

Legends On A Legendary Stage Misrepresented

Thursday, November 01, 2007 by **Matthew Kiel**

The mystifying characteristic in great music always defies description. Is it the tempo, sequence of notes and words, mood, skill of the players? Or is it a chaotic combination of the above plus the uproarious chemical reaction that happens when the sound hits the ears? With greatness in art almost completely subjective and its impact immeasurable till years later, the argument could be futile. When the 20/20 vision of hindsight examines such epochal points, support for the argument always comes in words and pictures. For those who weren't there, *Bad Brains Live at CBGB 1982* offers nothing more than sub-par footage of arguably hardcore's greatest band plowing through many of their classics at a now-extinct, legendary venue.



Content wise, the material is there. Riotous renditions of "Big Take Over," "Attitude," "Pay to Cum," "F.V.K." and others culled from this 3-day stint fill the disc. Dr. Know, H.R., Daryl Jennifer and Earl Hudson are in truly blistering form. The major issue here is presentation. Since this footage is twenty-five years old and contains a legendary band at a venue of mythical status, it's only fair that even the smallest sense of

purpose should be given. Unfortunately, even the liner notes feel abandoning as one reads *Big Takeover Magazine* Editor Jack Rabid's words, "If we never missed a gig, it's because we knew how lucky we were to witness a marvel." That's not fair to those who were too young, unborn or completely missed out on the movement. That the unfocused, glare-filled footage and scratchy sound are just shy of par is moot considering the subject. Clearly, this was put together for little money, if any, by lovers of the band because there's no way anyone was going to fork over a budget at the time for a supposed fad like punk rock.

Though those who came to hardcore later or are just arriving now may not mosh in their living room as they watch this, yet show-goers will look on and wish they could go to a venue and feel as connected with a band as one could at CBGB. There are punks and skins sitting next to the Bad Brains as they play, there's no barrier between the band and the crowd and everyone there seems to have a great time. It may not be *The Last Waltz* or *Stop Making Sense*, but for 1982, the argument is there for Bad Brains being the hardest and fastest rock band in the world.

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