

Aggielife

COMING BACK TO EARTH TO RESURRECT THE FUNK

Digable Planets step out from jazz shadows

By Rob Clark
THE BATTALION

When Digable Planets stepped on the scene in 1993, it was more than just an ordinary debut. Spurred by the success of the Grammy-award winning single "The Birth of Slick" and the familiar "cool like 'dat,'" their debut album "Reachin'... A Refutation of Time and Space" went gold.

Simply put, their style is like no other. Greatly influenced by jazz, the Planets put introspective political lyrics over the funkier vibes in years. The strong leadership of lead rapper Butterfly combined with Doodlebug's rhymes and Ladybug's strong feminine perspective gives the group three distinct voices that bring unique ideas to the table.

With perhaps only De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest, Digable Planets are a major force in revolutionary rap.

Back for a second dose, the Planets returned in October with their second release, "Blowout Comb." A more back-to-basics album, it showed the maturity of the group through its whirlwind tour of success.

In a phone interview, Doodlebug said while the group has enjoyed its success, the true focus of the group doesn't lie in award inscriptions.

"Getting those Grammys, it was like damn — it surprised us," he said. "We were happy, and it made our parents real happy. Their children were successful, so that was really nice."

But Doodlebug said awards are only good for the moment, and what an artist does following

such accolades is crucial.

"It's just a piece of metal," he said. "What's it gonna do for me? Next year the same crowd won't even recognize my existence. Next year they'll be on some new sh-t."

"It doesn't help black people; doesn't help my family. The only reason I can see it helping is if later on my career plummets and I can hock it somewhere."

Despite their success, Doodlebug said the band has been labeled unfairly as just a mixture between jazz and rap, the always ambiguous "jazz hop" category.

From left: Butterfly, Doodlebug and Ladybug of Digable Planets

"Jazz hop — I would never even acknowl-

edge its existence," he said. "What the hell is that? That's a bullsh-t term that they use."

Doodlebug said the group's jazz influence means more than just a sound.

"Jazz is a major thing in our culture; a major thing that black people get credit for creating," he said. "From jazz comes other musical forms. From R&B, soul, blues, all the way up to '70s style to what we're doing in the '90s. It's like a mother and father thing. A mother has a child, the child grows up and has a child."

"You learn so much from it, and it definitely inspires me musically as

well as culturally."

But for rap music in 1994, Doodlebug said it has lost its focus.

"The rap game is now industrial strength," he said. "The industry has taken over. The fun days of hip hop were the days back in the Latin quarter when Big Daddy Kane and KRS-One were hot and Biz Markie and the Juice Crew. Those were the fun days 'cause the industry hadn't really caught on yet."

Now that rap is hitting worldwide, Doodlebug said those fun days are over.

"Like this gangsta sh-t," he said. "It's so bullsh-t. I'm not saying there are no gangstas out there but it's gettin' to the point of them being pimps."

Doodlebug said the creative flow of rap is often interrupted by the business involved.

"It's a f-cked up game and I don't like it," he said. "Show business is 99 percent business and 1 percent show... Rap is no fun to me no more. Everybody's a cutthroat. Everybody wants to kill each other just for a spot on the Billboard charts. Who gives a f-ck? Rap was selling before Billboard even had a rap chart."

Doodlebug said the popularity of rap has had one major drawback on today's youth.

"Everything is conned in this country," he said. "School is like the foundation for con artists. You don't learn nothin' in school. You learn how to get over, how to get that A, B or C. The educational system is real f-cked up. Kids don't want to read books; that's not cool. What is cool is listening to rap."

Ice Cube's return a lackluster one with remix/B-side album

By Rob Clark
THE BATTALION

Ice Cube's "Bootlegs and B-Sides" (Priority Records) is a collection of three new tracks and 10 B-sides and remixes. Cube should know better.

ter than releasing an album like this. The only other prominent B-side/remix rap album was Public Enemy's "Greatest Misses," which followed the title by missing wildly.

A typical example of the extreme lack of creativity on the album is the remix of "What Can I Do?," from Cube's 1993 "Lethal Injection" album. The always original rap phrase "how ya like me now?" is added into the chorus for no apparent reason.

But the most disastrous remix is of "When I Get to Heaven," one of Cube's best from "Lethal Injection." With the lyrics "They won't call me a nigger when I get to heaven," it showed a somber, introspective

side of Ice Cube. But the original message plays second fiddle to the new and less appealing version of the music.

There are two bright spots, however. The remix of "Check Yo Self" puts Grandmaster Flash's synthesized groove of "The Message" to Cube's rhymes. While recalling the old-school days of rap, it also shows Cube's versatility as a vocalist.

But the best has to be the remix of "It Was a Good Day." Not only is it arguably Cube's best song, but the background music is far better than the original.

The sunny, Saturday-afternoon feel sounds more like a Jackson 5 song than that of a gangsta rapper, but somehow it works. And the light vibe reflects Cube's lyrics of a surprisingly conflict-free day in South Central Los Angeles.

With his record sales diminishing, this meaningless album is the last thing Ice Cube needed. His much-anticipated "Helter Skelter" album with Dr. Dre will be released next year, and perhaps that will get him back on track. But until he returns to the days of classic albums like "AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted" and "Death Certificate," Ice Cube just might melt away.



Stern talks man down from suicide attempt

"Who better to help someone who is psychologically disturbed than Howard Stern, who himself is psychologically disturbed?"

—Howard Stern

NEW YORK (AP) — The caller said he was ready to plunge off the George Washington Bridge. Howard Stern, fielding the call live on his national radio show, knew that the man had called the right place.

"Who better to help someone who is psychologically disturbed than Howard Stern, who himself is psychologically disturbed?" Stern said Wednesday after police hailed his role in getting the distraught fan safely off the bridge.

Stern was thrust into the unaccustomed role of hero after Emilio Bonilla, 29, of New York, walked to the middle of the bridge and called the radio personality on a cellular phone.

Bonilla had climbed over the bridge's railing and was threatening to jump, saying he was depressed.

"Let me thank you for calling in," Stern quickly told Bonilla. "I always wanted to help someone who was about to jump off a bridge."

The pair spoke for seven minutes. Once convinced the call was legitimate, Stern seized the opportunity to plug his upcoming movie, "Private Parts," as Bonilla giggled.

"When I mentioned the fact that I had a movie coming out and that he would miss it if he died, it caused him to laugh," Stern said later. "But it also caused him to say, 'Hey,

wait a second. Maybe I should stay around for the movie.'"

Lt. Stanley Bleeker of the Port Authority police responsible for the bridge was listening to the show and immediately sent officers to the scene. Another Stern listener, Helen Trimble of Brooklyn, got out of her car and wrapped Bonilla in a bear hug.

She quoted him as saying over and over, "I'm gonna jump, man."

While Stern kept the man smiling, police pulled Bonilla to safety. He was charged with cocaine possession and reckless endangerment and taken to a hospital for evaluation.

Typically, Stern proved a less-than-gracious hero.

When an officer grabbed the cellular phone to say Bonilla was safe, Stern shouted, "I'm a hero. Call the newspapers!"

At his news conference, Stern made disparaging remarks about homosexual men and Hispanics. He also said the incident should convince the Federal Communications Commission, which has fined him \$1.67 million for indecency, of what a great guy he is.

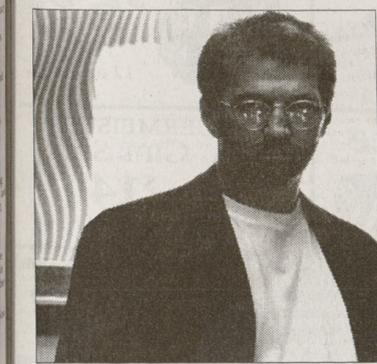
Officials at the Port Authority, where officers routinely risk their lives with far less publicity, were not amused, though they said they had no reason to think the incident was a hoax.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Snoop Doggy Dogg, Carey take top Billboard awards

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. (AP) — Snoop Doggy Dogg and Mariah Carey took top honors Wednesday at the fifth annual Billboard Music Awards.

The Swedish quartet Ace of Base was named best new artist during the ceremony at the Universal Amphitheater.



Eric Clapton

Actress Heather Locklear and comedian Dennis Miller were hosts of the two-hour event, broadcast on Fox Television.

Scheduled performers included Melissa Etheridge, Tom Jones, The Offspring and Toad The Wet Sprocket.

Da Brat was named the best rapper; R. Kelly received the award for the best rhythm and blues singer, and Kenny G was named best contemporary jazz artist.

The best album rock track was "Shine," by Collective Soul.



Snoop Doggy Dogg

Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton and Billy Joel were honored with special awards.

Winners were based on worldwide record sales, radio airplay and marketplace tallies as compiled by Billboard magazine from Dec. 4, 1993, to Dec. 3, 1994.

Musicians show support for human rights program

BOSTON (AP) — Musicians Peter Gabriel and Michael Stipe were among the 4,000 people who attended Wednesday's Reebok Human Rights Award program, where four young people were honored for helping make their countries better.

Among the honorees were Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary, 25, who launched a literacy program 10 years ago so his fellow Nepalese could stand up for their rights.

Others were Rose-Anne Auguste, a 30-year-old Haitian nurse; Adauto Belarmino Alves, a 29-year-old gay rights and AIDS activist from Brazil; and Samuel Kofi Woods, 30, who monitors human rights violations in Liberia. Each will receive \$25,000.

A "youth in action" award went to



Peter Gabriel

Sexual harassment suit against Barker dropped

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bob Barker may have been involved in off-the-set hanky panky with Dian Parkinson, but a judge said there's no proof that cost Parkinson her job on "The Price Is Right."

Superior Court Judge Edward M. Ross dismissed the wrongful termination claim from Parkinson's \$8 million sexual harassment lawsuit Tuesday.

He let stand Parkinson's sexual harassment and emotional distress claims, and that part of the lawsuit will go to trial, said her attorney, Laurence Labovitz.

Parkinson sued Barker and Mark Goodman Productions Inc. last June, alleging that Barker coerced her into having sex with him between December 1989 and June 1993.

She said she was forced to quit her job showing products on "The Price Is Right" as a result.

Barker, the show's host, acknowledged the two engaged in "hanky panky" but said Parkinson initiated it.

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