

'We're the Dreamers'

Senators Hear Opposing Views on Piracy from Two Rappers

On September 30, 2003, a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs held a hearing on copyright infringement. Two rap stars came to testify.

LL Cool J: Artists are a huge, and extremely important part of American culture. We're the dreamers. We don't write

the laws like you guys. We don't necessarily have the power on certain levels that you guys have, but we're the dreamers. This is—we're the guys who make the movies and create the scenarios where the American guy goes in and wins, and the rest of the world sees it and says, "America's not so bad."

We need protection. We need help. A lot of people will say, “Well, I’ll take care of myself. Don’t worry about me,” and there are other artists who feel differently, and I understand that. I have—I don’t feel like anyone shouldn’t have the right to their own opinion. I just know that, when you have producers, you have the drummer who’s just a session drummer, he’s not LL. He’s not getting the big check and doing the movie thing and all of the talk show stuff that I do, but he’s on the drum. He’s making a living. If you take this guy—or you have a producer, a keyboardist, a songwriter—these people can’t live.

The entertainment industry—we’re just going to give it away. We’re just going to say, “Okay, now it’s free. That’s it. It’s okay.” And that’s it? It’s just—in my opinion, I just think it’s anti-American, and I think the thing that makes America great is the fact that we can get—we can make money and create jobs in all of these different ways... I’m not against technology. I’m not against the Internet. I just wish that these things could be done—

music could be downloaded legitimately.

Chuck D: I speak at many colleges. They know it’s a crumbling economy. Increasing tuition—the college student would rather have Wendy’s and lunch than try to buy expensive CDs. The collusion of five record companies and four radio networks and TV outlets is becoming an issue of the FCC. And as it pertains to artists, it stifles the growth of grassroots businesses from the bottom up to the top...

Music was sold and exchanged at swap meets, flea markets, illegal tapes were sold to build and promote the music in the first place in the Eighties and in the Nineties. And as far as rock ‘n’ roll, blues licks were taken from the Mississippi Delta without authorization, so people could spend \$180 to check out the Rolling Stones do them all over again.

So the record industry is hypocritical and the domination has to be shared. P2P to me, means “power to the people.” And let’s get this to a balance. And that’s all we’re talking about.