

ROCK PICKS

BY L.A. WEEKLY MUSIC STAFF

Wednesday, May 23, 2007 - 12:00 pm

In the new Bad Brains DVD, *Live at CBGB 1982* — a fascinating document of the Washington, D.C., band in their hardcore-punk phase, when they were one of this planet's fiercest and fastest live combos — singer H.R. is shown onstage surrounded by a whirlwind of thrashing limbs belonging to assorted beefy stage-divers. Even though he's dancing just as frantically to the Brains' intense fusillade of muscular punk rock and lilting reggae, H.R. somehow seems calm at the center of the storm. Unlike many hardcore punks, the Bad Brains were superior musicians, expanding into heavy metal on 1986's classic *I Against I*, which featured melodically yearning tunes like "Sacred Love" (whose vocals were recorded over the phone while H.R. was in jail). The original lineup has only performed sporadically in the past decade, but they're about to release a comeback CD, *Build a Nation*, produced by the Beastie Boys' Adam Yauch. Tonight, a solo H.R. (which stands for "Human Rights") will dig deeply into his spiritually heartfelt reggae roots for some transcendent magic.

- Falling James