



Music Review: *Bad Brains Live - C.B.G.B. 1982*

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Not being a huge fan of punk — the only bands I know and dig are Black Flag, The Stooges, and The Ramones — I'd often read how Bad Brains were end-all and be-all of "good" punk; that they were this amazing band that never got the mainstream respect that they deserved.

After listening to them on *Bad Brains Live — CBGB 1982* I am stunned into agreeing.

Keeping in mind that this is nearly a 24-year old concert recording, the sheer energy and velocity of emotion that Bad Brains brought to my speakers makes me wonder how anyone in attendance that night survived.

Why weren't they reduced to smoldering ashes?

Some of these songs, like "Big Takeover," "Right Brigade," or "Riot Squad" thunder ahead at a speed that would leave the Ramones panting in their wake. Obnoxiously smart, fast and furious, they scorch their way into your eardrums in all the right ways.

Not all of them are scorchers, however.

Scattered throughout this CD are songs in a style that I wasn't expecting - reggae. In many ways it is this oversight on my part that probably shows most clearly that my unfamiliarity with the music Bad Brains. It simply had never occurred to me that they would be anything but fast and furious, you see.

Songs like "I and I Rasta," "Jah the Conqueror," and the sublime "Rally Round Jah's Throne" blow away all my preconceptions, however, and deliver unto me tracks that Bob Marley would have been bobbing his dreadlocked head to.

My only complaint is the recording quality of some of these songs. Whenever the band rips it up and gets down to some serious freaking-out, it is then that you can tell that this was recorded in a club in the early '80s.

Granted, CBGB was *the* club, so at least they chose wisely.

After a few listens, though, I find myself thinking that everything is just as it should be. I don't want Bad Brains to be pristine and sounding superbly produced. Instead, I want them raw and sounding as if they are playing so damned hard it is making my speakers sweat with the effort of merely keeping up.

This is an amazing look back into an amazing band at, perhaps, the height of their blazing career. It is also, however, a CD release that I have no qualms about insisting you purchase.

For those of you interested in seeing the concert as well as listening to it this release is also available as a DVD — one I'll be shortly purchasing, myself.