

theretrospect

SUMMERTIME

Time to Sit Back and Unwind With DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince

Go ahead, make your jokes — we'll give you some time to get your laughs out.

Done yet? Good.

This year Will Smith released his ninth full-length album. That's probably three times the number of albums your current favorite rapper will ever release. Why? Sheer talent and dedication to the game, that's why. Sure, you might know Will Smith as that goofy kid from *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* reruns or that multimillion dollar actor who's made a couple of pop hits to coincide with his family-friendly movies, but you have probably never taken the time to get to know the dynamic duo that was and always will be the magnificent DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince.



These dudes are undeniable living legends in the hip-hop game, for any current rapper to not recognize that (Yo, Eminem — you readin' this?) is a complete shame. They got their start way back in 1986, when hip-hop was still just a toddler finding its legs. They were rockin' house parties all across Philly, trying to make the rap thing happen when later that same year Jeffrey Townes placed first in a DJ competition. The group was signed to a deal with Jive Records and Will Smith turned down his acceptance into MIT for a shot at a music career. It's not often that you see a rapper who's been accepted to a prestigious university.

Later, they proved hugely popular with hip-hop heads and the growing MTV audience, releasing hit after hit — never needing to push a hard image or cater to a thug-hungry crowd. When push came to shove, Jeff and Will kept their cool and kept on being their fun-lovin' selves. For those of you who've never listened to their music and write it off as corny — give it shot. In fact, just listen to the entire double-album *He's the DJ, I'm the Rapper*, in which master turntablist Jeff Townes destroys vinyl on purely instrumental tracks in a way DJs/producers seldom do today and the track "Live at Union Square" presents hip-hop at one of its youngest, purest and most hungry forms. Fact is, even as solo artist Will Smith, he's still got Jeff by his side. While Will's been rappin' and acting, Jeff continues holding it down with his own solo albums (his latest, *The Return of the Magnificent*, dropped last month) and production and scratching credits for the likes of Jill Scott and (gasp!) his boy Will.

If you need further proof that these Philly cats are untouchable icons in the annals of hip-hop and deserve the utmost respect from a younger generation of hip-hop fans, just peep the finest hip-hop summer jam ever released: "Summertime," off their 1991 classic, *Homebase*. —AQC.

Though they've both carved out successful solo careers, Will and Jeff are still tight and continue to work together.



Jeff and Will represent their hometown of Philly.



1991's *Homebase* contains one of hip-hop's all-time greatest summer jams.



The duo's 1987 debut, *Rock the House*.



Released in 1988, *He's the DJ, I'm the Rapper* showcased two major aspects of hip-hop: turntablism and emceeing.



"A Nightmare on My Street" was one of many songs to feature Freddy Cruger during the '80s.



Living Legends DJ Jazzy Jeff fits right in with greats Kidd Capri, Grandmaster Flash, DJ Premier and Daryl McDaniell from Run D.M.C.