

# The Dwarves



live in San Francisco (2011)

live show

Reviewer Rating:

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*Published on June 3rd 2011*

"Constant motion" is the best way to describe the modern incarnation of the Dwarves live show. As soon as they took to the stage on May 27, 2011 at San Francisco's Bottom of the Hill, the entire band started to get down and dirty and they didn't stop for their entire set.

Although frontman Blag Dahlia is known for pacing about the stage and launching his gangly frame into the audience at unexpected times, the band themselves invoke the music's energy to an equal degree. Composed of members from throughout the Dwarves' career, the band was constantly stomping forward and backwards, flinging their guitars like whips, head-banging, or menacingly flashing their broken teeth.

The show itself was something of a return for the Dwarves. While they've been playing shows on and off for the past seven years, it's been at least several years since they've hit San Francisco proper. Since the release of their last record, 2004's *The Dwarves Must Die*, they've developed into something of a traditional hard rock band, playing extended sets, a stark contrast to their earlier eight-minute shows that often devolved into fistfights. But, now that they've released a brand new LP, *The Dwarves Are Born Again*, they've breached new territory as much as they've gone full circle.

Instead of announcing songs or flaunting big intros, the band tore into song after song after song leaving no room between the last note of one song and the first of another. In fact, the only time the band broke from playing was when Blag Dahlia took less than a minute to thank the audience.

Interestingly, although the band has a new release out, they played a mere three songs from it, and instead chose to spread their set list out fairly evenly from their material released since 1999. As a testament to their songwriting skills, while Dwarves tunes are loud, fast, nasty affairs in concept, the pop attributes of their tunes bore through in the live act, so much so that the as Blag handed the mic to audience members throughout the night, not once was a fan caught unaware of the lyrics. (In fact, Yours Truly got to sing the outro to "Back Seat of My Car" in which I improved the last refrain into a single "Awrrrrrgggghhh!!!" I'm an artiste, you see.)

Also noticeable was the composition of the audience. Due to the nature of their album covers, which often feature naked women, the Dwarves have been cited with misogyny. Earlier this year Blag Dahlia responded to that via an interview where he stated "I think what it was, we always had a nihilistic negative perspective for the people who got the joke. It wasn't misogyny, it was

misanthropy. We didn't just hate women, we hated everyone!" But, at the show itself, the guy/gi ratio was nearly 50/50, a stark contrast to the often male-dominated realm of hardcore punk... a even music in general. This probably says something about either the Dwarves, sexism in punk or San Francisco...I'm just not sure what.

Although the band tore through about 25 songs, the show was over just a shade after 20 minute. With a load of upcoming live dates, a new LP, and two associated EPs, the Dwarves ARE born again, it seems. And if they were re-birthed to bring us a live show this fierce, than maybe crucifying them seven years ago wasn't such a bad idea after all.

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