

thealternative

There's more to life than Hip-Hop and R&B

Reporting by Anthony Q. Casasnovas

7th OCTAVE

WHO: Public Enemy's Minister of Information, Professor Griff, handles the lyrical side of things with fellow vocalist/rapper Power Born; Khari Wynn handles all the shredding and heavy riffage; Jahi Asad slaps the bass into submission; Qass (pronounced kwace) let's loose his metal head fury on the drums; and DJ Legacy keeps it scratchin' on the 1's and 2's

WHAT: They are a self-proclaimed "Heavy Mental [band] in an Age of Revolutionary Ghetto Metal." This translates to: they're a rap metal band more in vein with Rage Against the Machine and Public Enemy, rather than those meatheads Limp Bizkit.

WHEN: The group formed in the aftermath of the Y2K scare of 2000 - when absolutely nothing happened.

WHERE: Griff and Jahi are from the boroughs of New York. Khari hails from Boston, Power Born was born in Savannah, Georgia and Q is from Chester, Pennsylvania.

WHY: "I wanted to do it because I felt like the music industry, more specifically the rap game, needed a breath of fresh air," says Griff. "Public Enemy has always fused rap and rock, but we rarely got credit for it. So this time, the rock part is evident." While on the road, Griff was constantly auditioning musicians to form his devastating rap/metal hybrid. Before recording an entire album, the band contributed music to Public Enemy's 2002 release, *Revolution*. The politically-charged and riff-heavy "Son of a Bush" became a popular track amongst P.E. heads. Following some live performances with Public Enemy it was time for the group to drop their debut, *Se7enth Degree* on Chuck D's Slam Jamz label. Now it's up to 7th Octave to prove that the ghetto knows how to rawk.

ZAP MAMMA

WHO: A five member female group, personified by project founder Marie Daulne.

WHAT: Zap Mama was an African a capella project started by Daulne. The group's music has since evolved into a sort of fusion of world-beat rhythms and contemporary neo-soul.

WHEN: Originally formed in 1990 by Marie, the group would release their first CD, *Adventures in Afropia, Vol. 1* in 1993. After a four year absence, Zap Mama returned in late 2004 accompanied by a who's who of neo-soul inspired hip-hop/R&B.

WHERE: Following the death of her father, Daulne and her mother wound up in the refuge of African pygmies. She would later spend most of her time being raised in Europe, before moving back to Africa to learn more about her culture.

WHY: Initially, Daulne started the Zap Mama project as a way to express her culture, heritage and experience with the pygmies. The earliest albums featured music that was created using nothing more than human sounds, whether it is vocal noises and singing or noises created from slapping and clapping parts of the human body. The group has maintained a presence in the industry by updating their sound, without ever compromising Daulne's original vision. Their latest release, *Ancestry In Progress*, proved that other popular artists such as Common, Eryka Badu, Talib Kweli, The Roots and others have grown to appreciate the work of Zap Mama enough to actually join in Daulne's musical experiments.





CAFÉ TACUBA

WHO: A Latino group of eclectic design students who love to *rawk*: vocalist Ruben "Nru" Albarran; guitarist Joselo Rangel and his bassist brother Enrique "Quique" Rangel; and keyboardist Emanuel DeReal.

WHAT: American rock journalists have no clue how to classify this band. The lazy comparisons have run the gamut from the Latino Beastie Boys to the Beatles. With their 2003 release, *Cuatro Caminos*, they were even likened to that of Radiohead. This band has created their own brand of music that utilizes everything from indie rock, electronic, hip-hop, reggae and traditional Latin rhythms. Instead of trying to categorize it, do yourself a favor and just pick up a few of their albums. Your ears will thank you.

WHEN: Warner Bros.' expectations were exceeded when they signed this group in 1992. Since then they've released five albums, with each being even better than the last.

WHERE: Each member of the group comes from the northern "suburbs" of Mexico City, but their popularity has reached international levels.

WHY: When Latin music was undergoing a revolution of sorts, the industry needed a leader. In the process of creating good music, they also earned themselves recognition as *Time Magazine's* "Top 50 Latin American Leaders" and landed a Latin Grammy award. By the end of the '90s, when the United States was gladly accepting any crappy Latin pop act, Café Tacuba completed an experimental album with the Kronos Quartet. Maybe it's time for you to learn Spanish, porque ellos son líderes en una revolución progresiva.

M.I.A.

WHO: Artist-slash-Roland MC-505 fiend, Maya Arulpragasam.

WHAT: M.I.A.'s sometimes political (subtle or otherwise) multilingual "raps" are backed by sparse hyperactive beats with an electronic asthmatic that can work well within a club bumpin' pop hits or a neon-colored rave atmosphere. Just imagine if Missy Elliott had been the daughter of a Sri Lankan freedom fighter and you're (sort of) on the right track.

WHEN: When Maya started learning English, it was the politically-charged hip-hop of the late '80s (Public Enemy, N.W.A) that would truly inspire her debut album, *Arular* - which drops this year. She'd already dropped a mixtape with Diplo entitled, *Piracy Funds Terrorism, Vol. 1* in 2004.

WHERE: Born in Hounslow, London, little Maya was whisked away to Sri Lanka at only 6 months old. Her father became politically known as Arular and was a founding member of the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students - a militant Tamil group fighting for the freedom of their people. Because of this, Maya and her family were constantly moved from one poverty-stricken area to the next to escape the ongoing violence caused by the ongoing civil war and any threat that may stem from her father's involvement. Eventually they relocated to India, then back to Sri Lanka. During all this chaos, Maya had reached her teens and wound up at London's Central Saint Martins Art School in the UK.

WHY: M.I.A.'s career creating a mash-up of hip-hop, dancehall, electro and world music actually began with her creating visual art. She's won awards, sold paintings and had books sold before even setting foot in the music biz. Things took off for her when British rock band, Elastica commissioned her to create their album art and come on tour with them. While touring the US she was introduced to the Roland MC-505 by popular electro-clash group Peaches. Let's just say, from that moment on, the one thing Maya hasn't been is missing-in-action.

