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BAD BRAINS

Live at CBGB 1982
(MVD)

If anyone out there saw the recent documentary, *American Hardcore* (and I imagine if you are reading this review that might be a few of you), there is an interview with the menacing yet lovable Harley Flanagan of the Cro-Mags, where he is talking about the build up of Bad Brains' "Big Take Over." He describes the intensity of waiting through the duh-duh-duh-duh-duhs and for the band to just explode in a collective "BOOM," HR leading the frenzy with his legendary screech. The DVD, in fact, opens with "Big Take Over," and if you weren't there at CBGBs in '82 and already know what Harley is speaking about, then you better brace yourself. We are talking serious detonation here. This footage culls one hour from the three shows the band played at CBs between December 24th and the 26th. I have never seen anything like this before. A DC HC veteran recently told me that Bad Brains was not only the best hardcore band he had ever seen, but possibly the best band he had ever seen. Well, even with muffled sound, roughly two cameras taping, and a shit ton of punkers (whom over the three nights you begin to recognize) flying across the screen, it is very clear that Bad Brains were untouchable. The group's energy alone -- never mind their obvious prowess over their instruments ('throat" included) -- easily earns them such accolades.

I am imagining that these are the best moments from these shows, and there are some great ones. The kids in the pit are just flipping out and when Bad Brains slow down for "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth," somehow the mayhem subsides into respectful swaying and then BLAM!, the band goes right into "Riot Squad" and all hell breaks loose again. And Again. It's riveting to watch each member attacking those reggae tracks with the same (controlled) ferocity that dominates the rest of the show. For a hardcore scene known for its violence, there are few such incidents save one bloodied-up guy, a set of lost keys, oh, and an annoying Dead Kennedys fan who HR shoves off the stage for just standing around too long! It's difficult to wrench your eyes from Dr. Know; he is on fire, particularly during tracks like "Attitude," "I," "Supertouch/Shitfit" and "Banned in DC." Then there is HR...you don't become a legend for no reason. If you have never seen footage of Bad Brains you owe it to yourself to pick this up; the man is a human string of firecrackers. Bombastic. I really have nothing else to compare him to. This is some incredible footage of a relevant part of American music and it's thrilling to watch. Highly Recommended. [NL]