

HIP HOP heavy-hitter Darryl 'DMC' McDaniels rocked the weekend with a three-day spectacular featuring a meet-and-greet session, a motivational speech and a mighty performance (plus a surprise visit from a superstar friend). While many musicians stop in for a show and fly out straight after, the global hip hop hero took the opportunity to make a deeper connection with his fans, as Assistant Editor **Nawaar Farooq** found out.



Singing star delights fans

DMC kicked off the three-day extravaganza organised by Jam Up at Virgin Megastore at City Centre Bahrain, where he posed for photographs, signed autographs and chatted with his devoted followers.

Down-to-earth and easy to talk to, he warmly motioned for people to come closer and gave the sense that he was familiar with each and every one of his fans, which proved to be refreshing and engaging. People of all ages came to the signing, in which DMC was joined by local DJ and producers Flipperachi and DJ Outlaw.

Ron Lee, a visitor from neighbouring Oman, came to the meet-and-greet on short notice for a sweet outcome. "I just happened to look at *GulfWeekly* that morning and saw that he was going to be here. I figured I would come check him out while I was visiting Bahrain. I've been a fan of his music for a long time and loved *King of Rock*," he said.

Even people who were born decades after the introduction of Run DMC's rap-rock hip hop genre came to show their admiration. Since the younger fans aren't always able to attend concerts, it was great to have other outlets for them to engage with the star.

St Christopher's School student Hamzah Malik, 13, from Saar, said: "I'm so excited to meet him, say hello and shake his hand."

He thought the 'meet-and-greet' event was 'the next best thing' to attending a show. He added that he looked up to the star so much that he even donned the DMC look when he was in Grade 6.

One of the most fascinating aspects about having a musical icon like DMC in the kingdom is that it attracts all kinds of audiences. A universal love of hip hop lives passionately through fans of the genre around the globe.

Santiago Belza, 26, a basketball coach in Bahrain, said: "This is an awesome experience. I'm from Argentina and I cannot believe that I'm meeting a legend like him here in Bahrain. You don't get to meet guys like him every day."

"His music will still be alive as long as the listeners keep passing it down the generations. I'm not as much of a fan of rap nowadays. To me, the old hip hop is the best."

One of the most memorable moments was

when a bearded man crept through the crowd with his face hidden behind a stack of flyers for the event. He snuck in carefully and once he made it to the side of the staged area, he humbly revealed his identity.

To everyone's surprise, Jam Up's previous star performer and lead guitarist of Guns N' Roses, Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal, made it back to Bahrain to support his fellow artist and friend DMC. The two shook hands and hugged with giant smiles on their faces, which added a nice touch to the evening.

DMC took his time with each fan and made sure everyone left with a signature and a smile. And, for those who didn't have a ride home right away, sponsors UBER had representatives ready and waiting to sign them up for an introductory offer of whisking them home in a luxurious cab ride.

Organisers of Jam Up say they have been supported by the Faieq AlZayani Company.



Making a connection



MOTIVATING FOLLOWERS: DMC giving insight into the music industry to his fans at Malja in Amwaj

DARRYL 'DMC' McDaniels gave an inspirational speech to music fans, provided a history lesson on hip hop and an insight into the music industry at Red Bull's Creative Space, Malja in Amwaj.

Arriving last Thursday evening in none other than hard-core rock fashion, a line of Harley Davidson motorbikes revved through the parking lot and lit up the night with their headlights. Men in leather vests, bandanas and rocker attire waited for DMC's car to pull up and again, he walked out into the crowd with lots of energy and a genuine smile.

In a backstage chat with *GulfWeekly*, he said: "My favourite part of being in Bahrain so far is this facility; it makes me feel at home with the decorations, the interior, the artists, and the studio and the stage. It feels very friendly and community driven."

The art of making music has been revolutionised through waves of technology and DMC enjoys studio recording and live shows equally and views them as two parts of the same process. He also feels that one of the most important factors of growing an art form is building a connection with an audience.

"Make the best music that you can possibly make. Before you ask someone to buy your

music, give it away for free, so you can develop a relationship with the audience.

"It's different now. People can make their own music at home with the technology around today. Like in New York City, guys will make their music and then go out and try to hawk it on the streets. They'll try to give you their CD and then they'll ask for 10 dollars and you're like, 'I'm not paying you for that.' I want to know if I like your music first. When you put your music out for free, you create a relationship with the audience, so when you do put up something for sale, they'll be happy to buy it."

With all of the industry changes between the technology and talent, DMC pointed out what he feels would strengthen the genre. "In the past 20 years what has changed about hip hop is the lack of creativity. Hip hop has become lazy and the young people have to challenge themselves to create presentations, works of art, stories and impressive works," he said.

"There was a time when everybody rapped and it was good. Now everybody raps and lot of people shouldn't be rapping. For real, there should be regulations. I don't know how some of these guys get a record deal. That shows you the mind-set of the people controlling the industry. They need to change the leadership."

As of now, DMC is keeping the sounds of rap-

rock alive by collaborating with fellow Jam Up artist Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal of Guns N' Roses. A full-length heavy metal LP collaboration with former Exodus singer Rob Dukes and his new band Generation Kill is in the works, which will be produced entirely by Bumblefoot.

"Working with Bumblefoot is like *Walk this Way* on steroids. Imagine all the original sounds. It's going to be a lot of fun when it's finished," he said regarding the upcoming album. "That's what it's all about. Connecting with other artists and musicians and sharing experiences."

Following the interview, local comedian Ali 'Fingerz' introduced the visitor to the audience.

DMC pounced on stage enthusiastically and heartily welcomed everyone. Fans were comfortably seated on soft pillows and cushions that were scattered across the room. A giant chalkboard with a sketch of Run DMC was illuminated behind him and the environment was relaxed and opened up the door for a very conversational tone.

He gave an interactive 90-minute speech, which included topics such as the evolution of hip hop from disco, a chronology of his career with Run DMC, an explanation of the comic book series he started and advice on how to elevate art and music and create progress and change not only within individuals, but the world. While he gave

the speech, he also broke out into song a few times, which made the presentation even more entertaining and engaging.

Director of Talentfreeflow, Rawia Beyhum, 37, from Janabiya came to watch the presentation, and said: "I've been listening to Run DMC since I was nine and I found his speech to be totally inspirational."

"If he was staying here longer, it would be awesome to get him into the public schools in Bahrain. The best thing I think he said was to 'just be'. A lot of people try to please everyone else around them and that just takes them away from themselves."

US Navy colleagues Simone Odom, 37, and Laresa Buxton, 32, also came to see one of their favourite stars that evening. "We grew up with Run DMC and to get an artist like that here in Bahrain is an opportunity we couldn't miss," said Simone. "I thought it was awesome and a great cultural experience to showcase what true hip hop sounds like, looks like and where it started is great," added Laresa.

The night ended on a fun-filled note with DMC's official DJ, Charlie Chan Soprano, spinning late 1980s and early 1990s hip hop hits (with his head, even), and a performance by a group of break dancers, which kept the energy flowing throughout the evening.



Review: DMC – Club Wrangler, Juffair Grand Hotel

DMC topped off his three-day extravaganza with a riveting performance on Friday night, while sharing the limelight with local musicians and producers Flipperachi, DJ Outlaw and local band Phat Nutz.

It started, however, with a moment of silence. Darryl 'DMC' McDaniels called for quiet in memory of the late Run DMC member Jam Master Jay before launching into an hour-long set.

After that thoughtful gesture, he broke into the hit *It's Like That*. Rocking a black AC/DC tee, sweat beads glistened on his forehead and led to the protruding veins in his neck as he belted out lyrics with conviction. His official DJ, Charlie Chan Soprano, joined him to mix the tracks and keep things fresh.

Of course, it's nice when musicians do something unique for a performance. The rapper normally has a harder lyrical flow, but he decided to slow it down and do something different by serenading the ladies in the audience.

One of the cool things about having a pioneer of hip hop culture perform is one gets a pretty good sense of the artist's personal tastes. DMC made it very clear that nothing can come close to one of his favourite brands, as he started into his next number, *My Adidas*.

One dancer in particular had on a playful red sequined Adidas dress that glittered against the strobe lights. There was also a gentleman dressed like the late rap legend, Tupac Shakur. I wondered if maybe I should have stepped up my game in some cool kicks and some bold old school sunglasses and a retro basketball cap as well.

The next song transitioned into full heavy metal mode with a new track called *Fired Up* that DMC is launching with Rob Dukes' band, Generation Kill. It almost felt like I walked into a Metallica concert instead of DMC. The guitar riffs were so extreme that I felt the reverberations shoot through my body and rattle my spine. That's the beauty of collaboration... a powerful and intense fusion of styles and sounds.

Needless to say, this track garnered a lot of attention and cheers from the crowd and DMC informed us that this track will officially be released on May 31, which coincidentally happens to be

the star's birthday.

Apparently DMC also has a lady-stalker that he is quite wary of. He wanted to make sure that she wasn't hiding in the crowd somewhere, so he made a point to hop off stage and meet some of the females to make sure she wasn't lurking amongst them. He politely introduced himself and verified that none of them were the bad kind of crazy.

Once he confirmed that she was nowhere in sight, he climbed back on stage to belt out *Mary, Mary*, in which he lifted his shirt up and powerfully projected his arms outward. I wasn't sure if that was supposed to be attractive or intimidating, as I was still in the process of regaining a normal heart rate after hearing *Fired Up*. He followed that number with *Black Betty*.

Bahrain-based band Phat Nutz joined in on the festivities and played along to one of Run DMC's most recognisable tracks, *Tricky*. DMC started jumping around on stage while waving his arms in the air and led into smashing performances of the hits *Walk This Way* and *Seven Minutes of Funk*.

He mixed things up at the end and had Flipperachi join him for a fluid freestyle performance and closed the show down with Run DMC's *Rock Box* while the crowd roared with excitement.

Overall, a perfectly timed set before an audience of immense energy. It was another success for Jam Up organiser Jude D'Souza and his team who have created a music-based platform to attract global stars with the sole objective of empowering Bahrainis and Bahrain-based musicians.

— Nawaar Farooq

