

Spotted



Former Pussycat Doll Nicole Scherzinger (left) and hip-hop star Ne-Yo boarding a

yacht at Jumeriah Beach Hotel before partying later at Cavalli Club. *TOWIE*'s Chloe Sims in Emirates' business class on a flight to the UK after a weekend in Dubai.

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Hot seat

A Tribe Called Quest

Ahead of a set at Casa Latina next week, A Tribe Called Quest decksmith Ali Shaheed Muhammad, 41, talks hip-hop, faith and politics with *Rob Garratt*



Despite not recording any fresh material since 1998, Tribe are still loved and respected around the world. Why do you think your records touched so many people?

I think it was because it was something true. Our music came from the heart... striving to [battle] segregation. It was just an honest and pure expression. I miss musicians who are that honest.

So do you think hip-hop has lost its way?

It's like anything. There's a divide; there's a lot [of music] about the individual, the attraction, how you're better than they are. Then there are a lot of artists speaking

about love and unity – but you don't think of them. They're not in the media.

'Music can be destructive and make you stray'

Can hip-hop remain a relevant art form?

I think society will dictate that. Hip-hop is an expression of life and society, and we still need that voice from the streets. If you take what's going on in America now, it's a very young country still trying to achieve the equality dictated

by the Constitution. There is still racism and segregation. I'm pretty sure if Obama is re-elected there will be more [ramifications], and the effects will be heard in hip-hop.

There was once talk of another Tribe album. Is that off the cards now?

You never know. We're not discussing it – we were discussing it at some point but nothing really came out of it. I don't want to be the one to burst the bubble and say it will happen when it doesn't. We're grateful for all the love and respect we've been shown.

If you met someone who'd never heard your music and you could play them just one song, which would you choose?

'Can I Kick It?', because it's just a fun song. I don't think it really encapsulates my full scope as an artist, but there's something about it that touches hip-hop culture.

As a Muslim, how do you feel about the mix of religion and music?

I know about the sensitivity of music and religion. To me hip-hop is poetry with music. Music can be seductive and destructive and a way to make you stray. I'll be DJing in Dubai and some of the music I play won't all be about uniting with humans and seeing from a spiritual perspective.

Do you have a message for your fans in Dubai?

I'm grateful for the opportunity [to play]. I hope to bridge the gaps, standing in one space and having a good time together for just a moment, putting something positive into the universe.

Ali Shaheed Muhammad plays on Thursday September 13 at Deep Crates at Casa Latina, Ibis Al Barsha (04 399 6699).

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