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HARDCORE CINEMA

Bad Brains—Live CBGB 1982

BY ALEKS PRECHTL

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2006 - 3:00 PM



H.R. at CBGB

Washington, D.C.'s, Bad Brains clearly stand out among America's original hardcore punk rock bands. But it's not because its members happened to be African-American in a scene that was overwhelmingly, mind-numbingly white. Nor was it because they evolved into devoted Rastafarians who on early recordings switched seamlessly from aggressive hardcore to soulful Jah-praising dub-reggae and back again. No, Bad Brains stand out because they simply were the best. Just seconds into "Sailin' On," the first song off their 1982 self-titled release, Bad Brains gave the listener a jolt: four drum licks followed by an aural explosion that leaves all would-be contenders in the dust. Melodic, aggressive and catchy, all in an instant.

Along with great songwriting, Bad Brains' shows, highlighted by singer H.R.'s vocals and antics, evoked a passion and honesty that are rare in today's music. They inspired, influenced and helped nurture the D.C. hardcore bands that followed, including SOA (State of Alert), featuring a young Henry Rollins, and especially Fugazi leader Ian MacKaye's first band Teen Idles and its spinoff Minor Threat. But Bad Brains' reach also extended nationally to the Beastie Boys (whose double Bs honor Bad Brains), Rage

Against the Machine and the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Hearing a Bad Brains recording proves they were arguably the most musical early hardcore band (with Orange County's Adolescents nipping at their heels), but this was an act that had to be experienced live. Unfortunately, their legacy is scarred by drug abuse, insanity, homophobia, and unfortunate explorations into funk and metal. Lucky for those of us too young to have caught them in their heyday, we can watch and hear "Big Take Over," "Attitude" and "Pay to Cum" on the soon-to-be-released DVD *Bad Brains—Live CBGB 1982*, which gets a free debut screening in Long Beach.

Bad Brains—Live CBGB 1982 screens at Murphy's Pub, 4918 E. Second St., Long Beach, (562) 433-6338. Tues., 6 p.m. Free.

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