

Hip-hop artists lead Philly's Live 8 show

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Philly was where hip-hop represented itself during the U.S. edition of the Live 8 concert series.

Kanye West, Jay-Z, Alicia Keys, Destiny's Child, the Black-Eyed Peas and host Will Smith took to the stage before a sun-drenched crowd that stretched a mile down the Benjamin Franklin Parkway from the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

After British rockers the Kaiser Chiefs kicked things off with their hit "I Predict a Riot," hometown boy Smith took the stage to begin hosting duties.

"Right now you're watching the biggest concert event in the history of the world," Smith said. Pleading for leaders of the G-8 summit to "end this daily tragedy" of African poverty, Smith was beamed around the world by satellite as he led the global audience in snapping their fingers every three seconds, signifying the child death rate in Africa.

"Today, we are here to declare our interdependence," said Smith in the city where the Declaration of Independence was signed. "Today we hold this truth to be self-evident: We are all in this together."

Later, the rapper-turned-movie star returned for the most theatrical performance of the day. He was carried onto the stage on a throne, with women spreading rose petals in his path. The theme from "Rocky" played just yards from the steps that Sylvester Stallone famously

climbed in "Rocky."

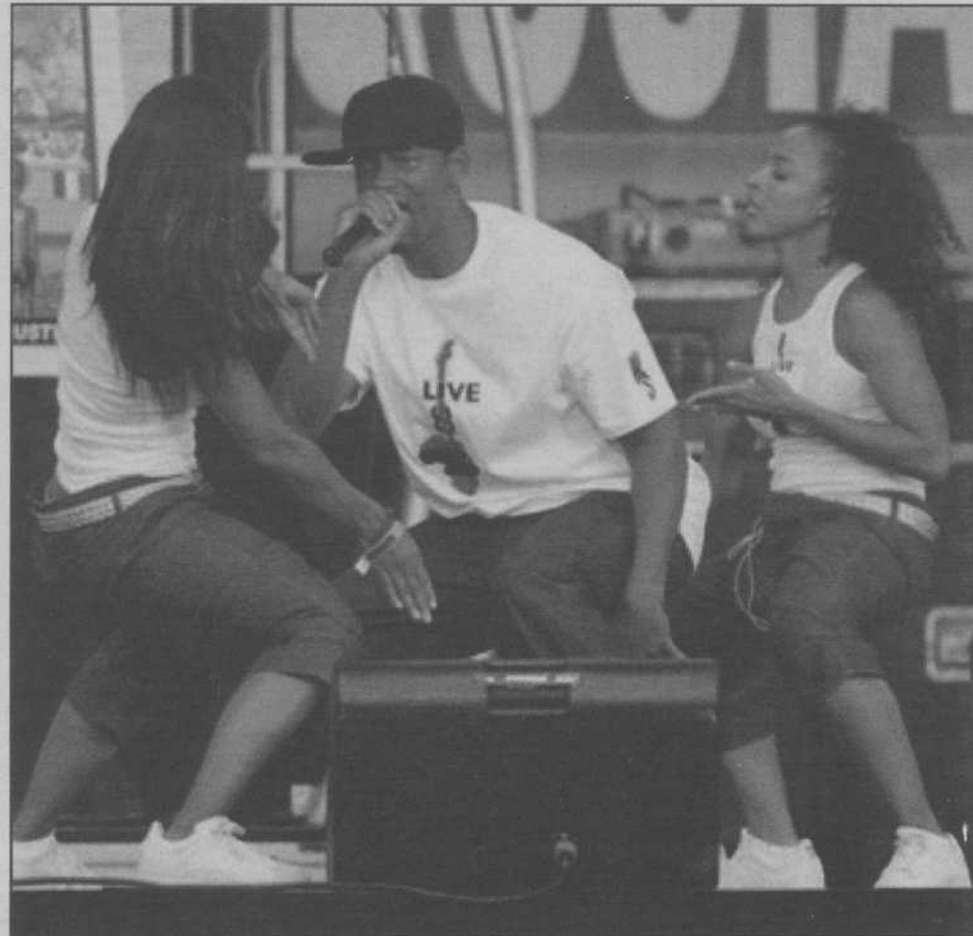
That segued into a repeated sample of "the champ is here!" line that Smith delivered in the movie "Ali." Smith then introduced his old sidekick, DJ Jazzy Jeff, and they performed "Gettin' Jiggy Wit' It" before launching down memory lane with the theme from Smith's early '90s sitcom, "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," and his classic hit "Summertime."

Smith's star power was only matched by Stevie Wonder, who closed the show by effectively turning Smith's finger snaps into handclaps. Backed by a dapper 11-piece band, Wonder proved he wasn't too old for a good funk groove on "Higher Ground" and "What the Fuss" — which had the blind singer strutting out in front of his keyboards.

The final tune of the night was Wonder's classic "Superstition." One concert goer, Paula Abdul, couldn't resist the beat, dancing enthusiastically on the side of the stage and, by extension, on the jumbo screens.

"The meaning of being an artist is to really do these kinds of things," Wonder said backstage. "We cannot stop now. The only way we can end this is to give more love."

Earlier, Kanye West performed "Diamonds From Sierra Leone" in front of an all-female string section outfitted in black skirts and dark stripe-like masks over their eyes. He delivered some of the harshest words of the day, lamenting "politicians who



Philadelphia native Will Smith, center, performs with dancers at the Live 8 concert in Philadelphia on Saturday. Live 8 is a global effort to raise awareness of African problems.

drive home in their Bentleys every night and watch thousands of Africans die."

Backstage, he told The Associated Press, "I'm not into politics, I'm into people. I know that these people are dying. My people. This is an event that will go down in history."

After Linkin Park started their set, Jay-Z came out for a mash-up with the rock-rap group. Jigga had the crowd chanting "Hova," his smooth cool in sharp contrast to Linkin Park's vein-popping fervor. The combination

made for one of the day's most popular performances, especially on Jay-Z's "Big Pimpin'."

One of the first acts, the Black-Eyed Peas, took the

stage with their usual energy and frenetic weaving, performing "Let's Get it Started." The rap group also pulled out a Bob Marley classic as they sang with obvious

symbolism, "Get up, stand up, don't give up the fight."

Of course, there was much more than hip-hop.

"Today's gathering is not about charity, it's about humanity," said "Rush Hour" actor Chris Tucker.

Fans stormed down the parkway just before 6 a.m. and pressed as far forward as possible, but only those closest to the front were able to see the stage. The less fortunate were treated to giant screen broadcasts of the concert, along with clips from the other cities.

Organizers and performers said as many as 1 million fans were there, but that was impossible to verify and seemed overblown, with several hundred thousand seeming more accurate. Police declined to provide an estimate.

Bon Jovi performed "Living on a Prayer" after being introduced by actor Don Cheadle as hailing from "the most exotic of locales" — New Jersey.

"An amazing event," Cheadle said backstage. "Hopefully it will light a fuse that will continue to go for years and years."



Photo special to Sentinel-Voice


A TOAST TO THE QUEEN OF KINGS

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