

Reviews



"Yo! Bum Rush the Show"
Public Enemy
Def Jam Recordings
★★★★

Out of the watered-down, pop-oriented rap music of today comes Public Enemy, a rap group that combines minimal instrumentation with raps full of street language.

"Yo! Bum Rush the Show" is a rap album that has nothing to do with the sophomoric, "adolescent hormones gone haywire" posturing of the Beastie Boys, or the obnoxious, clownish antics of the Fat Boys. Public Enemy delivers the angry, furious rap that marked the music's early days.

Lead voice Chuck D lays down a cocky rap about his 98 Oldsmobile on the album's first track, "You're Gonna Get Yours," a fine example of the Public Enemy style: simple, harsh drum programming and lyrics equally so.

On the record's next track, D raps about the woman who thinks she's "so-phisticated." "Better walk, don't talk, she's all pretend. Can't be her friend unless you spend," D warns his listeners as guitarist Vernon Reid plays a guitar line that sounds as though it came from the AC/DC book of riffs.

Public Enemy often adopts a militant stance in the lyrics of their raps. In most cases, they convey a fierce sense of black pride.

"Rightstarter (Message to a Black Man)" is a good example of the band's tough, black militant stance. Back-up voice Flavor Flav takes over the

rhythmic chores while lead scratcher Norman "Terminator X" Rogers works the turntables, delivering some furious scratch work to accompany the heavy drum beats.

On "Raise the Roof," Rogers delivers more vicious scratch work and the beats become louder and harder as Flav exhorts everybody to "raise the roof." One can almost feel the power in the driving rhythms on this track.

The album's best cut is the title track. Here, D berates the violence that has plagued so many rap concerts recently as beats combine with an occasional explosion of synthesizer backing.

The vivid street lingo sometimes makes the message in the raps hard to understand, but there's no mistaking D's angry rail at crack on "Megablast."

"Hittin' mega-pipes, gettin' super stupid thin," D declares. To close out the record, Rogers jams on the turntables again on the instrumental "Terminator X Speaks With His Hands."

"Yo! Bum Rush the Show" is an excellent album that could very deservedly be called a rap classic. The simple, furious instrumentation combined with the group's harsh street posturing make this record a must-own.

Run-D.M.C., be warned. These guys are chillin' and jammin' all over the place. And they take no prisoners!
Review by Shane Hall

The John Thomas Project
John Thomas, vocals; Corrie Bergeron, guitar, vocals; Scott Edy, guitar; Rob Engberg, guitar; George Jones, bass; Chris Allen, drums.

Kay's Cabaret, Saturday, Feb. 27
★★★

Kay's Cabaret, a small, cozy nightspot in the Post Oak Mall, played host Saturday night to the John Thomas Project, a

loosely organized group of musicians whose performances resemble a jam session more than a strictly organized band. The group performs covers of classic rock favorites from the 1960s and 1970s.

The music was slated to begin at 9:00 p.m., but when that time rolled around, not all of the musicians had arrived. Nevertheless, the music started as guitarist and vocalist Corrie Bergeron strapped on his acoustic guitar and performed a folk-oriented instrumental called "Emerald Eyes." This song was followed by the arrival of more musicians, so Bergeron stopped playing to help set up equipment.

By 9:45, all of the musicians except drummer Chris Allen had arrived. Again, Bergeron began performing, this time with bass guitar accompaniment by Jones.

As he has demonstrated in the past, Bergeron is quite a talented musician and singer. Especially good was his version of Jerry Jeff Walker's "Mr. Bojangles." Bergeron then sang a duet with Edy on Simon and Garfunkel's "Scarborough Faire."

It was at this point that drummer Allen arrived, so the audience again shifted its attention from the musicians back to the television which was broadcasting the Olympics.

By 10:15, the John Thomas Project was whole and ready to play. The group started the show with the Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction." All of the musicians displayed good musical skills; especially guitarist Rob Engberg. His guitar solo on "Satisfaction" was the work of a skilled guitar technician.

Even with the first song, a notable problem surfaced: vocals. Thomas' vocals were mostly inaudible. Some blame was placed on the sound system, because even when Thomas was talking between songs, it was difficult to understand what he was saying.

But while vocals may have left something to be desired, musicianship did not. Engberg emerged as the star of the show with his powerful guitar solos. He was clearly at his best when doing covers of Jimi Hendrix. "Hey Joe" and Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" (which Hendrix recorded in 1968) were especially impressive.

Edy, playing rhythm guitar, lent a perfect complement to Engberg with his skillful rock technique. Adding Bergeron's acoustic guitar created a formidable trio. Meanwhile, the rhythm section of Jones and Allen kept the strong, solid beat that is essential for great rock 'n' roll.

Thomas, often shouting to be heard, was generally drowned out by the instrumentation. Still, the sound setup continued to be suspect because Bergeron's vocals did not fare much better with full instrumental backing.

Nevertheless, the show was enjoyable from a musical standpoint. The Animals' "House of the Rising Sun" and Jethro Tull's "Locomotive Breath" were both performed well. The group seemed to be having a good time as well, which is how a jam session should be.

Review by Shane Hall

Title Frantic
Starring Harrison Ford
Directed By Roman Polanski
Rated R
★★

Harrison Ford plays the unlikely hero of Dr. Richard Walker in Roman Polanski's latest film, "Frantic." Walker and his devoted wife Sondra spent their honeymoon in Paris in the 1960s, and, twenty years later, a medical convention has enabled them to renew their Paris romance.

However, Sondra disappears a few hours after checking into their hotel. Walker waits patiently for her

return, then becomes worried and tries to track her down.

Unfortunately, he is the only one who will believe that harm has come to her. The authorities try to help, but have a hard time believing that she was kidnapped.

With only a few clues to go on, Walker must become a detective in order to find his wife. During this search, Walker meets a beautiful and mysterious Parisian, played by Emmanuelle Seigner. These two form an unlikely alliance, and together they are able to find the ransom the kidnappers demand.

Walker is an absent-minded American who can't speak French trying to find his way around the Paris underworld. He is challenged to perform acts of heroism, even though he doesn't want to be a hero. However, he is very crafty, and his quick thinking keeps the team one step ahead of the kidnappers.

This is a surprising character for Harrison Ford to play, considering he has played the two of the most swashbuckling adventurers of movie history, Indiana Jones and Han Solo. Ford is a talented actor, and his portrayal of Dr. Walker, a man whose love and dedication to his wife allow him to persevere in the face of great danger, is sincere and touching. He is clearly the most valuable asset to "Frantic."

A clever story, with characterization that avoids the stereotypical action-heros, "Frantic" still fails to bring out the aspects of an action-thriller. Polanski's command of the action is sometimes powerful, resulting in memorable, exciting scenes, but most often fumbling and confusing. By failing to build suspense, the resolution of a possibly exciting scene is boring.

One merit of the film is the photography. With the exception of a simplistic focus on otherwise convincing symbols, the photography is excellent. Polanski has a command of the dark, shifting aspects of surrealism, and uses light very effectively.

Polanski pays for not building a net during the film by losing his balance and falling from the tightrope of directing with the ending. Not only is the final action ridiculous, but Polanski chooses to write Seigner out of the story in such a way as to make the haunting attraction she provided seem unimportant.

"Frantic" is a film with good intentions, but it loses focus and interest.

Review by Matthew Stewart

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