

make up their minds, so they keep jumping in and out of the rap game and back into R&B because it is safer. One thing rap isn't, is pop music. Even after all these years, Chuck D still finds himself correcting fucked up rap definitions. And when it comes to the rappers themselves, "There is a lack of innovation, particularly when artists want slow, comfortable beats, instead of faster, challenging ones." Some might consider this a narrow view, but remember, this is the same man who brought us "Rebel Without A Pause," which lit a proverbial fire of sound under our collective asses.

Coming up on two decades in the business, Chuck's energy has scarcely diminished. He has his priorities in check. "I don't kiss ass. In the last

four years I have seen more sucking and slurping, which is cool if that's your swerve, but my thing is we can take care of things and make a deal. You respect me and I respect you, but demean me in any manner and then I'm the first to say, 'get the fuck out of my face.'"

The vision of Slam Jamz will echo an international feel, a feat easily accomplished since he bounces through New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles and the rest of the globe on the regular. "Most companies are just worried about getting on the charts, but there are 38 countries out there to choose from," says the new world orderer. As far as his hit squad, the man once known as the "rhyme animal" has his program set: the music



has to be bangin', the objective of the group has to be clear, the visuals have to be tight and their performing abilities have got to be on point. Son Slawta Melquan, Hyenas In The Desert and soul artist Kyle Jason, three of his newly signed artists, seem to already fit the mold.

But, there are other ground rules. "I tell them straight up, 'don't think your life is gonna be fixed.' My teaching comes into telling people not to believe that bullshit you see in videos, the Versace and Lexuses. They might as well believe in Superman," says Chuck. Perhaps the most significant advice he could give to them relates to the realist, keep-it-real tenet, a job. "Have one foot in the real world and one foot in the business, then you'll be able to make better decisions," he tells them. A firm believer in the less-is-more concept, a record by one of his artists might only have seven cuts on it in order to feel things out. He just doesn't believe in full rap albums by groups that come out of nowhere. "We want to concentrate on doing little things and being happy with an artist that sells 100,000 copies instead of trying to get the 500,000 in order to simply justify our pay."

As for Public Enemy, Chuck D wants to set the record straight: There will be an album next year, tentatively entitled *Afraid of the Dark*, "which will be an exploration of what's going on with our race while we indulge in popular trends. Flav will be there," he says. Of his partner Flavor Flav's trouble with the law and drugs, Chuck implies that referring to his new book, "The Public Enemy Chronicles," will shed some light on the situation for die-hard Flav fans. Otherwise, Chuck D, the eternally political master of ceremonies, and one of rap's oldest participants (mid-thirties), embarks on a yet another tumultuous adventure to reinvent rap. Here's to hoping that the second time around is just as sweet, and just as earthshaking. **Q**

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