September 8th in Atlanta's Renaissance Waverly Hotel - "Live".

This award honors the legacy of pioneering artists in the hip-hop genre whose influence has impacted today's hip-hop music. Past winners include hip hop artists KRS-One and A Tribe Called Quest.

Public Enemy, which includes Flavor Flav, Chuck D, Terminator X, and Professor Griff, changed the face of hip-hop in the early '80s with its radical brand of socially relevant music. By shedding light on controversial issues within the black community and beyond—from police brutality to poverty to the country's lacking education system—the group helped add a much needed social awareness to hip-hop and paved the way for other such politically minded rappers as N.W.A and Nas. Public Enemy achieved much of its success with an intensive mix of hardcore beats (helmed by its production team the Bomb Squad) and insightful lyrics. Chuck D's commanding rhymes were complemented by Flav's outrageous antics, exhibited primarily in his eccentric, colorful sense of style.

Born Carlton Ridenhour in Long Island, N.Y., 46-year-old Chuck D formed Public Enemy in 1982 while studying graphic design at New York's Adelphi University and DJ-ing at the student radio station WBAU. There, he met fellow hip hop fanatics Bill Stephney and Hank Shocklee, and ended up rapping on the song "Public Enemy No. 1," which was featured on one of Shocklee's demo tapes. After hearing the record, Def Jam co-founder and producer Rick Rubin pegged Chuck D for his nascent label, and the group was then officially formed with DJ Terminator X, Professor Griff, and longtime friend William Drayton, a.k.a. Flavor Flav Shocklee. Bill Stephney acted as the group's publicist.

In 1987, Public Enemy released its debut album "Yo! Bum Rush the Show," which was protest music in the highest sense. The group then released its pivotal 1988 album, "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back." This stand-out disc not only hoisted Public Enemy onto the national stage but attracted a sea of dissent. Even so, critical singles like "Bring the Noise," "Fight the Power" and "Don't Believe the Hype," voiced the concerns of many while advocating change. After Griff exited the group, Public Enemy continued its dominance with the release of "Fear of a Black Planet" (1990) and "Apocalypse '91 . . . The Enemy Strikes Black" (1991), which bowed at No. 4 on The Billboard 200 chart.

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In 1995, Chuck D retired Public Enemy from touring and founded his own record label and publishing company. The next year, he released his solo debut, "The Autobiography of Mistachuck" (Mercury), and published his autobiography in 1997. The members later regrouped to helm the 1998 soundtrack to Spike Lee's film "He Got Game," and in 2005 issued "New Whirl Odor."

With two decades of experience and 11 albums under its belt, Public Enemy is still impacting pop culture today. Earlier this year, the group released "Rebirth of a Nation" via Guerilla Funk, and in August, Koch issued the remix collection "Bring That Beat Back." Meanwhile, Flavor Flav's reality dating series "Flavor of Love" remains popular in its second season on VH1, and Chuck D continues to raise his voice through his books, lectures, record label, and his hip hop web portal, www.rapstation.com.

"Public Enemy's activism coupled with the continued cultural significance of its music, made this group the obvious choice for this year's Hip Hop Founders Award," says Gail Mitchell, Billboard's senior R&B/hip-hop editor. "Public Enemy is still a crucial player in the hip-hop industry, and we're thrilled to be honoring them at our awards show."

The Billboard R&B Hip-Hop Awards will cap off the 7th annual R&B Hip-Hop Conference, which is taking place from September 6-8 at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel in Atlanta. This 3-day event brings together music professionals that help to create, produce, promote and distribute this exciting genre of music. The conference will be packed with panels keyed to current issues and trends in the R&B/hip-hop industry, workshops, artist showcases, savvy speakers, networking opportunities, and an exclusive Q&A keynote session with hip hop genius Ludacris.

Billboard R&B/Hip-Hop Conference - September 6-8, 2006 at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia.

For more information on the Billboard R&B Hip-Hop Conference & Awards, visit www.billboard.com/events.com