



Different Stages

By Charles E. Rogers

For over five years Salt 'N' Pepa has ruled the female rap roster. Sure, there have been bonafide challengers, most notably Queen Latifah, MC Lyte and Monie Love. However, none have the recording track record of Salt 'N' Pepa and there just-as-famous dejay Spinderella. Why?

"Because Salt 'N' Pepa were the first females to break ground, to really challenge the male dominated, chauvinistic rap establishment," says one respected journalist. "They exploded on the scene so large they became almost rap goddesses, so to speak. So even though people like Latifah, Lyte and Monie Love are also very popular, Salt 'N' Pepa are so big and so consistent with their hits they're in a class by themselves."

Such logical insight makes even more sense considering Salt 'N' Pepa's ability to overcome an horrendous release like 1988's "Twist And Shout." That year many predicted they had gone so commercial they were headed down the Fat Boys road to hip-hop oblivion. It was not to be.

Coming back '90s strong with the platinum "Expression" single, the smash follow-up hit "Independent," from their gold Black's Magic LP, they reclaimed their throne. One of the rap queens had a little prince — a new baby boy. Pepa's pregnancy even helped the act get it together in that it had the time to regroup and re-evaluate things.

Salt confirmed this on an MTV interview. She said she was aware things were kind of getting out of hand and the group wasn't as focused as it should have been. The time off she, Pepa and Spin took from touring while Pepa was expecting gave them a second wind, a chance to put things in proper perspective.

At press time, the ladies were getting their third wind. They took an entire month off from the business, attending a fancy east-coast health spa together. Reportedly, they did it so Pepa could regain her sexy pre-pregnancy figure, and the three of them could get physically and mentally prepared for 1991, a year they'll do extensive touring, more recording, and even some writing and producing of their own.

On the real tip, Salt 'N' Pepa's longevity stems from their ability to grow as artists. Their manager Herbie Azur is a shrewd businessman, thus a vital figure in the act's success equation. "Herb knows what time it is," Salt recently said. "He knows how to make the right deals, and he gives us a lot of respect and participation in our careers."

Azur's biggest success stories are Salt 'N' Pepa and Kid 'N' Play, both livin' large. Like Kid

'N' Play, don't be surprised to sooner or later see a Salt 'N' Pepa cartoon series. "We would like that," said Pepa. "But more important to us is to keep our music on the dope tip. That's what's going to keep the fans in our corner and us on top."

Salt 'N' Pepa have become rap's most outspoken feminists.

Salt 'n' Pepa: first ladies of rap

"Independent" and "Expression" both make liberated statements that dog the negative female images many male rappers seem bent on perpetuating.

Through their music and vid-

eos the ladies are riding a new wave of productive, positive, strong female concepts, designed to redefine the image of the Black woman in general, and female rappers in particular.

Sorry, Icey Jaye, it's more than a "Girl Thing." For Salt 'N' Pepa it's a woman's prerogative to express herself and be independent.

Now that's why this superstar trio will long reign supreme.

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