

Dilated Peoples Preview

By: Stewart Dalley

For a musical genre that was first written off as a passing fad it's hard to believe that hip hop is almost 25 years old. Like many twenty-somethings hip hop has been through a few changes in its time. Hip hop started out with fun party tunes, like the classic Sugar Hill Gang's 'Rappers Delight' and before long it began to act as a social commentary for the impoverished black community of America. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's 'The Message' was the catalyst of the change that laid the way for political rappers like Public Enemy and KRS 1. The early nineties saw a sudden shift in the music that heralded a return to the old skool bragging of the past, this time though, with that added ingredients of misogyny and criminal boasting. This was the era of G-Funk and its main protagonists came out of the Death Row camp, which was home to artists like Snoop Dogg, Tupac and Dr Dre. For many record buyers and artists this scarytale style of rap left a bad taste in their mouths and forced the growth of an underground scene that stayed true to the political traditions of the past.

With gansta rap on the rise in LA and NYC the underground started to show promise with acts like A Tribe Called Quest, Gangstarr, Jurassic 5 and The Pharcyde showing that there was room for two schools (skools, if you like) of thought. It was around this time that Dilated Peoples started to emerge to a highly receptive audience. Originally a duo, Evidence and Iriscience, they first got to recording in 1992 with the help of Evidence's next door neighbour, who just happened to be QD3, the son of the peerless Quincy Jones. 1994 saw their no-messing lyrics land them a deal with House of Pain's DJ Lethal - flush from his 'Jump Around' success - for whom they recorded their debut album 'Imagery, Battle Hymns, And Political Poetry'. Unfortunately for them (and us) that deal went sour and the resultant album never saw light of day. Three years later DMC World Champion DJ Babu joined their ranks and in 1998 they unleashed the hypnotic 'Work the Angles' single on a hungry underground scene. Touring with household names like Rage Against the Machine, Gangstarr and D'Angelo saw their 2000 debut album 'The Platform' hit the Billboard charts and opened them up to a worldwide audience.

Touring has continued to be their main way of picking up more press and fans and given the treatment they received at the hands of Heathrow airport security staff, after September 11th, its surprising they've decided to head back out on the road at all. But with a new album 'Expansion Team' to promote there is no time for reflection. Hauled off their plane and interrogated for over an hour, for nothing less than, what one presumes to be the colour of the skins, you can bet that the Dilated Peoples have penned some new tracks with a strong racial influence to them that will get showcased at their gig at King Tuts tomorrow. Enjoy the nu skool.

'Expansion Team' is out now on Capitol Records. Catch them live at King Tuts 11th February.