

'DEF' FROM PAGE 18

albums. The Fat Boys, who Kurtis produced, have had two gold albums already.

"Kurtis Blow's yet to have his first gold album, even though he had one of the first gold rap singles in 'The Breaks.' I can see him saying to himself that he's getting kind of older, and the successful artists are getting young. I can see him saying maybe I'm losing my position as the King of Rap. As it is, it's a position he kind of gave himself.

"But he's had a good career. I know one of the first rap records I appreciated when I was in high school was 'Christmas Rapping' [1979]. And in 1984, when I was working in radio, one of my favourite cuts on my rap show was 'A J Scratch' by Kurtis. But I don't know, they say the average life span for an artist is six months, and Kurtis has had six years, but maybe his time has come.

"It's hard to say about Kurtis right now. I mean he has this project with Bob Dylan, where Dylan does a cameo on his new album — maybe that'll be interesting. I'm just sorry about these comments he's made in the press lately, they're totally without base. He goes in the papers and says the raps of LL Cool J and Run DMC cause violence, and yet Kurtis's last name "Blow" means cocaine. So in terms of putting positive messages to the kids, here's a guy whose last name means cocaine to the B-Boys. So it's really ludicrous. I don't think Kurtis is thinking about what he's saying right now."

Deliberately Def

The other string to Russell Simmons's bow is his talent as a producer. This led to the partnership with another producer, Rick Rubin, then a NYU student. Together they set up Def Jam Records in the summer of 1984, and they now rival ZTT boss

Trevor Horn for the most innovative production of the last decade.

Aside from production, Def Jam recordings are notable for their blend of

Original Concept, Public Enemy and Alyson Williams. Plus singles from Busy Bee 'Oom Tang,' MC Breeze and Jimmy Spicer's 'Crack Attack.'



Publicist Bill Adler and producer Russell Simmons.

megalomania and self parody. Def Jam are cool because they tell you they're cool. Def Jam are fun because they find themselves funny. Who else but Def Jam would chronicle a visit to their own offices as being the def event of the year (Original Concept: 'Knowledge Me'), and who else but Russell Simmons would brag that, "Me and my man Rick, we've got millions of gold albums. I'm getting cold money every day, we've got wheelbarrows full of the shit ..." (LL Cool J: "That's a Lie").

Last year media giants CBS did a million dollar deal with Def Jam that achieved worldwide distribution for their records and gave CBS access to some very hot property. It means that Def Jam have to put out 15 albums a year, but with over 30 acts signed to Rush, talent doesn't seem to be a problem. In fact, over the next few months we should see a new album from LL Cool J, the debut album from the Beastie Boys (just finished), albums from Tashan, Chuck Stanley,

Most of the recording is done at "Chung King, House of Metal" in nearby Chinatown, an address that LL Cool J once refused to reveal, explaining it was "too def." But now, with the new Def Jam/Rush headquarters at Elizabeth Street, a studio is planned for the basement.

"Deliberate sounds, a deliberate beat," Simmons says, describing the Def Jam sounds. "There's something real about an image, deliberate execution, delivery. Not like dance music. I like a real image ..."

Russell defines the major difference between Def Jam/Rush artists and their competitors. "Roxanne Shante is the best female rapper, one of the best rappers around, Divine Sounds, the Fat Boys are good, UTFO and Whistle are good, but the real difference between them and Def Jam artists is tangible imagery. When you see Run DMC you see very strong artists, you see characters. With Whodini there's the lovers, the romantics, sartorially splendid. With LL Cool J you see the kid, the gold, the

kangol. When you see these other artists there is no identifiable imagery!"

The kid, Ladies Love Cool James, was in and out of town in the week I hounded



Jimmy Spicer

the offices of Def Jam, a week where my photographer and I came to be known as "the New Zealand mafia." I rang LL on a number of occasions at his grandmother's house where he lives. But the bugger was never in.

Crack Attack

Jimmy Spicer is a rapper who was recording from the late 70s. His 'Crack Attack' single is being recorded now, and the demo ran like this:

"A freebase cocaine, crack is the name, makes you skinny as hell and eats up your brain. As of now the strongest drug on the street, will turn a million dollar man into a five dollar freak."

"Sounds like the B-Boys are gonna like it," says Spicer, "ain't the beat stupid def man? ... We're gonna get a girl DJ, her name's Spinderella."

Do you think you are going to beat crack?

"I hope so. It's like a fashion, but if it's as bad as they say it is, it might last a lot longer than a fashion. It's like heroin. We licked that. I think we can lick this too."

Def Jam are doing their utmost to confront the crack problem, which is rife in New York right now. An anti-crack concert in Miami will feature Run DMC, the Beastie Boys,

"Chuck E Dee is one of the most respected rappers to come out of Long Island. He's going to be releasing an album pretty soon, with a group called Public Enemy. They're going to be the first punk rap group, like real punk. If Johnny Lydon doesn't bother us. We're in the studios right now working on the single; 'Public Enemy No 1' and the album 'Yo Bum Rush the Show.' At first it was going to be called 'The Government's Responsible.

"Now you'd think at this point, given the violence factor, that maybe it's not the right time for a very aggressive rap artist. That's exactly why we're doing it. We're going to represent a different point of view for rap, maybe a darker point of view. It may get political at times, it may be socially relevant at times. Somebody's got to talk about what's going on. But it won't be in a preaching manner, a la Melle Mel."

The Rite of Slayer

Rick Rubin's love of heavy metal is undoubtedly instrumental in Run DMC's success — and the Beasties' headbanging beat on 'She's on It.' Newly signed to Def Jam are the Californian group Slayer, speed metallers in the mould of the Butthole Surfers and Black Flag. Their third album, and first for Def Jam, is called *Reign of Blood*.

MCA of the Beastie Boys spoke of Slayer more academically. "I'll tell you," he said. "I was listening to Slayer yesterday, and this might sound stupid to some of your readers out there, it sounds like Stravinsky. *The Rite of Spring*. Classical music played on guitars and drums. I couldn't believe it! Like, the fast stuff is shit as far as I'm concerned, when they start playing fast. Nnnnnnnnyyyy ... nnnnyyyyyyy ... it's noise. CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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