



Happenings

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Music Review: Bad Brains

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Live at CBGB 1982

MVD Visual (www.musicvideodistributors.com)

Finally, a new reason for middle-age cubicle dwellers to raise their rock fists in the air. A mere 25 years after the footage was shot by two camcorders, Bad Brains three-day exhibition at CBGB is being released.

Hailed as one of the most original and strangest rock outfits to ever pick up instruments, Bad Brains shattered the world's perception of rock and roll – and this DVD documents it perfectly. All of the footage was taken during a multi-day hardcore festival at the now-defunct, greatly missed CBGB. During the festival, Bad Brains played three nights, and this DVD highlights all three shows. Though the audio sounds like someone tossed a boom mike in the middle of the room and hit record, the muddled sound lends authenticity to the visual display that is Bad Brains.

If you listen to Bad Brains and enjoy the bizarre rise and fall of H.R.'s voice, seeing H.R. in action live only magnifies his greatness. He gyrates, he screams and he pushes words of truth from deep within. At points, H.R. gets lost so deep in the music he seems almost absurd and comical, but he remains convincing in his delivery.

When H.R. isn't the focus, the sweating pulse of the band works vigorously to woo the crowd. Guitarist Dr. Know smiles and moves as he screeches through song after song, Earl Hudson (H.R.'s brother) pounds his see-through drums with reckless abandon and bassist Darryl Jenifer is well...strangely absent. For some reason, he only gets about 45 seconds of screen time on the hour-long video.

Enough of the music, because that's not the only thing to admire on this DVD. It's shot in the 80s, and that alone should be a signal of greatness. White punk rockers with short-cropped Mohawks mosh alongside muscular black guys with shaved heads, while a Cyndi Lauper look-alike sings along with H.R.'s every word from a corner of the stage. And when CBGB blows a fuse and the lights go out, Bad Brains keep ripping through their set. Look up again and half the crowd is on the cage, climbing on top of each other and losing their collective mind. In a phrase: pure chaos.

Finally...This is Bad Brains. Fans will love it. Newcomers may want to start somewhere else first.

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