

KNOW YOUR



American rap superstars Public Enemy performed in the Auckland Town Hall last month to a sell-out crowd — due in part to the controversy raised by their support act: rap superstar Ice T. Nick D'Angelo caught up with Chuck D and Flavor Flav the following day, and forgot to get their autograph.

One thing I noticed last night was that both PE and Ice T performed a medley of their hits. I suppose with so many albums under your belt that's the only way to get through them all?

Chuck: "We've only got an hour so let's give the people what they want to hear. They want to hear some hits, they want hear some cuts, maybe some solid statements, maybe blend it in with the total package. If you happen to be the only rap group that's appeared in town that year then you better bring your old joints. We're doing our fifth album now called *Public Enemy's Greatest Misses* with six new cuts, and when you do something new something old has got to go. Can you imagine guys like David Bowie and the Rolling Stones, who've been around 25 years, it would be ridiculous if they played *all* their material ..."

I missed you last time you played NZ but I saw you in the UK in '87 as part of the Def Jam Tour. You were very subdued in your performance — very staunch. Last night I saw you and I thought: My God! This is showbusiness — this is a 'performance' from you two.

Flav: "That was you in the UK? Man, I thought I recognised you! Good to see you again Homey. Word up G."

"I'll tell you man," continues Chuck, "as far as grading a show from 1 to 10, last night was definitely a 5! [laughs]"

Well, actually that's what I heard today from people who saw you here last time. I'm just

comparing you to the UK performance which was very serious.

Flav: "Last time when we came here we were in real full effect. Our energy level was Full Impact then but last night was our first show of the tour and when you're cold you're going to do a cold show. The show was still hitting and we put in all our energy, but still it could've been better. The stage wasn't looking right. Last night we didn't have our backdrop and sometimes I get some power from that backdrop! I look back at that big ol' punk and I go: *Whoah!*"

Chuck: "That's when your professionalism kicks in. You can play it off like you're having a good time. To be honest I'm a little tired of doing the old records. But you have to do them, it's what the people want to hear. When we were here in 1990 we was fresh off *Fear of a Black Planet*. Right now we're on our third tour and I want to get a new record out man. When we do our next tour in the States at Christmas, I'm just going to do those six new joints off the new album with a couple of the old ones and I'm going have a ball doing it."

You had a bit of mic trouble last night, Flav in particular, and you seemed pissed off because when you tried to talk politics the crowd wasn't responding. I think it was because they couldn't hear you.

Chuck: "No, I wasn't pissed off — I couldn't find a subject [laughs]. I wanted to talk about

the Maori people but I wasn't honed in on the subject. When I get to Australia I'll be honed in. Australia's somewhere I really want to hit at. The Aboriginal people ... when I went there before there were so many things that pissed me off. This time they're going to get a bit of dialogue."

It seemed ridiculous to me last night that when you mentioned George Bush everyone booed on cue, yet most of them don't know shit about Bush. Bush has not touched their lives yet as soon as Chuck D says Bush is a bad dude suddenly everyone ...

Flav interjects: "What Chuck is doing is letting the people see his point of view of the reality in the United States."

Chuck: "I didn't feel that street corner vibe of: Yo man we're trying to overthrow this NZ Government cos it's been fucked up since the 1800's. I talked to the Maori people last time I was here and I had a vibe. This time we got into the country late so maybe that had something to do with it. This time I didn't feel that vibe."

You spoke last night about how the US Police motto 'Protect & Serve' means protecting property and how the Black people have no property therefore they get no Police service ...

Chuck laughs: "That's one of the few things I made sense on ..."

You guys have been around, you must have property. I hear Ice T lives in Beverly Hills now — how rich are Public Enemy?

Chuck: Ice T is large, he got his shit together. PE aren't large like that [laughs] I ain't got no property — all I got is my jeans and my jacket!"

Flav: "We aren't rich financially, but we *are* rich. We're

rich from the heart. We're a rich people, and we like to teach the people. As long as you want the best for somebody you're rich."

Chuck: "We're moving on up. We've got a lot of people in our structure and things are intertwining. It's always a struggle to get your business totally straight. People are always trying to snatch yo'money. Always! We've now got a business team, and as of the last two years everything has been airtight and solid. They're making a lot of right and correct moves for us, whereas in the beginning of our career there were people who we later found out were, uh, criminals! There's probably 15-20 people in the Public Enemy structure and it's not just Chuck D and Flav who've got to be correct, it's everyone in the totem pole."

Have you got a Master Plan?

Chuck: "TO RUUUULE THE WORLD!!!" (Everyone laughs and rolls around the floor for 10 minutes clutching their sides with mirth.)

Obviously you're more than just 'entertainers'?

Chuck: "No, you're right. We're adults, we're black men that want to be in control of our destiny and tell people that this wickedness that has come about in the past has not been progressive for all peoples. This world has to be shared. If anything is going to be our goal to rule it's to rule people with the right word. It's beneficial for them to know that this is the only planet that we can live on. The word is love. Love this world you're on, love your fellow man. And that can only come about if you know the real deal. That's the thing that we've been about: do right over wrong."

The common criticism for rap is that it's so sexist. It still

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