

Dwarves

STAFF

Live in Berkeley (2011)

live show

Reviewer Rating:

Contributed by: JohnGentile
(others by this writer | submit your own)

Published on October 31st 2011

"We played here with NOFX. We played here with Green Day. We played here with the Offspring," Dwarves frontman Blag Dhalia announced to a packed 924 Gilman. "Where are those fuckers? We're still here!" It wasn't clear if the question was a boast or a lamentation, but as the band tore through a set of classics, it seemed as though whatever trajectory their career had assumed, they were relishing the ride for all of its upsides and downturns Oct. 30.

In previous years, when the Dwarves played 924 Gilman, the shows tended to end after one and a half songs, with members of the audience grabbing the band's gear and swinging them like battle axes, and the band responding with swift kicks to their attackers' faces. While the modern show isn't as violent as the earlier eras, the band has channeled its energy into their music and are playing as tight as ever.

The group cut from song to song without breaking in between, acknowledging both their visceral sound as well as the futility of long diatribes in such an atmosphere. Although they just released the fantastic *The Dwarves are Born Again*, the set ranged across their career, with heavy helpings from their seminal *Blood Guts & Pussy* as well as the more hard rock (albeit snappy) material from their Epitaph years. Interestingly, while the band has always had a fairly hard edge, they've bulked up the drive of their rhythm section. While the songs still fly by, almost jumping the rails, the bass and guitars seemed to be beefed up at Gilman, giving the band an almost heavy metal rumble despite the lightning speed of their songs.

Near the end of the set, when Dhalia seemed to be stage diving every third verse, middle-schooler (maybe early high schooler) "Gabriel from Arizona" took the mic for "Back Seat of My Car" before he was pulled down and the entire front row took vocal duties simultaneously. As a special treat to those "in-the-know," the band played "Free Cocaine" from 1988's *Lucifer's Crank* album. While the band rarely plays their pre-Sub Pop material, perhaps a few more resurrections of the old material is warranted, because as the band ripped through the minute-long jam, it became clear that the old stuff is nearly as good as their classic material, and just suffered from poor production in the studio.

To end the show, half the band stage dove while the other half threw their instruments at the monitors, creating an interminable feedback loop. Interestingly, the audience shouted "one more song, one more song!" which was in stark contrast to former years when the band was literally ripped from the stage against their will after two-and-a-half minutes. The Dwarves might be born again, but in their resurrection they've changed from being a pack of wild dudes to being a pack of wild dudes that can kick out one hell of a full length set.

Random notes:

-Best costumes of the evening: 6'3" Smurf, Drunk Danzig, Punk rock Coolio, and creepy old dude in the back... oh wait, that was me!

-Worst job in the universe: Hands down, 924 Gilman boy's room janitor.

-Fun fact #1: Alternative Tentacles' Jesse Luscious, who was in attendance, is the guy who yells "Let's hear it for the Dwarves" at the end of the studio recording of "Hurricane Fighter Plane."

-Fun fact #2: I saw two dudes get dropped off in a minivan with their mom driving! so un-punx.

-Fun fact #3: Even at nearly 50 years of age and with graying temples, Blag Dahlia still had the young girls lining up to hug him and take pictures. Is such a character to be revered or reviled? Such is the quagmire that is the Dwarves.

Login to rate this album

People who liked this also liked:

