

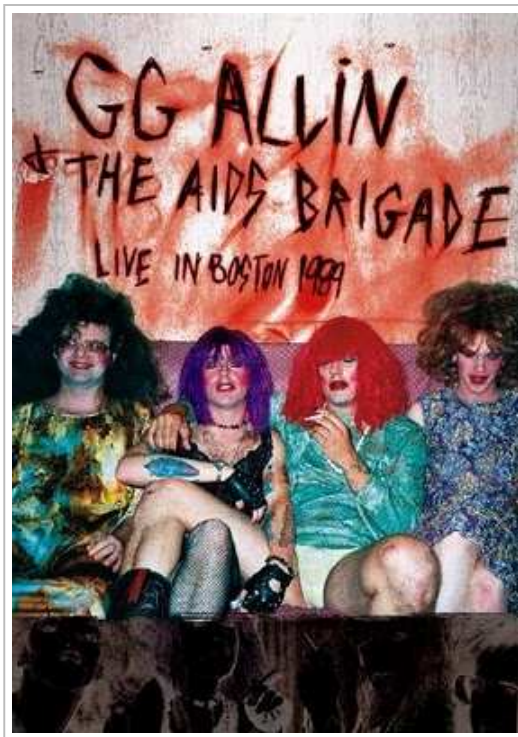
FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2010

DVD Review: GG Allin & the AIDS Brigade, Live in Boston 1989

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Images from the Internet



GG Allin & the AIDS Brigade, Live in Boston 1989

Directed by Merle Allin
MVD Visual, 2010
90 minutes, USD \$19.95
GGAllin.com
MVDvisual.com

If you don't know who GG Allin is, well, suffice to say that he is a cult hardcore musician who is simply without boundaries. He was as transgressive as he could be, with no fear of attacking his audience or injuring himself on stage. He made Johnny Rotten look like a nerd, Sid Viscous a schoolboy, Stiv Bators unassuming, and even Keith Moon appear sane. Ironically, his birth name was Jesus Christ Allin. He died

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of a drug overdose in New York City in June of 1993. I can't imagine there is any way he could have lived much longer than that.

Back in the late '70s and early '80s, I started receiving badly recorded demo cassette tapes from GG of his band the Jabbers, when he was living up in New England. I wasn't quite sure what to think about the music, but the lyrics were blatantly offensive, and obviously meant to be. The songs were not juvenile, like another West Coast cult band, the Angry Samoans (who wrote about saving Hitler's appendage, rhyming it under a rock; don't get me wrong, they were a fun band), but rather they were well written, albeit much more angry and violent (yes, I still have them).

Before long, his then band, the Murder Junkies, were banned in many clubs, including their local big town, Boston. Under the name The AIDS Brigade, the band got themselves booked at the Middle East Café in the Boston suburb of Cambridge, and went down to the show dressed in drag, in which they also performed.

The first couple of tracks of the DVD are two sets of rehearsals, one being just GG and his brother Merle, who is also in the band, facing each other in chairs and playing guitars. The second part is a full band rehearsal for 19 minutes, and I must say it's the best I've heard the band sound. They played decent music, for certain, which would deteriorate as the years went on. The last pre-show footage, which lasts a bit too long at 15 minutes, is the make-up application in a crowded room, presumably someone's house. It's pretty hard to follow who other than the band is there, and what is being done at any particular moment.

The show itself, on August 27, which is done in full New York Dolls style drag (GG was a big fan), is mounted on the small stage, with GG in the center. Sure they cover all his main songs, such as "Expose Yourself to Kids," and my fave of their tunes, "Bite It You Scum," but it is actually starts relatively sedate. They sound like a great hardcore band, or even mid-'70s New York Scene style, but as it goes on, GG lifts his skirt and pulls off his panties, exposing himself (as he's wont to do), and even manages to throw himself on the ground a few times. As GG shows go, this is mild, but the music is the most upfront I've seen, and as a musical act, they were impressive, with biting lyrics (pun intended), and smart tunes.

Ah, but the DVD doesn't end there, and here is where it gets a bit - err - twisted. But first a side-note: from late 1989 to 1991, GG was in prison on an assault charge, and something must have "broke" in there, because of what followed in his life, including extreme substance abuse and the disappearance of any kind of propriety in his performances. I am not sure if Andy Kaufman would applaud or be aghast.

There are two full gigs at over 40 minutes each, presented via a close single camera (by a very brave cameraperson) from May 26 in Seattle

▶ 2008 (70)

▶ 2007 (22)

About Me

Robert Barry Francos
c/o 62 Timber Ridge Rd,
Commack, NY 11725. From 1977-88, I used to publish a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). And the beat goes on.

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and May 27 in Portland, just one month before his death. What is shown is how far to the extreme he had achieved. He performs both gigs naked (with the exception of boots, dog collar and in the second show, gloves), rips up bibles and local newspapers and sets them on fire onstage (using *mas* lighter fluid), pees and defecates on the stage (and ingests both), sticks multiple items up his bum (including a turkey baster and the microphone), flings the mic stand into the audience, and he punches people and gets pummeled in return. By the end he is bloodied and covered in crap (literally). There is a barrier between the audience and the stage, and while no one in the crowd comes over to the band's side, GG travels often into the spectators, in one case ripping the tee-shirt off of a woman, and varied times whacking other people on the side of the head if they venture too close.

In the Seattle show, he openly insults Nirvana and Pearl Jam right off. Considering the time period and the location, this took balls, which were *right there*. The sound was kind of muddy, unfortunately, and the lyrics were mostly impossible to make out (though thanks to the 1989 show, one could have an idea). GG doesn't just roam the stage, he prowls it... he *owns* it. Often hitting his head repeatedly with the mic, he growls more than sings, and it's pretty obvious he's bloated and not in good health. The club, Under the Rail, first tries to turn off the electricity, and then when they realize that this may cause more trouble than not, it comes back on and the band continues to play, including "Kill the Police," "I Live to Be Hated," and "Highest Power." When all the lights go out, the show ends; GG goes into the audience and starts a near riot when the scene ends.

The second is at The Roseland Theater, where many of the preamble antics continue. GG's legs are black and blue (could be bruising, or perhaps from shooting up?). The sound is a lot clearer, but it doesn't help that GG keeps breaking the mics, which are replaced quite often (by a club roddie who does *not* want to touch the feces covered contraption; at first he just drops it on the floor, but then he brings a towel to wipe it off). At one point, GG climbs up on a very tall bank of monitors, and starts pushing at a neon wall hanging, and you're left to wonder if it will go crash (I'm not telling).

It's these later shows that are more representative of his *Hated in the Nation* documentary, which is where most know him from. It's definitely a self-destructive circus that has attracted fans the likes of World War IX's Justin Melkman and SQNS's Tony Petrozza (who covers "Bite It You Scum"), and I'm certainly glad to have them, but it's the 1989 Cambridge show that is the find for me, as I had not seen footage of the band from this period. I am pleased at just how good and catchy it is. One would hardly know it was the same band.

GG Allin is not an acquired taste: you either love it or you hate it, period. If you're squeamish about bodily functions (or bodies, for that matter) in any kind of way, or find objectionable lyrics objectionable, needless to say, avoid this. But if you are a fan, you surely will not be

disappointed. RIP, GG, and I hope you have found peace.

Bonus video (not from this DVD):



Posted by Robert Barry Francos at [12:01 AM](#)

Labels: [AIDS Brigade](#), [Boston](#), [FFanzeen](#), [GG Allin](#), [Hardcore](#), [Merle Allin](#), [Murder Junkies](#), [punk rock](#), [Robert Barry Francos](#), [SQNS](#), [World War IX](#)

Reactions: interesting (0) cool (0) informative (0)

2 comments:

[Gary Pig Gold](#) said...

["Always Was, Is, And Always Shall Be"](#)

[November 11, 2010 12:09 AM](#)



[Robert Barry Francos](#) said...

Yes, that is the name of his first album, on Orange Records. He looks so young and healthy on the cover...

[November 11, 2010 12:19 AM](#)

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