



PUBLIC ENEMY
CALIFORNIA, 1987

I knew Chuck D [right] and Flavor Flav before Public Enemy became Public Enemy and we were very close. They came out to California [from New York] in 1987 – the year they released their first album, *Yo! Bum Rush the Show* – and I showed them around town. They were

filming a rock show on MTV called *IRS Records Presents the Cutting Edge*, which I might have helped them get on – I helped a lot of hip-hop acts get rock press back then. I persuaded Chuck and Flavor that [punk band] Minor Threat were an important band with similar ideals and that

they might want to wear these shirts – the black sheep was an image I thought they could identify with. They were like, 'We trust Glen, we'll put on the shirts, all good.' Punk and hip-hop were interchangeable to me, but not everybody saw it that way, so it was necessary to do things like this.



FUGAZI
IRVING PLAZA,
NEW YORK, 1995

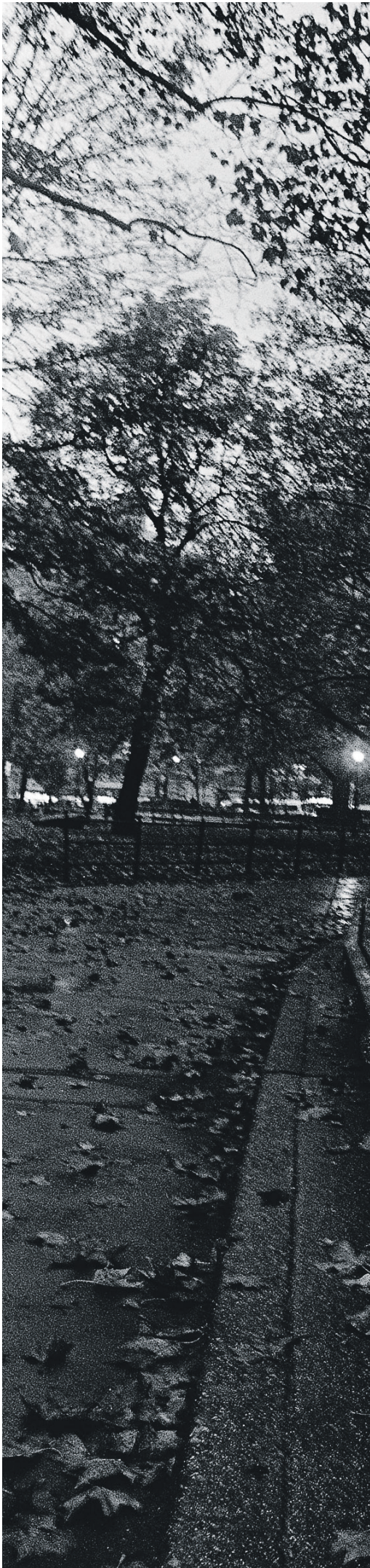
This shot [of Fugazi vocalist and lead guitarist Guy Picciotto] was taken at a time in the mid-90s when hip-hop was beginning to become generic and things in music generally, for me at least, weren't as exciting as they had been. Fugazi were a big exception. They are one of my favourite bands of all time – for their music, their integrity, for their stamina at

sticking to their ideals. This particular gig is a blur, but I remember that they were playing at Irving Plaza three nights in a row and we had a wonderful time. It's always a great emotional outlet when they play. I did a whole book on the band called *Keep Your Eyes Open*; this is the only image that appears in both that book and the new one.



SLICK RICK
NEW YORK CITY, 1989

This was taken on the set of a video he was doing in New York. I'd already shot the cover for his first album, *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick*, which had been a big success on Def Jam the year before. Here he's wearing my ski jacket turned inside out because he thought it looked cool – at that time a lot of people were wearing their jackets inside out because of the crazy patterns. I can't remember if it was me or him who suggested that he wear all of his gold chains at the same time, but that's what ended up happening. He had all his gold with him – he was carrying it around in a plastic bag – and it was all real gold. It was a pretty crazy shoot, but we had a lot of fun.



LL COOL J
MADISON SQUARE PARK,
NEW YORK, 1985

BEATS, PUNKS AND STUNTS – AND A ZELIG OF US SUBCULTURE

American photographer [Glen E Friedman](#) witnessed first-hand the birth of skateboarding culture, the rise of hardcore punk and the golden age of hip-hop. As his best work goes on show, he talks to [Killian Fox](#) about his favourite shots

Glen E Friedman has made a career out of being at the right place at the right time. Over the past four decades, and particularly from the mid-70s to the early 90s, the American photographer has proven himself adept at capturing cultural phenomena in their formative moments. For evidence, see the opening pages of his new book, *My Rules*, an exhilarating mishmash of his most enduring work. (A show of the same name, based on the book, opened in London last week.)

In the first spread, a teenage skateboarder rides the asphalt of west LA, Friedman is still in junior high, and skateboarding is gaining momentum – and notoriety – as a west-coast subculture. Turn the page and the second spread, dated 1982, plunges us into the sweat and fury of a hardcore

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY GLEN E FRIEDMAN



People didn't really know who LL Cool J was when I took this. His music had only come out in the generic Def Jam burgundy covers, with no visuals, so I was brought in to take some publicity shots. It was the first day I ever met LL in person. We walked from the Def Jam office to Madison Square Park. It was nearly dusk – the park lights were on but you still

see some daylight – and in the main publicity shot he looks tough, cool and hard, which is what we were trying to present. But in the book there are a couple more photos of him where you see the big smile and the softer kid he really was. They show a little more of the reality of that day. He was a 17-year-old with a huge ego, but a sweet guy at heart.

BEASTIE BOYS WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK, NEW YORK, 1986

I'd shot Beastie Boys the previous year in L.A, when they were opening for Madonna, and there was this one photo where I got Adam Yauch to run up a palm tree and push himself off, and everybody loved it. So when I came to shoot them in New York, I was like, let's do that again on your home turf. We were in Washington Square

Park, the centre of everything in lower Manhattan. I've got five or 10 photos of him in the air – this was the best one. The composition is right, the attitude in everyone's face is right... the only problem was that Mike D [centre] wasn't wearing his sunglasses, which [Def Jam label boss] Rick Rubin thought was a shame.



BAD BRAINS A7, NEW YORK CITY, 1981

This was an incredible moment. A7 was a small bar in the East Village where a lot of hardcore punk bands played in the early 80s. The energy that Bad Brains exuded could fill an arena, so imagine what it was like when they played in this room, which was just 20 feet across. You can see how low the ceiling is – [singer] HR's fist is nearly touching it –

and the stage is only six inches off the ground so the crowd is almost on the same level as the band. I'd been following Bad Brains for a while – I probably saw them first in 79 and had seen them play plenty of times before this. I rarely shoot a band the first time I see them – you've got to find what they're about and whether they inspire you.



punk gig in Staten Island – Friedman documented the US punk-rock scene as it was taking shape on both coasts.

He was also present at the start of hip-hop's golden age. The third spread, dated 1985, features portraits of Run-DMC, one of the genre's first great breakout acts. To quote Henry Rollins, who appears several times in the book fronting the mighty California punk band Black Flag: "He was there at the beginning of so much cool stuff in so many different areas, it's not funny."

So how did he manage it?

"Obviously I was lucky to be born when I was and grow up where I did," Friedman concedes when I call him at his home in New York. "My mom moved me to California in third grade and I happened to live in an area that was the epicentre of skateboarding." But, he insists, it wasn't purely a matter



Skateboarder Jay Adams photographed in west LA in 1978: 'This was a typical backyard pool session,' says Friedman. 'Everyone gets out of school at three o'clock, someone finds out about a pool that's been drained and you skate it before the owners get back at six.'

of luck. He got up on a board long before he picked up a camera and was well-placed to document future stars such as Jay Adams and Tony Alva when they started pushing skateboarding to new extremes in the mid-70s.

From there, it was a natural progression to punk rock, he says. "When punk came along, it was a perfect fit for skateboarders – the angst and speed, the intensity of it. It was what we were trying to find all along. All of a sudden bands we liked were playing in these smaller venues and I'm like, holy shit, I could touch the person. I've got to start taking pictures of this."

He did more than take pictures. When he heard a demo by the infamous LA band Suicidal Tendencies, he offered to produce their debut album as well as shoot the artwork and ended up becoming their manager. Friedman has

always had the touch of the impresario about him. When hip-hop became a force to be reckoned with in the early 80s, he forged a connection with Def Jam and helped promote the record label's up-and-coming acts, including Beastie Boys, LL Cool J and Public Enemy. As well as shooting their publicity material and album covers, he fought to win recognition and coverage for hip-hop acts in the rock press. "American music was always much more segregated," he says. "To get them in those magazines and on the radio, it wasn't the easiest thing."

Ultimately – and this explains the joyful, all-in-together approach that informs his new book – Friedman refused to differentiate between his great cultural passions. "Skateboarding, punk and hip-hop – they are almost completely interchangeable to me," he

says. "It's all about attitude – that's the unifying element." The proof, he adds, is in the mixture. "When I introduce people from these supposedly different cultures, they all get along fine."

My Rules is at 14 Henrietta St, London WC2 until 18 January. The book My Rules is published by Rizzoli (£35). To order a copy for £29.75 go to bookshop.theguardian.com or call 0330 333 6846



ONLINE



See more of Glen E Friedman's photographs at observer.co.uk/new-review