

Public Enemy hits Charm City



(Courtesy photo)
Public Enemy will play
tonight at Rams Head Live.

Nancy Dunham, The Examiner
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BALTIMORE -

Chuck D doesn't spend much time talking about Flavor Flav's stint starring in the recent reality series "Flavor of Love" on Vh1.

This is a guy who understands that the whole of the group is more important than its individual parts.

"Flav's part of Public Enemy. We all are," he said. "We are Public Enemy anytime, anywhere. This is the greatest hip-hop show on earth, and I'm not saying that because I'm in it. It's because we're all in it."

Chuck D and the rest of the group have good reason to boast. Their first single, 1987's "Public Enemy #1," was a combination of Chuck D's commanding orations and Flav's antics. Not only did it give the group its name, but it gave a whole new sound to the rap genre — layers upon layers of samples, sirens and general chaos.

The group's second album, "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back," was hailed by Rolling Stone as one of the 50 greatest albums of all time.

"Loud, obnoxious, funky, avant-garde, political, uncompromising, hilarious — Public Enemy's brilliant second album is all of these things and, on nearly every track, all at once," the magazine said.

Almost 20 years later, the group's pace and intensity are the same.

You can feel it in the way Chuck D talks, outlining the group's latest tour, its 20th anniversary CD and his music label SlamJamz.

Then he talks a bit about some of his musical inspirations, including the Temptations, the O'Jays and other great Motown acts as well as some little-known musicians from the 1950s through today. What sets most of these acts apart is a professionalism that overcomes all genres, he said.

"When we lose the James Browns, the Ray Charleses, we lose the element of spontaneity," Chuck D said. "We lose the magic that comes from rehearsals and the work to make yourself a credible act. The excitement has left the audiences."

Not so with Public Enemy, which will play anywhere from 90 minutes to three hours, depending on club rules and audience excitement.

"We are the Rolling Stones of the rap game," Chuck D said. "Nobody can match my boys. Nobody."

IF YOU GO

Public Enemy (Beat to Mecca Tour) with X-Clan

» Venue: Rams Head Live, 20 Market Place, Baltimore

» Time: 7 p.m. today

» Tickets: \$20

» My info: www.ramsheadlive.com; 410-241-1131

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