

YO!

From left: Cheryl Wray, Sandra Denton and Dee Dee Roper

Rap divas get their due

Salt-n-Pepa win top honors at BET Awards

HIP HOP AWARDS '10. 8 tonight, BET.

By **MISTER MANN FRISBY**
For the Daily News

ATLANTA — NOT MANY hip-hop dynasties can say they were built on dependable household appliances.

Enter the Queens of Rap. Cheryl "Salt" Wray and Sandra "Pepa" Denton were Queensborough (N.Y.) Community College students and working part time at Sears in the mid-'80s. It was their sole mission in life to call New York customers and persuade them to extend the warranties on their washing machines. (One of their co-workers in the telemarketing cubicles was a youngster who talked often of how he was going to be a huge comedian one day. The world knows him as Martin Lawrence.)

In between making phone calls, they were persuaded by aspiring music mogul and Salt's then-boyfriend Herby "Luv Bug" Azor to make a rap record. The song was called "Showstoppers" and was a direct dis to popular rappers Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick. It was the way of the world in those days. If a female rapper was to get any respect, or attention, she had to take a lyrical swing at one of the guys.

Once radio stations in New York and beyond got a hold of that record, the rest is history. Five albums, 15 million

units sold, and numerous world tours later, the "Queens of Rap" have woven themselves into the fabric of hip-hop history.

"They are a very significant part of hip-hop in that they were the first female rappers to go platinum and the first to rise to the occasion and demand respect for themselves," said iconic radio personality Lady B of WRNB-FM.

"They refused to be pushed to the side."

Not long after the group recorded their first full studio album, they went

on a mission to replace their original DJ, who had quit the group.

Dee Dee "Spinderella" Roper heard a rumor in school that Salt-n-Pepa were looking for a replacement and practiced nonstop with the assistance of A.D., her high school sweetheart.

Acing the audition was the easy part. The huge challenge was persuading her parents to let her hit the road on a national tour that conflicted with her senior year of high school.

"These women plucked me from the Pink House Projects in Brooklyn when I was 16 years old and changed my life forever," recalled Roper, who is now one of the most sought after celebrity DJs in the world. "It has been non-stop ever since."

Roper joined the group right in time

See **AWARDS** Page 31

Daily News Hot Button

Mister Mann Frisby will chat about the state of female rap at noon today.



PHILLY.COM/HOTBUTTON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2010

PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

PAGE 27

Continued from Page 27

to shoot the video for what music critics have often called one of the greatest hip-hop tracks of all time, "Push It."

"I missed a lot of 12th grade because I was on the road with the girls, but I had an agreement with the school that I would do my homework on time," she recalled. "When I graduated, the whole crowd was screaming, 'Ahhhh. Push It' as I walked down the aisle. It was so funny and embarrassing."

This groundbreaking trio was honored with the "I Am Hip Hop" Icon Award in Atlanta last week, during BET's "Hip Hop Awards '10" ceremony. The show will be broadcast tonight.

All eyes were on the pioneering rap group as they took the stage after a video montage of their career that included a recorded congratulatory message from their former co-worker Lawrence.

Among the audience members were peo-



Lady B: "Different ballgame."

ple of all generations and musical tastes, but it was obvious that the majority of attendees were likely babies or not yet born when Salt-n-Pepa debuted.

"It felt good to be honored by my peers as a pioneer and to receive a standing ovation from a younger generation," said Salt. "I saw Busta Rhymes and Puffy backstage and we hugged and laughed. They were genuinely excited for us and what we have accomplished."

Throughout the years, the trio earned a reputation for being workaholics, extremely driven to success. According to their former co-manager JP Edmund, Pepa once took to the stage sporting an eye patch after she cut her eye while removing a contact lens. She refused to miss the show.

"I worked those girls really hard," said Edmund. "At one point they did nine countries in 11 days and they both got sick. They kept it moving and finished, though. They had longevity because they just kept work-

ing hard no matter what."

All of the recent hype over Salt-n-Pepa with this award and their current "Legends of Hip-Hop" national tour, has many fans wondering why the female emcee has virtually disappeared.

Since Salt-n-Pepa kicked in that door, rappers like Da Brat, Queen Latifah, Lil' Kim, Foxy Brown, Missy Elliott and Eve have all joined the platinum club. But in recent years, tumbleweeds are blowing in the studios where mainstream female rappers once spit fire into microphones.

"It's deeper than asking where have all the females gone," said Lady B. "The question is where has real hip-hop gone. With the new technology and the nature of record companies, it's a whole different ballgame for everyone, not just the female emcees. They do exist, however. They're underground and on YouTube, but we have to find a way to get them to the mass-

See **AWARDS** Page 33