

# Def Jam Records



- **Rick Rubin** (on right) from Brooklyn suburb; “DIY” punk producer as teen
- Age 19: his band Hose opened for the Meat Puppets, Hüsker Dü, and the Butthole Surfers.
- 1983: Rubin studies beat-juggling and scratching with "Zulu Nation" DJs.
- With then-concert promoter Russell Simmons (on left), Rubin starts "**Def Jam Records**", signs artists T La Rock and **LL Cool J**.

# Def Jam Records



- **Russell Simmons** (Queens): in early 80s, concert promoter, wanted to bring hip-hop to a larger market.
- DJ Joseph Simmons (brother): member of **Run D.M.C.**
- 1983: Def Jam signs punk band "Beastie Boys" (w/ Rubin as member)
  - Rubin convinces them to switch to rap
  - fires only female member.
- **"Beastie Boys" to open for Madonna's *Virgin* tour.**

# Beasties & Madonna on tour '83-84

- **Madonna and the Beastie Boys slashed by the critics:**
  - "singing out of tune and out of rhythm"
  - "their image has completely overshadowed their music."
  - Madonna "stole" Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean,' behaved like a brat.



# Beasties & Madonna on tour '83-84

- **Critical failure, audience success:**
  - White artists, playing to suburban white audiences but **produced by African-Americans** [Madonna produced by R&B Reggie Lucas].
  - Enigma for baby-boom parents: "our children aren't **rebels**. They're just apathetic beasts, slackers, and trashy sex-objects."



# 1986: Hip-Hop Breakthrough

- **Rap before 1985 =**
  - › **marginal novelties:** Blondie (soft punk) or disco/funk crossovers like the Sugar Hill Gang
  - › **TV news reports:** "gangs" (Zulu Nation) "dance and rap instead of fighting!" --> *break-dancing craze*
  - › **marginal political expression:** "The Message" (Grand Master Flash) and "Planet Rock" (Afrika Bambaataa)...minor R&B hits
- **1986:** Def Jam Records promotes *License to Ill* and *Raising Hell* to Columbia records
  - › **License to Ill** (Beastie Boys) was the fastest-selling "debut album" in Columbia Records history.
  - › **Raising Hell** (Run DMC) included a collaboration with Aerosmith

# 1986: Hip-Hop Breakthrough

- CONTRAST with BARRY GORDY
  - [Review:] **Gordy** chose "refined" R&B styles, pitched to *teen romantics* in a time of cultural revolution
  - **Rubin and Simmons** chose blatantly confrontational hip-hop, pitched to *teen angst* in a time of white prosperity
- Rubin repeats this formula with Bronx M.C. Carleton Ridenour (aka Chuck D)
  - Eventually signs (resistant) Chuck w/ friend "Flava Flave"
  - Took name "Public Enemy" from Chuck D's song "Public Enemy Number 1"