

Hello Mike?

"Hey."

Can you hear me?

"Yup. Hey."

OK. I wanted to ask about the punk boom. It seems like punk is making a comeback these days. You know, Fugazi have become huge, Green Day is charting, Bad Religion is on a major label and charting. Why do you think that punk has made this kind of resurgence now?

"I figure the music that's coming from the heart will eventually reach the people. It's hard to say — a lot of times it baffles me as well [laughs]. It's really weird. You know we put out that *Some Old Bullshit* compilation? And we had no idea of it entering the charts when we put it out, the idea was to just make it available. It's like a totally weird thing, it's not like it's a current record at all — it's a hardcore record we made years ago. It entered the charts and that kinda freaked us out."

Okay, an obvious but difficult question — you guys are white, Jewish and you're playing music mostly associated with blacks. And in this arena you have people like Public Enemy's Professor Griff (quoted as saying "the majority of wickedness that goes on across the globe" is caused by Jews) and Farrakhan (controversial head of the Nation of Islam) making their stands, industry people like Tommy Silverman (white, Jewish founder of hip-hop label Tommy Boy) and Jerry Heller (white, Jewish manager of Eazy E) being verbally assaulted, mostly over being white and Jewish. And we have white rappers like Vanilla Ice and Marky Mark who, while they try very hard to be down with black people, are like punching bags for critics. This never seems to be an issue for you guys — how do you pull that off?

"Um ... I don't know actually [laughs]. I mean we got into doing hip-hop, listening to hip-hop, performing hip-hop, really at a point in the history of hip-hop — early on — when it was inconceivable that there were gonna be any white people in hip-hop. And then when we put out our first hip-hop singles — say like 'Hold It Now', 'Paul Revere', 'New Style' — some of the hip-hop community were into it kinda before anybody new who we were. We would get up in these clubs and people would almost look at us like we were from Mars. The new generation, the kids that come along, I'll meet some of them and I'll be a fan of their record and they'll be like 'No man, I grew up listening to your shit'."

Your first album (*Licence To Ill*) was massive, yet it brought on friction between Beastie Boys and Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin. Then after you guys became big with that record you stopped playing 'Fight For Your Right', which was your big hit. It seems that you tried to distance yourself in some ways. Looking back on it now how do you feel about that first record now?

"Well, I think in terms of the record itself, we're still real proud of it. A lot of the music is pretty amazing. And it's definitely what we wanted to make at the time. So, that's all a record can be. The bad stuff is more like moments that happened around the record as opposed to being on the record."

Your second album was considered disappointing sales-wise when it came out, but unlike most rap records, it sells well years later. How do you feel about that record now?

"We're real proud of that record in a lot of ways and a lot of people still seem to be getting into it. We made a very different record ... we were into the record we made, so I don't know if it was such a bad thing that happened in terms of not selling as much."

Right now in rap music the 'gangsta' thing is huge, how do you feel about that? Is it all about people tellin' it like it is or is it just a marketing manoeuvre?

"Well, I'm real hesitant to comment on the categories of music 'cause in a lot of ways that's misleading. A lot of rap groups are doing a lot of very different stuff, all these independent things and a lot of people try to lump it all together, kinda address it as one group."

At the moment it seems that to be a mass murderer is something to aspire to.

"To me that's the whole negative thing about 'gangsta rap'. There are records that are very articulate, quality, from-the-heart records. There are records that are just emulating those records, diluted forms. But people will always eventually tell if it's fake."

About your new album — you guys have always mixed things up quite a lot, but the new album seems really diverse: you have hip-hop and punk and jazz and dub. How do you guys usually go about building your tracks?

"I don't know ... all different ways. A lot of the stuff is from New York and then we did a lot of it here in our studio in LA. So sometimes we'll get together and start doing a groove and Mario, our engineer, [is] on the multi-track, and we'll just jam. Or sometimes we'll take old tapes of stuff that we'd been

we got into doing hip-hop, when it was inconceivable that there were gonna be any white people in hip-hop.

recording and we'll go through them and find really cool moments ..."

Do you mostly work off samples or do you play? How do you go about it?

"Well, a lot of stuff we did completely live. And there's a lot of stuff that we sample, or stuff that we played live where we're sampling ourselves."

With the large variety of stuff you have on your record I get the impression that you must have a huge record collection.

"We're all vinyl collectors. We're all like, fiends."

How many records do you think you have?

"Last time I checked like ... over 3000 and that was more than two years ago. It has to be at least four by now."

The title of your new album is *Ill Communication* — where did that come from?

"Well, we just took it from that line where we're freestylin' with Q-Tip, where it goes 'Ma Bell we got the ill communication'."

So Q-Tip is on your record. Do you have any other guests on the record?

"Biz Markee. Also, Keyboard Money Mark and Eric Bobo who are both regularly in our band. And DJ Hurricane who's also a regular with us but now has his own record."

I listened to the record and my favourite tracks are 'Root Down', 'Sabotage', 'Sure Shot' and 'Eugene's Lament'. Are you releasing any of those as singles?

"Yeah, 'Sabotage' and 'Sure Shot'. I like 'Eugene's Lament' ... I don't know if that's gonna be a single though. If it was up to me it would be the only single [laughs]."

Your label, Grand Royal, what are your plans for that from

A lot of rap groups are doing a lot of very different stuff, all these independent things and a lot of people try to lump it all together

here?

"Keep puttin' out stuff that we're into. Like I said we got the Hurricane record finished up. We got Luscious Jackson — we put out that EP. They just finished their album ..."

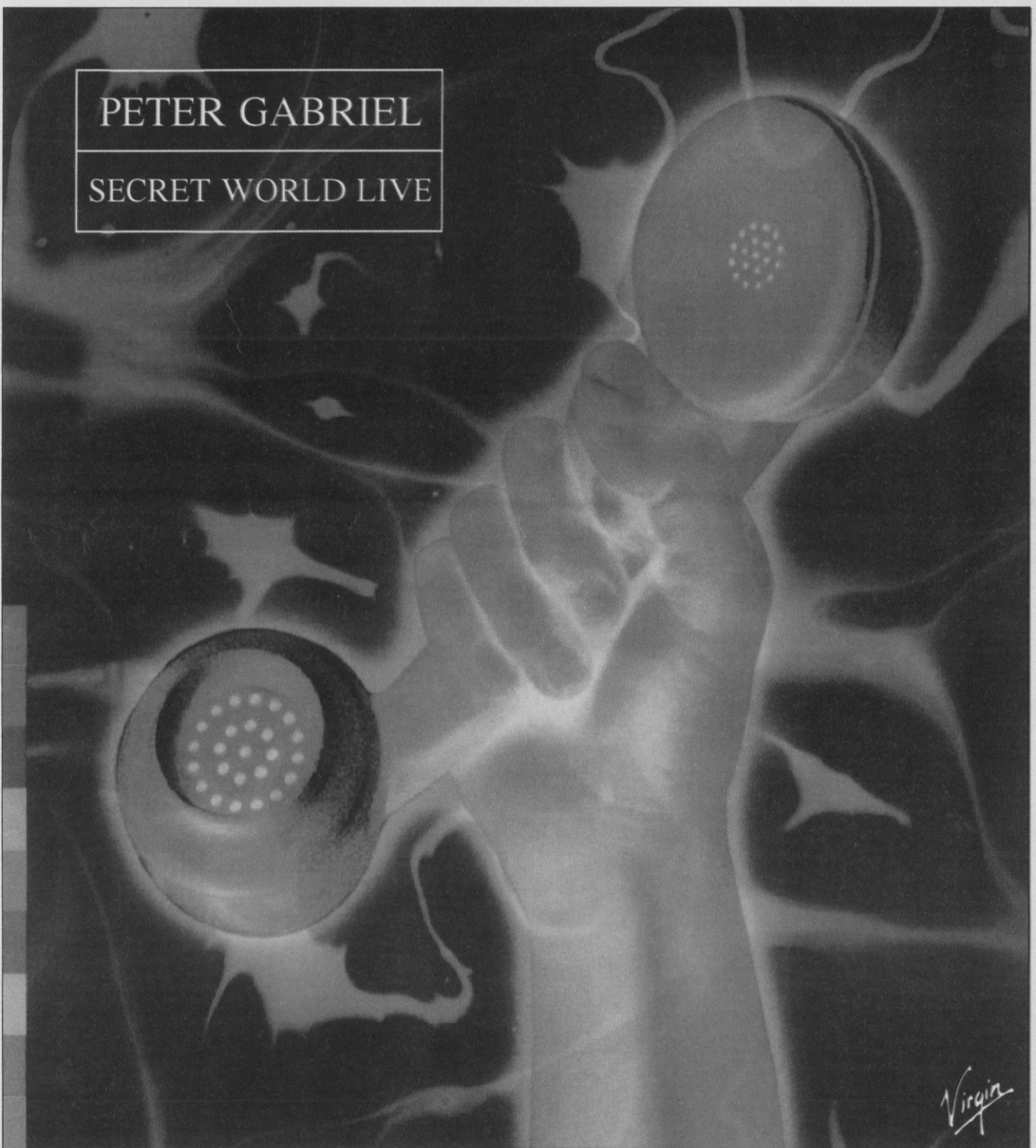
You're also involved with X-tra Large and also X-Girl.

"Yeah well, X-Girl is more Kim Gordon from Sonic Youth and this girl Daisy Von Leuwert who's really responsible. We just help them in manufacturing and distribution."

So, anything else you want to say about the new album?

"I don't know. I think everybody should really give 'Eugene's Lament' a chance!"

KEITH CAHOON



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