

The Hypeman Cometh: Flavor Flav



William Drayton's performance alter ego Flavor Flav became the biggest star of reality TV last year with the hugely successful Flavor of Love. A house full of women vying for his affections created the right amount of drama to keep viewers interested in TV's first Black bachelor's search for love. The show came on the heels of Flav's romance with the tall blond Brigitte Nielsen on "The Surreal Life." Flavor of Love spawned the current first Black bachelorette reality show starring the equally entertaining New York and her stern but funny mother Sister Patterson. Flav's trademark phrase "Flavor Flavvvvvvvvv" entered pop culture but not without criticism. His dark skin, Viking-inspired crowns, gold-toothed grin and hip-hop inspired speech fascinated viewers and made some of them decide that he was too much of a minstrel and misogynist.

Messageboards posted insults aimed at Flav's complexion that invoked images of the disgraceful Black memorabilia positioned throughout Spike Lee's "Bamboozled." To these viewers the absence of Boris Kodjoe or LL Cool J-type looks disqualified Flav's pursuit of love and reduced the women of the show to desperate victims. He was again casted into the role of a public enemy scorned in some ways for what he once said in song for "being too Black."

Television was always driven by the need to promote something and the man and women of Flavor Of Love used this fact as the motivation for doing the show. Since the show's end some of the women have attained their own 15 minutes of fame particularly the new reality TV star New York. Flavor's eventual choice of a mate, Delisshus has moved on in the media world as a fixture at hip urban events. The jester-like hypeman who laid the foundation for future famous hypeman including Eminem's best friend Proof has returned to touring with his legendary hip-hop band Public Enemy. PE had the honor last year of its pioneering work Fear Of A Black Planet being

entered into the National Recording Archive.

The artwork from the album grabbed critical eyes in the industry and art direction on hip-hop albums gained a new importance. Their prominence as the most-successful politically inclined rap group seemed to be in contradiction with Flavor's television career but both gigs require amounts of humorous charisma and a tad of the fantastic. Beyond Flavor Flav's stage persona there is musical talent that can play several instruments and still rhyme silly over hip-hop beats. After years of stops and starts the native of Long Island, New York finally released a passionate solo album with music for Old School hip-hop fans, Country and Western lovers and all the urban music fans in between. Now touring North America Flav took the time to answer some questions about his solo jaunt and accusations of crass cooning.

What were you trying to do with the album?

The main thing I was trying to do with these album was to show all different sides of Flav I am a musician I can play instruments.

I heard you play eleven instruments?

I play over eleven but that's cool. I play over fourteen different instruments and self-taught also you know when I grew-up in church I was in the choir and I could sing a little bit. That's just a talent I wanted to express to the world you know I am a musician. I'm into all kinds of music so that's why my album has different kinds of music on it. You got rap stuff, R and B stuff, then on the end of it you even got country-western. The last one's called "Hotter Than Ice" and I do like country music but see music is a universal message and I want my album to be universal so that's why I did not put the same kind of jams for my record I wanted to put all different kinds of jams on this record so that way I can sell it to all different kinds of audiences instead of just

catering to one audience.

I noticed you had different kinds of sounds one song sounded like the early Bum Rush The Show material.

A lot of people think my album has no direction the world ain't got no direction either. So once the world gets direction I'll put out an album that has direction till then while the world is mixed up I'll put out an album that's mixed out. At least I can sell it to everybody instead of just one audience.

Who did the production on the album? I could tell that some of it was live instruments and some of it was samples and stuff.

Which is today's music and not only that Public Enemy we were the first to ever sample. We were the first ones to put out samples in our music. I'm thinking of going back to basics. I produced the whole album but at the same time I had other people come in and produce as well. On "Two Wrongs Don't Make It Right" "Bridge Of Pain" all of these are different producers. But then again it was my production money that put it out there so I'm the producer.

What made you decide to put out the album independently? It would seem with the success of your TV show you could grab a major deal.

I've been signed to record companies and all record companies have made money off of me. I feel that it's my turn to make some off of me I wanted to wait until I was really scott free so I could sell this album myself and make my own doggone money.

You said this was going to be your only solo album because you wanted it to be a collector's item does that still stand?

Definitely that still stands but I'm still working on another Public Enemy album with my partner Chuck D and The Bomb Squad

we're putting The Bomb Squad back together for the first time in years. We're going to come out with this next Public Enemy album and I guarantee it's going to be a banger.

How was the European Tour you just came back from and what is going with PE?

I know that Public Enemy is going to do a North American tour

How do you feel about the criticisms of Flavor of Love that it's a lot of cooning and the women are degrading themselves by fawning over you?

I just want to say that everybody is entitled to their own opinions not only that everyone's opinion is to be respected by Flavor Flav even if they have the wrong opinion. Let me say this my purpose of doing TV is I'm looking forward to a TV career. I'm looking forward to a movie career that's why I moved to LA in the first place. Now with this TV show Flavor Of Love I am the bachelor on TV so I'm going to have to pick and choose from girls. Girls that came on my show you gotta remember I didn't put them there they put themselves there. And every time you seen disagreements in the house fighting and brawls and all of that they were not fighting over Flavor Flav that was personality conflict.

You got a bunch of different personalities for the first time in one house ever yes you gonna have conflicts. So that's why I'm saying people right now have the wrong perception of Flav when it comes to the Flavor Of Love only thing I've tried to do is mediate. I tried to be the mediator of the conflicts. I don't really like violence. To all of the people that don't understand hopefully one day they will understand.

How do feel about today's hip-hop?

Today's hip-hop is in all different kinds of directions because that's how we're living. It's not just in one

direction anymore it's all mixed-up right now. Rap music has taken its own course and it's up to us to put it back on course. I'm proud of all the music artists congratulations to all you new artist making records welcome aboard.

What are you most proud of about your album?

That it's done and it's out. I've been trying to come out with a solo album since 1990 but I worked on this album for about two years.