

Tales From the Digital Underground

Written by Killing Joke



Rare is the occasion that Crackpot Press staff members go out for a random concert; at least it is in the opinion of one who loves music as much as I do. More rare is the random out of nowhere suggestions for live performances of acts you haven't even thought of in 10 years, but if you haven't figured this out by now, it is the nature of this publication.

I received a call from Dave Crackpot about going to see the Digital Underground the very night of the call. Digital Underground? It took some effort to sort through my musical memory for this hip-hop unit outta San Francisco but I did start to recall vague things about "The Humpty Dance", a sort of mock comedy against dance hop of the time (MC Hammer, Vanilla Ice) with some intelligence. But I had nothing in the collection. Dave promised to provide the greatest hits. And we were off, gangsta's straight outta Brentwood, kickin' it at the 14 Below for the Digital Underground.



I had a Dodge Stealth rental car that week so I didn't really give a shit once I got behind the wheel. Dave's greatest hits mix was boomin' most of the trip. "Same Song" one of many I never heard before, establishes D. U. from the first dub as a rather unique force. Coming attcha with a Parliament/Funkadelic approach to hip-hop. "Are you old school, new school, R & B or

hip hop?" Yes indeed. "Swing" lays it all down, and with several DJ's, Shock G, Money-D and even Ali-G type characters like "Humpty Hump." Yeah, Humpty Hump, Marx Bros. Style glasses and fake nose (a big fake nose) who raps in an almost white-man makin' fun of voice that pre-dates Bullworth. It all came back to me when "The Humpty Dance" track started ringin' from speakers. Then Randy, the only non CPP member on this trip, hooked us up with his bad ass hip hop mix, just to get us off the Underground, so the live show would be more fresh. We hit the parking lot with Noreiga on the track. "What's it gonna be, Nigga?" Luckily, since it seems most of Brentwood showed up, 3 white boys could get away with it.

The show itself -- amazing. Non-withstanding a hell of a long wait, it was the black man's time after all, and some truly boring opening act torture - some band thought it would be great to mix Carlos Santana and Yes. Why they were opening up the show we couldn't fathom. Digital Underground went on flawlessly and covered tracks from their entire career. Now here is an act that has up to 20 people on stage at once. Family. Friends. You name it. It was about having fun and not giving a fuck. "Underwater Rhymes" came off perfect, MC Blowfish and everything, the band proudly displaying it likes the Marijuana. Yeah, contact buzz couldn't touch this, pot smoke instead of fog effects! They didn't even save "The Humpty Dance" for the encore, they came out blasting with that about song number five, everyone in the crowd raising the roof with Humpty Hump followed up with a DJ solo that knocked the socks off any rock show I've seen. They also concentrated heavily on their "Sex Packets" album. Prior to grooving that night, I was content to never place these guys in the hip-hop top 10. Dave wasn't having any of that, saying they were untouchable in 1991. I shouted out "Public Enemy," "LL Cool J," "NWA," "Ice T" but they had already peaked by then. And the Underground had a lot of depth. In fact, they are truly closer to "Consolidated" and "The Disposable Heroes", although mentioning them seemed to be a sore spot for Shock G as you'll see later. But did I need anymore convincing how hot this show was, the freaks of the industry are kings. And nothing brought it home more than this, right in the middle of the show, they had a friend join them for a song. I'm talking about Tone Loc. No shit. Busted out Funky Cold Medina, and the house was brought down.

Afterwards the parking lot was a mass gathering of fans. I was hoping to get a picture with Tone but it wasn't happenin'. There was already a line and he had to jet before I could get close. Dave Crackpot faired a lot better. Randy, who had got us into the show through a friend, also got Shock G to stop by for a quick photo-op for Crackpot Press. I took the photo, Dave C took the op. He started to tell shock how The Underground was one of his all time favorites, right up there with the Disposable Heroes. Shock suddenly froze, like he didn't like hearing that name. Who knows? And there wasn't time to ask, 2AM on a weeknight was late enough for the CPP members who still have day jobs.

The show, and the band were inspiring as ever. I was in full hip-hop mode for three weeks followed by a week of funk. Even driving home, finishing out Digital Underground's Greatest

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Hits, I blasted out my own rhyme: “Driving down Sunset, 3AM and fly. Mutha fuckin’ drivin’ like I’m fuckin’ high.” Yeah. Get out and buy this collection, or the “Sex Packets” album. Need I mention, Tupac started here? You won’t be disappointed.

Epilogue – Strangely enough, a few weeks later I bumped in to Shock G outside of Bird’s in Hollywood. Yo, I was gonna talk about how much I enjoyed the show, and maybe even mention the Disposable Heroes, but he was working some hot white chick better than Humpty. And I didn’t wanna mess with the black man’s time.