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[Album Reviews](#)
[Single Reviews](#)
[Live Reviews](#)
[Bad Brains](#)

October 09, 2006
New York (CBGB)

[Air Supply](#)

October 05, 2006
New York (B.B. King's Blues Club)

[The Raconteurs](#)

September 27, 2006
New York (Roseland Ballroom)

[Queensryche](#)

September 23, 2006
Atlantic City, N.J. (House of Blues)

[Book Reviews](#)


Bad Brains

Location: New York (CBGB)
Event Date: October 09, 2006

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October 10, 2006,

Classic Bad Brains Lineup Pays Respects To CBGB

Greg Prato, N.Y.

One of the most renowned rock clubs of the last 30 years has gone the way of the dodo. After a long battle with the Bowery Residents Committee, owner Hilly Kristal agreed to shut down New York's CBGB's for good later this month. And while such '70s era punk/new wave acts as the Ramones, Talking Heads

and Blondie will forever be the face of CBs, hardcore music (especially Sunday matinees) has also become synonymous with the locale.

Washington, D.C. transplants the Bad Brains led the pack in hardcore's earliest days. The group's original lineup has only performed together sporadically since the '90s, but to mark the closing of the venue that helped establish the group early on, singer H.R., guitarist Dr. Know, bassist Darryl Jenifer and drummer Earl Hudson reunited for a trio of shows in CBGB's final days.

The first night of the three-night stand was expectedly packed solid, with quite a few celebrities seen milling about. Ex-Cars frontman (and sometime Bad Brains producer) Ric Ocasek and his wife Paulina Porizkova sat in a sectioned-off area, the Beastie Boys' Adam Yauch walked about the crowd and actor Elijah Wood set up shop by the merch booth.

As anyone who has ever been to a crowded show at CBs knows, it's nearly impossible to get a good viewpoint of the performance unless you are directly in front of the stage. Sensing the packed-like-sardines atmosphere, the band abruptly stopped playing opener "I Against I" so Hudson could warn the crowd to calm down, but rocked through it on the second pass.

Ever since the '90s, it has been anyone's guess as to which H.R. will show up on any given night -- the captivating, high energy performer captured on the just-released "Live at CBGB's 1982" DVD, or the ever-smiling gentleman who stands stationary by the mic through the performance? On this night, it turned out to be the latter. And to top it off, H.R. resorted to wearing an Evel Knievel-like motorcycle helmet for a portion of the set, obscuring his identity and rendering his

vocals mumbled.

The group still sounds like one fierce beast on stage however, as evidenced by potent readings of such classics as "The Regulator," "I," "Sacred Love" and "Sailin' On." During the heavy opening groove of "Right Brigade," Bad Brains showed once and for all that they could still give the likes of Led Zeppelin a run for their money in the mighty Godzilla rock sweepstakes. And despite Hudson's early plea, a few moshing/crowd-surfing hungry audience members couldn't hold back any longer as the set progressed.

It may not have been as life-changing as catching the Bad Brains at the 9:30 Club back in 1979. But fans know a glimpse of the classic Bad Brains is an opportunity that simply can't be passed up.

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