

It was a fine record for a bunch of teenagers — brash, extremely loud and even more obnoxious but with a totally solid musical base. The Beasties became the group everyone loved to hate, especially the English media scum who did their best to bring these awful yanks down but only succeeded in playing stupid games with assorted press agents.

After lying low for a while and riding out some serious changes in Def Jam, this supposed one hit act changed labels and shifted sounds in a very serious manner. *Paul's Boutique* took everything beyond its logical extreme. It was brilliant, but far removed from the norm, an incredibly wild and dense album that confused the hell out of everyone. Now they've returned to the scene with *Check Your Head* and it's certainly following in their tradition of outright weirdness and utterly superb music.

Talking with rappers is never easy, they seem to exist completely within their own frame of reference. Maybe it's because they do so much onstage explaining that they seem, with a few notable exceptions, unwilling to talk sense anywhere else. With Mike D, however, this is not a problem. He started out well, then discovered he was going to see a friends' band play that night and any hope of a serious interview went out the window.

We should do this properly, you know, questions and answers and stuff.

"No man, let's just do it like this."

Okay then, tell me something about the new-look Beastie Boys.

"Well, we've been doing freeform, improvisatory dance steps, we've got our own mime troupe."

Interpretative dancing is definitely the future of rap...

"That's what our next tour's going to be. Some people will read poetry, some people will do mime and my man Yauch, suddenly he's going to shoot out of a cannon and play the crazy fuzzi bass. That's when I'll get on the mike."

I saw a photo of you playing real instruments.

"Yeah, that's a real photo too."

No way, I could have sworn it was a composite.

"No, it's real, except my eyebrows. They were added at a later date. I didn't have any."

That's okay. I would feel cheated if you weren't airbrushed. Airbrushing is a very rock thing.



The BEASTIE BOYS have a very unusual place in contemporary music. They evolved from a snott-nosed punk rock band into a snott-nosed punk rap band around the time rap was starting to flex its muscles. Signed to the ridiculously cool and influential Def Jam label, they released *Licensed To Ill* which became a major mainstream album, introducing the masses to this 'new' sound.

BEASTS PER MINUTE

"Yeah, you've got to have eyebrows if you're going to make it in music. Actually, we've been doing that whole jamming thing for a few years now. Like we got here to England, and me and Yauch were in this one club and we were going to this other club to jam and we said to these guys, 'Hey, we're going to jam, you want to come?' They were like 'Jam? With instruments? Nobody does that here anymore.' Then they were like 'What are you going to do, play some soft jazz?' I was like YO! YEEOOH!"

So you're not diggin' the Chick Corea?

"People have called us the new Return To Forever."

Ouch, I'd start worrying when they're talking Spyro Gyra though.

"Oh man, don't bring them into the picture, that's the end right there!"

What about punk rock, does anyone remember you guys as hardcore band Pollywog Stew?

"Yeah, whenever I go into Tower Records in LA there's always this one guy who asks me if we'll play 'Egg Raid On Mojo'. I think we will because of this one kid."

I'd vote for it. I'm still a

sucker for punk rock.

"Yeah, it's cool but we're in England and everyone's acting like 'Oh, it's time for punk again.' They're totally on the dick for the Stooges and shit. It's really funny for us, like, I'm sure you know what I mean, you've probably been into punk forever and this all seems weird."

Serves you right for being in England. What are you doing there? Promotion?

"Yeah, we've played some shows and the album is out. Ummm, I'm not sure. I get confused. I get confused just walking out the door, let alone leaving the United States."

I know that feeling for sure. Who produced the record? Surely you can remember that?

"We did. Well, we did with our engineer Mario Calvado, otherwise known as Mario C. We needed him to help, we'd just be jamming and he'd start the tape. I play some drums, Adam's playing guitar and Yauch is playing bass. We got a keyboard player who plays organ and clarinet and piano. His name is Money Mark. He also goes by the name of Coach. He's also our basketball coach. He's also a master carpenter, we built our studio and he taught us the skills to build."

You built your own studio?

"Yeah, we built it to do the album. There's no way we could spend that long in somebody else's studio."

Does anybody in America use a studio anymore? The Chili Peppers did the same sort of thing...

"Yeah, but they just put a bunch of equipment in a house. We built the thing."

You actually nailed the sucker together?

"Ourselves, man! I'm talking about Mark rocking the screw gun, me rockin' the level and Adam down below finishing the nails. It was real hard work. I got to give Rollins credit man, he's always working hard. He just got done touring back home, then he went down there and now he's here with the Chillis. The man works."

Yeah, he's a tourin' fool, ten or 11 months a year it seems. Get his new record, it's really great.

"Maybe I could go swap a *Check Your Head* with him, I've just got a whole box. I'll send you one for sure."

Great! Have you guys been doing side stuff, like Rollins does the books and the spoken word thing?

"Not really. We've got a record label we're doing called Grand Royale, it's our own label that we'll put some stuff out on around the same time the album comes out. That's been it mostly, although Adam did a movie with John Doe from X."

He's a very awesome guy. What's the film called?

"*Roadside Prophet* It's due out soon."

That's very LA, hanging with stars and being in a movie and shit.

"Yeah, but you know what it's like, you never see that sort of thing. There's not a lot of movie stars taking the bus, they avoid the RTD. Actually, we've got a song on our album that Mark recorded on the bus, actually on

cause people put so much value on sensationalism, they equate a certain amount of success with that profile, you know what I mean? We're really happy not to go through all that."

The Brits seem to be totally taken by a band's image. Some bands sell more T-shirts than albums.

"Yeah, it's strange. In America, dismal as it may be in terms of what gets played on the radio, there's more vibe. The same kid who listens to Jane's Addiction and Rollins will listen to PE and Ice Cube and it's pretty varied, the kids who go to the shows are pretty open minded. But here it's the opposite. In England there's these little defined categories and these kids are only

"I GET CONFUSED JUST WALKING OUT THE DOOR, LET ALONE LEAVING THE UNITED STATES."

a RTD. It's called 'Mark On The Bus'."

I really like the four track album sampler I heard.

"Yeah, you should hear the whole thing though, there's like 20 tracks. I'll definitely send one. What's it like for touring down there?"

Not bad, but we don't get a lot of funky acts. De La Soul was the last one. You definitely should tour.

"We'd like to, we want to get to a whole lot of places and hang with interesting people."

It would be good to see you down this way.

"It's kind of strange to play live, cause we have, like, three albums' worth of stuff to pick from. And now we're playing with a band we can cover other stuff. We're excited about that possibility."

What covers have you looked at?

"So far we've tried a version of 'Take The Money And Run' by the Steve Miller Band but I don't know if we'll stay with that."

You've been low key for a while.

"That's okay though. Now we're doing all this press and we've built the studio we just want to hang out there and not do shit. It's different things for different people. For Rollins it's playing live, for us it's the studio."

Press must be a hassle, you were certainly copping it for a while there.

"It's not so bad now. It's funny being back over here be-

into one thing and nothing else."

How about in the States. Who's the deal?

"There's all these kids in Berkeley who are cool, great music. There's a combination of younger kids like Del the Funkie Homosapien, he's got a group of kids who are all really creative, they're called the Hieroglyphics and they combine a lot of music and at the same time they do the sampling thing. It's cool."

What's on your label?

"There's this band out of New York called Lucious Jackson, they're really cool."

What's the New York scene like at the moment, aside from Helmet and Prong?

"That's pretty much New York. Prong, Helmet and Babes in Toyland. Lots of noise stuff. Lucious Jackson are cool cause they're a band and they're really inventive with sampling."

When that sort of thing succeeds it sounds great.

"The feeling I've been getting from people, a lot of bands are heading in that direction. We've done it on our album, it's what these kids in Berkeley are doing, it's the way of the future, man!"

Mike D certainly isn't kidding. He did send a copy of the album and it was truly great, the psychedelic rap of *Paul's Boutique* collides with some mid-60s Jimmy Smith and a truckload of punk rock. Best of all, the Beasties are no longer playing the 'dumb but cool' game. They're going right to the cool thing this time — so prepare yourself.

KIRK GEE

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