

# STYLE WEEKLY

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## **Bad Brains “Live at CBGB: 1982” (MVD Visual)**

Washington, D.C.’s Bad Brains was one of the greatest and most influential hardcore punk bands of all time. A big reason was its schizophrenic live shows, which mixed chaotic, breakneck-speed punk/metal with slowdown breathers of mellow dub reggae. Guttural throat maestro H.R. (who has lived in Richmond) was the centerpiece of the all-black group, an acrobatic performer both physically and vocally who could shift from tongue-twisting, Gatling-gun lyrical rants to vermin-coated screams with operatic flare. A volatile performer, he was thrilling and unpredictable onstage.

Those who missed the classic Bad Brains years should definitely check out this no-frills live DVD, recorded in 1982 at the legendary New York hole-in-the-wall CBGB (soon to be a Vegas attraction). The audio and video quality are relatively good, and the performances of early material such as “Attitude,” “Banned in D.C.” and “Pay to Cum” are characteristically explosive. Just watching the bewildered faces of young moshers gives an indication of the breathtakingly new, immensely powerful experience that Bad Brains once delivered. One can also see how skilled the jazz- and prog-rock-versed musicians were, how seamlessly they complemented one another to create such a joyful dissonance that was tightly controlled but unbridled, spiritual yet utterly destructive. \*\*\*\* — *Brent Baldwin*