

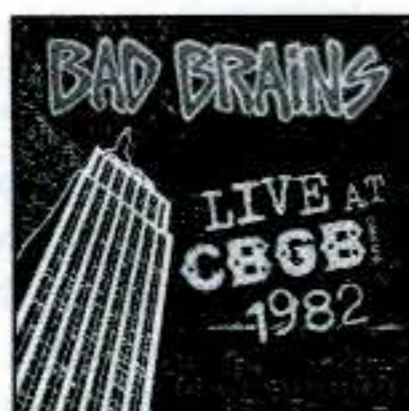
created the heavy, rockin' power-pop album of the year!

We knew Kastner could write melodic songs with the best; if he couldn't, he wouldn't have composed film scores, or collaborated with **MARK LANEGAN** and **EVAN DANDO**, or been able to entice **WIZ** to cross the ocean and join Doughboys after **MEGA CITY FOUR** split. But between his soaring, killer vocals, double-tracked and blowing cool, and the blasting backing tracks (with help from **FEAR**'s **LEE VING** and a strange crew recruited from **BLUE RODEO**, **RUSH**, **BIONIC**, **VOIVOD**, **DESCENDENTS/ALL**, and others), *Lucky* takes his hummable tunes into a new stratosphere. The best are the Lemonheads and Posies meets Swervedriver-juggernaut slam of tracks like "Everybody's Broken," "Trainwreck Magnetism," and "Brilliant People," but they're all roaring, tight, guitar-based killers, tightly played and arranged with nuances galore (like the piano twinkling of "It's All Too Familiar"), great singing, and resounding hooks. Three quiet songs, like the lovely "Best Kept Secret" (more piano) and "Most Upsetting Song," add balance.

This sounds like the Nils album we always thought they'd make. Jump all over it. (johnkastner.com)

19 bad brains

LIVE AT CBGB 1982 (DVD)
(MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS)



The legend was real. The 1979–1983 Bad Brains were the hottest rock 'n' roll band ever (don't argue), and those of us who saw them 80 or 90 times (several dozen of us in New York and their former base, D.C.) thought we were seeing a semimonthly miracle. I still remember singer **H.R.** starting sets by declaring, deadpan, "If you came to rock 'n' roll, you came to the right place"—the understatement of the century. Twenty-four years later, watching this video footage of a merely *typical* CBGB weekend, one is tempted to say, "See????!!!! That's what we were talking about!" It's no wonder I proudly named my magazine after their "Big Takeover" in 1980.

If you've never seen this phenomenon, you'd better put a seat belt on your chair before hitting "play." This footage brings back the full-on assault that was Bad Brains' outrageous experience. The pioneering all-black foursome, the ultimate "outsiders" by any definition, were amazingly better and wilder than even Jerry Lee Lewis in Hamburg, The Who at Monterey, MC5 at the Grande, Iggy's Stooges at the Whiskey, early D.O.A., or even Hendrix and the young James Brown. You've *never* seen anything like this, and none of us will again. Theirs was the ultimate combination of top-shelf

talent, relentless, scorching drive, and an open-rebellion conviction that was so religious (even before their conversion to Rastafarianism) that it bespoke unshakeable zealotry. This wasn't just punk rock, and don't even call it "hardcore": these mothers totally transcended all implied limitations, even without the spiky, cool-down reggae that broke up the blitzkrieg-furious, pummeling rapid-rockers and provided an alternating current to their overpowering energy. To wit, you should have seen them blowing first **DEAD KENNEDYS** (ask **JELLO**; he said so) and then **BLACK FLAG** off New York's Bonds and Irving Plaza stages the previous summer. This was a bloody stunner. I walked away from their shows with my mouth open, as if I'd just seen pigs fly, men walk on water, and Brigitte Bardot take her clothes off. As a visceral bombshell, only sex could match it; perhaps only skydiving feels as liberating and shocking to the senses.

Oh, *heck* yeah I was there for that X-mas fest '82, as ever. I see myself a few times in the back shadows (away from the new mosh-pit trend I already detested). And the joy of finally reliving Bad Brains' badass battering is only tempered by glimpses of old friends now deceased, like **REAGAN YOUTH**'s **DAVE INSURGENT** dancing in the front. I joke that lightning-fast bassist **DARRYL JENIFER** must not have signed his release, because the camerapeople film him so rarely (except as reggae rapper). But seeing **DR. KNOW**'s remembered overbite as he lights into a feral lead, **EARL HUDSON**'s muscular forearms pumping out the anvil-heavy beats, and Earl's uncanny brother H.R. embodying all this ferocity in his body and animalistic vocals and command of the stage still feels like an hour in a wind tunnel.

If we never missed a gig, it's because we knew how lucky we were to witness this marvel. Watching this DVD monthly from here on out can suffice now! (musicvideodistributors.com)

20 wire

PINK FLAG (REMASTERED)
CHAIRS MISSING (REMASTERED)
154 (REMASTERED)
1977-1979 (BOX SET)
(PINK FLAG)



Wire takes control of their own incredible back catalog, remastering their first three seminal albums. For those still listening to CDs on stereos, these have never sounded better since the original vinyl.

But as always happens, it puts those who purchased CDs previously via Restless Retro in 1989 or EMI U.K. in 2000 in a bind. Should you buy the same thing again? Unless you have plenty of dough and Wire is among

your favorites, probably not, for the 10 non-LP songs previously included as bonus tracks have disappeared. That's just unfortunate: No "Dot Dash," one of their fiercely admired 45s, or the infinitely superior, longer single version of "Outdoor Miner," or the harrowing b-side "Question of Degree." Wire prefer to present the albums as they originally appeared, with the vinyl sound restored, and fair enough. But those songs will be missed.

Perhaps then, such fans are best directed to the limited edition 1000 copies, mail-order only, five-CD 1977-1979 box. They'll get all three albums, plus two bonus, previously unissued live LPs, *Live at the Roxy London—April 1st & 2nd 1977* and *Live at CBGB Theater, New York—July 18th, 1978*. The former is the *full* document of the band's first two gigs (as the famous four-piece), whereas before only a handful of tracks had been released, first on 1977's famous U.K. top 20 punk compilation, *Live at the Roxy*, then on 1995's Wire rarities collection, *Behind the Curtain*. This is an unearthed treasure, the loudest and heaviest the band would sound until a 1999 reunion revamping. That they're way less tight than later has always made the Roxy recordings so valuable in Wire's cannon. That the group was shockingly doing covers—no less **JJ CALE**'s "After Midnight" and **DAVE CLARK FIVE**'s "Glad All Over," before **THE REZILLOS!**—and a few of the originals soon jettisoned is funny, and makes this even more important. On the latter, the sound of the radio broadcast from CBGB Theater (a short-lived, *really* dusty movie hall a long block from CBGB-proper) is thinner, and the 12 songs, mostly from *Chairs Missing*, go by in a blur. But the band's transition to more gnashing, clashing art rock is apparent, and it's great to relive the teenage feeling of listening to WPIX (and here, its prime DJ **JANE HAMBURGER**), the last time a commercial rock station here challenged the airwaves with the vanguard of new sounds happening outside the charts. A 60-page booklet with vintage photos and informative liner notes makes the box a great package.

Otherwise, those who still need Wire in their lives are advised, for the third time in these pages, to ask no questions and buy these three studio albums. *Pink Flag* is the popular favorite, a minimalist, deconstructive, short-song masterpiece released in December 1977 (a year after the first U.K. punk singles), that signaled that post-punk would, in the next few years, take over as the dominant creative Brit rock obsession. It's their one LP that's revered like a religious icon by fans of punk, post-punk, and art-rock. 1978's *Chairs Missing* is the ingenious transition, slower, more thoughtful, and more able to elicit the band's incredible tension in its two-guitar-bass-drums setup. The drone chords building to release on *Pink Flag*'s opener "Reuters" are fully exploited on an album more satisfying and unprecedented. Finally, there's 1979's *154* (named after the number of gigs they'd done), which remains in this writer's 20 greatest albums ever. Here, they take their