



BAD BRAINS: LIVE AT CBGB 1982 (2006)

Category : MUSIC DVD

Review by Mark Jason Murray



Released by Music Video Distributors
 Running Time: 60 min.
 Rating: NR
 Color format: Color
 Audio/Subtitles: Stereo or 5.1 surround
 Region Code: 0, NTSC
 Aspect Ratio: Full frame
 16:9 Enhanced: No
 Special Features: Short interview, audio track
 Trailer Online: No



The BAD BRAINS are truly an anomaly in the realm of early 80's punk rock. Personally, I can't think of any punk bands during this period which included all African American members and their Rastafarian beliefs and outbreaks of reggae seemingly would have placed them on the outskirts of the growing genre, especially within the East Coast / New York area scene. Yet their blistering speed and manic energy transcended any obstacles and have placed their early releases as some of the most original and influential of the period. Their absolute classic, 'Rock For Light' is the only punk/hardcore album to my knowledge produced by a multimillion selling artist (Ric Ocasek, singer of the Cars) during this period as well. Legendary, influential, original, groundbreaking, open minded: all these and more describe the BAD BRAINS.

Video footage of the band has been relatively nonexistent, so this DVD release covering three nights in 1982 at NY's legendary CBGB's is of great anticipation to fans. At nearly an hour in length, the band blasts through over twenty tracks (the listing on the DVD itself is incorrect) with a ferocity that bands today could only dream of attaining. What I find most impressive about their performance is how they are oblivious to the chaos they are instigating. Just watch as a fan easily slips the microphone from flailing singer H.R.'s hand to scream "RIGHT BRIGADE!" at the song's appropriate moment. Fans storm on and off the stage and there is no barrier between performance and spectator. Guitarist, Dr. Know, shreds through song after song with frequent ear to ear smiles as the music flows through him, while drummer, Earl Hudson plows through song after song as one fulfilling a heartfelt duty. Curiously, bassist, Darryl Jennifer is relegated to the shadows and doesn't appear in any shots. Although every non-reggae song by the band is ferocious and manic, the band never expresses any physical signs of anger release as their performance is more akin to a hyperactive emotional cleansing. This release captures a rare moment in punk rock history of one of the genre's true legends, when the bands were hungry and the crowds were wild. It all seems even more poignant today seeing that CBGB is now officially closing its doors.



The DVD's video quality is good, with multiple cameras catching the action both in front and behind the crowd with occasional signs of wear on the master tapes. The audio is of decent quality coming from soundboard sources yet a bit bass heavy. A 5.1 surround track is pointlessly included on the disc since it only directs equal amounts of sound to all speakers giving a somewhat hollow effect... just stick to the default stereo track at high volume. A CD has also been issued featuring the entire audio contents of the DVD. Bonus materials are slim and include about a minute of worthless interviews with fans with absolutely nothing of importance to say and an audio track for the reggae track, 'I and I Survive'.

Nearly 25 years later and still as important and influential as ever, BAD BRAINS: LIVE AT CBGB 1982 delivers a piece of aural history how it was and how it never will be again.