



Happy Mondays: Live in Barcelona ★★★★★ Label: MVD

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"I grew up in New York in the Seventies, and I've seen a lot of people who live life on the edge, but I've never before seen a group of people who had no idea where the edge is."

- Tina Weymouth on the Happy Mondays

A Happy Mondays concert on DVD? Call the coppshhhhhhh!

When you first see Shaun Ryder step onto the stage, wearing a black knit cap on his noggin and sporting a blue work shirt over a white T, you may think he looks like he's planning to audition for a new lineup of House of Pain. As soon as Ryder opens his mouth however, this document of a Happy Mondays reunion gig from 2004 begins to process you straight back to the heady days of Madchester. If you're too young to remember it, that'd be in the very early '90s, when the Mondays and the Stone Roses were the cover stars of NME and Melody Maker – not to mention when Melody Maker still *existed* – and even Northside could get a record deal. (Just kidding, lads; I still have a soft spot for *Chicken Rhythms*.)

The lineup of the Mondays seen here is far from original; it's basically just Ryder and his faithful companion, Bez, with an entirely new band. Instead of Gaz on drums, you've got James Portas, and in lieu of guitarist Mark Day, there's Kavin Sandhu and Johnny Dunne. It's a little surprising, actually, given that Gaz participated in other reunion shows during 2004; maybe he had other obligations that prevented him from making the trip to Barcelona.

Whatever the reasons for the slim original lineup content, this new version band is tight as hell. Ryder's voice is generally as good as ever (take that as you wish), and the set list is full of classics like opener "Kinky Afro," "Hallelujah," "24 Hour Party People," and even "Reverend Black Grape," the signature song of Ryder's and Bez's post-Mondays band, Black Grape. The set's heavy on *Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches* ("Donovan," "Loose Fit," and "Bob's Yer Uncle" are also performed), but, then, you'd expect that, given that it's the definitive Mondays album. The unfortunate bum note of the show comes as "Step On" begins with Ryder way off tune; he recovers relatively quickly, but given that it's the song most associated with the Mondays, it really should've been the highlight of the show across the board.

The disc is full of special features, including "A Pint with Shaun," where Ryder gives an often-unintelligible interview that screams for subtitles that never come. There's also an audio biography of the band that's recited over film of the band's performances, as well as footage of the group's sound check for the concert.

It's a shame no one's gotten 'round to reissuing any of the live videos from the band's heyday, like "One Louder – Live At Manchester Free Trade Hall" or "The Happy Mondays Party At G-MEX 25.3.90," but, in the meantime, this set will certainly serve to get your feet moving and your ass shaking.

~Will Harris
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