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Born Again

GREEDY, 2011

Back in the pre-internet era I came across a blurb in some metal magazine I read in my adolescent years—I'm guessing it was *Rip*. In that blurb it mentioned a "real punk" band called the Dwarves, who had just been kicked off the trendy Sub Pop for feigning the death of one of their members. I was intrigued, and I sought out *Sugar Fix*, the band's most recent release. Well, just a few things have happened since the early 1990s. Among them, the Dwarves have disbanded, Hewhocannotbenamed has resurrected, and the band continues to thumb its nose at just about everybody—especially punk rock.

2011 brings their latest release, *The Dwarves Are Born Again*, and it sounds much like their other post-reunion albums—the garage influences are toned down, with the production taking a somewhat poppy spin that emphasizes catchy bits and crisp, clean Blag Dahlia vocals, "You'll Never Take Us Alive" being a perfect example. While the progression since *Blood, Guts, and Pussy* has been steady, the band has clearly changed sounds in the twenty-five-ish years they've been terrorizing audiences. So what's to say about the record?

First, they've abandoned the rap-stylings that permeated *Must Die* and the industrial-punk that defined *Come Clean*. In fact, *Born Again* is pretty straight-forward punk, with hardcore and pop-punk undertones at various times that doesn't rely on any gimmickry. Well, no more gimmickry than their usual lyrics, anyway. The album kicks off with the arrogantly titled "The Dwarves Are Still the Best Band Ever," which boastfully proclaims, "Let's get high and fuck some sluts." The band may be in their forties now, but that juvenile, anti-PC blood still gushes. Lyrical topics include modern punk not living up to the elder statesmen (namely, of course, the Dwarves) and various sex and drug debauchery. Perhaps the most surprising note on the album is "Working Class Hole," in which the band conquers the current wave of Descendents-influenced bands with their own scathing piece. The vocal tradeoffs and group choruses mimic the style both respectfully and playfully, with an undeniable catchiness that's more rocking out than winking. That, ultimately, is what has kept the Dwarves active over the years, and what separates them from the plethora of imitators and shock value punks that have come and gone.

While the production is glossier than their early classics, the record proves that a step has not been lost. The Dwarves may not be experiencing a literal rebirth, but they are definitely proving that their irregular schedule over the past decade is not equal to their demise. Not only have they gotten stronger—they've gotten bigger: the cast on *Born Again* involves number of past contributors, with each playing to their strengths. This may not translate as well to touring, but it's made for a very intriguing celebration of two and a half decades.

The record comes with a bonus DVD containing live footage, videos, etc from throughout their history and is a worthy addition for fans. It is well constructed and doesn't feel like a throw-in, unlike many bonus packs. My only complaint is that the menu screen has its volume set way too high.

8.2 / 10

by [Loren](#) on Monday 13th June 2011

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The Dwarves

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