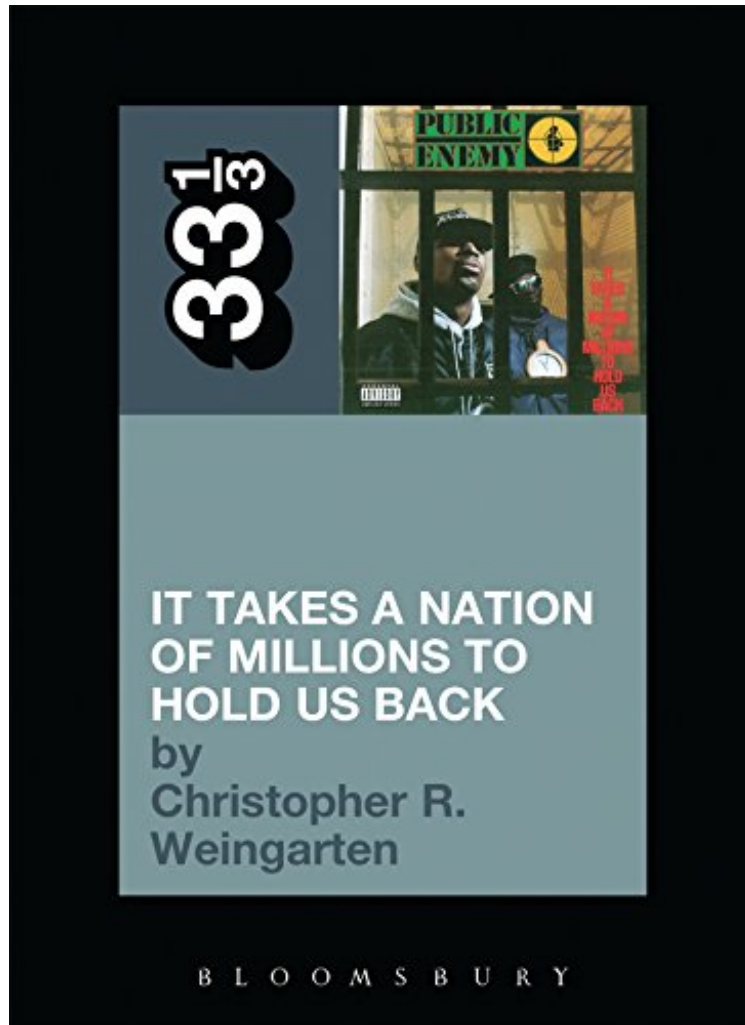


(Online library) Public Enemy's It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back (33 1/3)

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Christopher R. Weingarten
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#703626 in Books Christopher R Weingarten 2010-04-08 2010-04-08 Original language: English PDF # 1 .26 x .2 x 4.711, .31 #File Name: 0826429130160 pages Public Enemy s It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back | File size: 36.Mb

Christopher R. Weingarten : Public Enemy's It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back (33 1/3) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Public Enemy's It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back (33 1/3):

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Amazing book for any true-school hip-hop head or anyone who appreciates the art of sampling By Dawn-Marie The best 33 and 1/3 books make you realize not only why an album is so great, but that it is better than you thought. I grew up listening to Public Enemy. I remember when "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos" was a "world premiere" video on MTV. I was a fourth-grader; a whiteboy from the sticks who

would soon be reading books by and about Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, Huey Newton, Marcus Garvey, and Eldridge Cleaver -- thanks to Chuck D and Public Enemy. P.E. was definitely my favorite group up through 1994, and even after the big miss with Muse-Sick-N-Hour-Mess-Age, I still cited them as my favorite group "of all time," with Nation of Millions #2 only to Illmatic. But somehow, over the past five years or so, P.E. and this album had fallen in my estimation. I was asked to compile a list of top 25 hip-hop albums of all time last year, and I ranked Nation of Millions... #25. Well, after reading this excellent book by Christopher Weingarten, it's back at #2 and may even be knocking on the door of #1 -- and for reasons I never would have suspected. Growing up, I was always much more concerned with lyricism than production. I remember I used to consider hip-hop beats "background music" for the rhyming. My favorite emcees as a kid were Rakim, KRS-ONE, and Chuck D. Rapping was about being smart, first and foremost, and it wasn't until The Chronic that I really started paying attention to beats. Now, I make beats (or at least try to) on the MPC 2000, and I've been doing that an and off again for 15 years. I collect records and always listen for samples, but this is a comparatively recent development, if you consider that the bulk of the formative years of my hip-hop education came B.C. (Before Chronic). Thus, while I have a keen appreciation for what guys like Pete Rock, J Dilla, DJ Premier, and even Kanye West do and have done with their samplers, I never really gave a whole lot of thought to the Bomb Squad. Chris Weingarten's book is actually much more about Nation's production than Chuck D's lyrical content -- and that really surprised me. As a beat-digger myself, I loved Weingarten's approach. He takes each of the major samples used by Public Enemy, and traces not only why and how they were used, but also the conditions under which the original recordings were made! The amount of care and research required to do this is staggering, and it is no surprise that at 138 pages (prior to Works Cited), this is the longest of the five hip-hop books in the 33 and 1/3 series. For example, when looking at P.E.'s usage of James Brown's "The Grunt," Weingarten goes back to an evening when the J.B.'s were in mutiny, refusing to take the stage for the Godfather of Soul unless he paid them more. Refusing to bow down to his band, Brown tracked down Bootsy Collins and his Pacesetters and sent his private jet to pick them up and play the show! From here, we get "The Grunt." Each of the major samples used are traced in similar fashion, and I especially liked the sections on Isaac Hayes and Rufus Thomas (and the whole Wattstax thing, which I knew nothing about). The denseness of information caused me to read this book over three or four days, whereas I finished most of the other 33 and 1/3 books in a day or two, but the entire time I was reading it, I kept relaying stories to my wife and telling her, "This is like the greatest thing I've ever read!" All the while, I was listening to Nation of Millions, and I haven't stopped. It is once again in heavy rotation, and now -- for the first time ever -- I truly appreciate its greatness. You know how P.E. had that chaotic, rock 'n roll intensity to their music? That's because they didn't sequence their beats -- they'd all stand around at samplers, tapping them in, jamming like a live band! Four samplers (or more), with even Flavor Flav responsible for the snares! These are the kind of details that I love, and they're missing from all of the other 33 and 1/3 books (save Paul's Boutique) that I've read. I've enjoyed all the hip-hop books in the series, and Paul's Boutique gives it a run for its money, but this is the best. Stop what you're doing and buy this book NOW!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The Series at Its Best
By C. Koch
This book is a great example of what all the books in the 33 1/3 series should be. It offers a concise explanation of how the album was constructed, why, and why it all matters. The story of It Takes A Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back has been told before. If you are writing a term paper, check out these sources too: Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation, Check the Technique: Liner Notes for Hip-Hop Junkies, and Don't Rhyme for the Sake of Riddlin': The Authorized Story of Public Enemy. Having already read the above, I was hesitant to purchase this book. However, not only did the author offer additional information, he uses a clever literary device. Weingarten argues that the back story of each of the samples that makes the music of It Takes a Nation are essentially important to the new songs that were created. I think going into an explanation would only detract from a new reader's enjoyment, but (in my opinion) it is executed perfectly. Before reading this book, I could explain why this album is a favorite. But after reading it, I understand so much better! It is a sum of many things I love. James Brown. Funkadelic. Stax Records. And, most of all, sampling: taking something old and making something new with it. For me, it was a big "Ah-Ha!" moment. Weingarten explained to me something that had been swirling around in my head for years. Thanks. When I was finished, I let it sit for a week. Then I picked it up and read it again. Even if my analysis sounds a little over the top, if you are interested in Public Enemy, enjoy music history, or love learning about sample sources, you won't be disappointed with this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating and Meandering Exploration
By TMFHitman
The book contains a lot of background on the making of the record - PE's transition from "Yo! Bum Rush the Show," their relationship with Russell Simmons, the Beastie Boys, Rick Rubin and Run DMC, how the beats were built, Chuck D's involvement in the production, so on and so forth. The information is all interesting, but what sets the book apart is the same thing that set the record apart: the samples. Christopher Weingarten starts pulling on strings to see where they lead, and you get the sense that he could have gone on for another hundred pages with no problem. If the records sampled were played in your house growing up, I'm not sure how riveting this book would be for you. If you were raised on Neil Diamond and Joan Baez (or some similarly James-Brown-less palette) and Nation of Millions sounded like a screed from another planet when you heard it, then every page of this book is a revelation and a story well-told. Weingarten pulls out individual samples and tells the stories of those

records, often tying them to PE, explaining how they were chosen. The writing is crisp and the writer has a good eye for interesting detail, regularly stopping to tell a good story only tangentially related to Nation of Millions. After reading the book, I listened to the album, and it's almost new to me. An immensely enjoyable trip overall.

Christopher R. Weingarten provides a thrilling account of how the Bomb Squad produced such a singular-sounding record: engineering, sampling, scratching, constructing, deconstructing, reconstructing - even occasionally stomping on vinyl that sounded too clean. Using production techniques that have never been duplicated, the Bomb Squad plundered and reconfigured their own compositions to make frenetic splatter collages; they played samples by hand together in a room like a rock band to create a "not quite right" tension; they hand-picked their samples from only the ugliest squawks and sirens. Weingarten treats the samples used on Nation Of Millions as molecules of a greater whole, slivers of music that retain their own secret histories and folk traditions. Can the essence of a hip-hop record be found in the motives, emotions and energies of the artists it samples? Is it likely that something an artist intended 20 years ago would re-emerge anew? This is a compelling and thoroughly researched investigation that tells the story of one of hip-hop's landmark albums.

About the Author Christopher R. Weingarten is a professional freelancer living in Brooklyn, whose work can currently be seen in the Village Voice, RollingStone.com, Spin, Revolver, The Guardian, eMusic and much more. His speech, Twitter And The Death Of Music Criticism at the 140 Characters Conference in New York became a viral sensation in 2009. He reviewed 1000 of 2009's new records over Twitter on his account, @1000TimesYes. He is the shadowy figure behind hipsterpuppies.tumblr.com and is also the author of its corresponding book, upcoming via NAL/Penguin.